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Jesus the True Leader

The Biographical Portrait of Jesus as Leader in the Gospel of Matthew

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The Biographical Portrait of Jesus as Leader in the Gospel of Matthew

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MADE IN SWEDEN 

To Elin

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations	11
1. Introduction	15
1.1 Background	15
1.1.1 Problem.....	15
1.1.2 Purpose.....	17
1.1.3 Previous research	19
1.2 Material and method.....	28
1.2.1 Matthew, Judaism, and Hellenism	29
1.2.2 The biographical genre of Matthew	31
1.2.3 The narrative form of Matthew	37
1.2.4 Characterization	43
1.2.5 The comparative material.....	53
1.3 Leadership, literature, and language	56
1.3.1 The study of leadership	56
1.3.2 Leadership terminology in ancient Greek	64
1.4 Procedure.....	72
2. Portraits of the ideal leader in ancient biographies	75
2.1 Isocrates' <i>Evagoras</i>	75
2.1.1 The character of the leader	77
2.1.2 The relationship between the leader and the people.....	83
2.2 Xenophon's <i>Agesilaus</i>	86
2.2.1 The character of the leader	88
2.2.2 The relationship between the leader and the people.....	93
2.3 Philo's <i>Moses</i>	98
2.3.1 The character of the leader	101
2.3.2 The relationship between the leader and the people.....	108
2.4 Plutarch's <i>Numa</i>	113
2.4.1 The character of the leader	115
2.4.2 The relationship between the leader and the people.....	120
2.5 Summary and implications	125
3. The introduction of a new leader (Matt 1:1–4:11)	129
3.1 A new leader on the scene (1:1–2:23)	130
3.1.1 Jesus Messiah—the ideal king	130
3.1.2 A leader's birth	135
3.2 The prepared and appropriate leader (3:1–4:11).....	144
3.2.1 The preparation of the leader	145
3.2.2 A righteous and self-controlled leader	148
3.3 Summary	156

4. The leader and his followers (Matt 4:12–11:1)	159
4.1 The master and his apprentices (4:12–22)	161
4.1.1 Jesus the role model	161
4.1.2 Willing followers	167
4.1.3 The future leaders	172
4.2 The main tasks of the leader (4:23–9:35)	177
4.2.1 διδάσκειν	178
4.2.2 κηρύσσειν	186
4.2.3 θεραπεύειν	191
4.3 The shepherd of the people (9:36–11:1)	193
4.3.1 A popular leader?	194
4.3.2 The compassionate shepherd	198
4.3.3 The empowering leader	202
4.3.4 A man of peace?	206
4.4 Summary	209
5. The leader and his opponents (Matt 11:2–25:46)	213
5.1 A wise and humble leader (11:2–16:12)	214
5.1.1 Jesus and wisdom	214
5.1.2 A benevolent ruler	218
5.1.3 The humble leader	225
5.2 The leader and his community (16:13–20:34)	230
5.2.1 The founder of a new community	230
5.2.2 The servant leader	239
5.3 The true leader and the false leaders (21:1–25:46)	245
5.3.1 The confronting leader	246
5.3.2 A leader with integrity	254
5.4 Summary	266
6. The lasting influence of the leader (Matt 26:1–28:20)	269
6.1 The death of the shepherd (26:1–27:66)	270
6.1.1 A leader's death	270
6.1.2 A courageous leader?	275
6.2 The resurrected leader (28:1–20)	281
6.2.1 The lasting leader	282
6.3 Summary	288
7. Comparisons and conclusions	291
7.1 The theme of leadership	291
7.2 The character of the leader	293
7.2.1 The portrait of Jesus	293
7.2.2 Comparison with other portraits	296
7.3 The relationship between the leader and the people	300
7.3.1 The portrait of Jesus	300
7.3.2 Comparison with other portraits	302
7.4 Jesus as a model for leaders?	306
7.5 Implications for further research	316
8. Bibliography	319

Abbreviations

The usage of abbreviations in this study conforms to the conventions of *SBL Handbook of Style*.¹ In addition to the abbreviations listed there I use the following:

ACT	Ancient Christian Texts
<i>AEJT</i>	<i>Australian eJournal of Theology</i>
<i>AMJ</i>	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>
<i>AncSoc</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>American Psychologist</i>
ATRSup	Australasian Theological Review Supplementary Series
<i>ASQ</i>	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>
AUU	Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Uppsala Studies in Social Ethics
BCAW	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World
<i>BEQ</i>	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
BzAl	Beiträge zur Altertumskunde
<i>C&M</i>	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia. Revue Danoise de Philologie et D'Histoire</i>
CI	The Critical Idiom
CJAS	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series
CNTE	Contexts and Norms of New Testament Ethics
<i>ConPJ</i>	<i>Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research</i>
CSCT	Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition

¹ *SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).

<i>DJGFEd</i>	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> . Edited by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall. 1st ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
<i>DSE</i>	<i>Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics</i> . Edited by Joel B. Green, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Rebecka Miles, and Allen Verhey. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2011.
<i>DSS</i>	<i>A Dictionary of Social Sciences</i> . Edited by Julius Gould and William L. Kolb. New York: Macmillan, 1964.
<i>EAPR</i>	<i>East Asian Pastoral Review</i>
<i>EE</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Ethics</i> . Edited by Lawrance C. Becker and Charlotte B. Becker. 3 vols. New York: Routledge, 2001.
<i>ESEC</i>	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
<i>HPT</i>	<i>History of Political Thought</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Human Relations</i>
<i>HS</i>	Hellenic Studies
<i>IRev</i>	<i>Iliff Review</i>
<i>JCP</i>	Jews College Publication
<i>JM</i>	<i>Journal of Management</i>
<i>JMR</i>	<i>Journal of Management Research</i>
<i>JP</i>	<i>Journal of Psychology</i>
<i>KNT</i>	Kommentar till Nya Testamentet
<i>LATH</i>	<i>Leadership and the Humanities</i>
<i>LQ</i>	<i>Leadership Quarterly</i>
<i>MillSt</i>	Millennium Studies
<i>MOH</i>	<i>Management & Organizational History</i>
<i>NHLS</i>	New Horizons in Leadership Studies
<i>NSBT</i>	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NTMon</i>	New Testament Monographs
<i>OCG</i>	The Oratory of Classical Greece

PC	Proclamation Commentaries
<i>PhiSac</i>	<i>Philippiniana Sacra</i>
SGKA	Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums
SMRSHLL	Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis
<i>SR</i>	<i>Sociology of Religion</i>
TCH	The Transformation of the Classical Heritage
<i>TF</i>	<i>Transformation</i>
<i>ThA</i>	<i>Theology Annual</i>
TI	Theological Inquiries
<i>TSR</i>	<i>Trinity Seminary Review</i>
ULG Geschichte	Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte
<i>WLQ</i>	<i>Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly</i>

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Leadership is a topical issue in the world today. It is frequently discussed and analyzed in all kinds of areas in our society. The awareness of the importance of good leadership is not an insight of the modern world, but is seen also in the ancient world and the New Testament writings. Though New Testament scholars have left almost no stones unturned regarding the description of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the presentation of Jesus as leader has surprisingly received little attention, even if the text itself invites the reader to consider the text from this angle. In the first section of this introductory chapter, I will outline the background and purpose of the current study, its relationship to previous research, and how it makes a contribution in Matthean studies.

1.1.1 Problem

In his article “Translating the Language of Leadership,” Paul Ellingworth observes that “it is interesting to note how little of the New Testament language of leadership is applied to Jesus, whom one might expect to be represented as the Leader *par excellence*.”² One of the few examples that he gives is the use of ἡγούμενος in Matt 2:6. Though he rightly points out that leadership language is used about Jesus in this verse, Ellingworth’s announcement is overstated, since he totally ignores the use of the shepherd metaphor in the gospels. In the case of the Gospel of Matthew, this leadership terminology is used at several instances in the story, both in its beginning (2:6), middle (9:36), and end (26:31). Notably it is used together with ἡγούμενος in the beginning of the gospel:

² Paul Ellingworth, “Translating the Language of Leadership,” *BT* 49 (1998): 126–38 (136).

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a *leader* (ἡγούμενος), who will *shepherd* (ποιμανεῖ) my people Israel (2:6).³

This statement, given in the beginning of the story, lends itself to some questions. Does the theme of leadership have importance for Matthew's⁴ story as a whole? Is the theme picked up later in the narrative and then in which way? Does the Gospel of Matthew highlight Jesus as leader in its presentation of him? What are the characteristics of Jesus as leader in Matthew's portrayal? Is Jesus presented as a model for leaders to imitate?

The statement in 2:6, a creative use of different verses in the OT, is intriguingly given by the religious leaders. This character group is consequently characterized in a negative way throughout Matthew's story, with traits that clearly contrast with Jesus. Though this feature is often recognized by Matthean scholars, little attention have been paid to its implications for the presentation of *Jesus as leader*.

Matthew's literary genre is still being discussed, but the majority of scholars seem to regard it as a kind of ancient biography. This genre is partly concerned with different kinds of leaders, and sometimes this kind of literature gives portraits of ideal leaders. The moral character traits of the protagonist are underlined by the author, often for the purpose of imitation. Matthean scholars have studied the gospel from a literary perspective for decades and are increasingly investigating parallels to other ancient biographies. However, few studies have deeply examined the moral character traits of Jesus in Matthew's presentation, and none have analyzed the gospel in relation to leadership ideals in other biographies. Thomas Hägg, who affirms the biographical character of the four gospels, points out: "Yet comparatively little seems to have been written from a literary point of view to define by what means of characterization these four portraits emerge, and what the main characteristics are of each of them."⁵ He also notices that in character studies within the NT, "the general tendency seems to be to shun the figure(s) of Jesus himself."⁶

Matthean scholars have rightly paid attention to questions about the identity of Jesus, since that is an important part of the story. But in order to do justice to the biographical portrait, scholars also need to pay attention to the virtues of Jesus. To put it differently, the Christology of Matthew concerns not only theological aspects relating to the identity and position of Jesus, but also ethical aspects relating to his

³ The Greek text of the New Testament is taken from *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). Unless stated, all Greek text translations are my own.

⁴ When I use the term "Matthew," I refer to the text and not to an author.

⁵ Thomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 180.

⁶ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 180.

character. Though some aspects of the presentation of Jesus' character have been highlighted by Matthean scholars, studies that focus on the "moral Christology" are surprisingly few.⁷ As will be argued later in this chapter, ethics is central in leadership, and the moral Christology is thus intertwined with the presentation of Jesus as leader.

While popular publications on Jesus as leader are plentiful,⁸ *Matthean scholars have not paid attention to the presentation of Jesus as leader, even if leadership language and motifs in the text and its biographical genre clearly give reason for such research. Neither have the ethical aspects of the Christology in Matthew been sufficiently examined.* The present study seeks to deal with these issues and make a contribution to this neglected area of research.

1.1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the present study is *to understand and clarify the biographical presentation of Jesus as a leader in the Gospel of Matthew*. Through a biographical-narrative reading of the gospel in comparison with other ancient biographies, which portray good leaders, I want to shed light on Matthew's portrait of Jesus as leader. The premise of this project is that the theme of leadership is important throughout the story, Jesus' role as leader is underlined, and Matthew thus resembles other biographical portraits of good leaders.

The aim of the present study is not to present "the key" to understand this writing or the main feature of its Christology, but to help the reader to see new aspects in the presentation of Jesus, by looking at it from a different angle. The gospel's portrait of Jesus is rich and complex, as Boris Repschinsky points out: "The apparent failure of Matthean scholarship ... to settle on one dominant title or category from Matthew's Christology reflects the extraordinary richness of the gospel's portrait of Jesus."⁹ By clarifying the presentation of Jesus as leader in the gospel, and his

⁷ I borrow this term from John B. Webster, "The Imitation of Christ," *TynBul* 37 (1986): 95–120 (118). The "moral Christology" in Matthew is noted by scholars. See e.g. Birger Gerhardsson, "The Christology of Matthew," in *Who do you say that I am? Essays on Christology*, ed. Mark A. Powell and David R. Bauer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 14–32 (26), who points out that Matthew's Christology has "*a conspicuous ethical dimension.*" Italics his.

⁸ See e.g. Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991); C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1998); Günter Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission: A Handbook on Leadership Principles Exemplified by Jesus Christ* (Atlanta: Authentic Publishing, 2002); Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: Nelson, 2005).

⁹ Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relation Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism*, FRLANT 189 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 334.

leadership role in the story, new light is shed on several passages in the gospel and the understanding of the text is increased.

Earlier studies have often focused on specific parts of Jesus' leadership in the Gospel, such as different leadership roles (e.g. king or teacher) or follower groups (disciples or crowds). This study seeks to integrate different aspects in order to clarify the overall portrait of Jesus as leader. A central part of the biographical portrait of Jesus as leader is his moral character traits. For that reason these traits, or virtues, come into the forefront in the study. In contrast to most Christological studies, which focus on the *identity* of Jesus—who he is—the present study focuses on the *character* of Jesus—how he is. Leadership is dependent upon other people, the followers. Included in the portrait of Jesus as leader is thus also his *relationship* to the people around him and his way of influencing and leading them.

The focus in the present study is not on how leadership was practiced in antiquity or what different leaders accomplished. Nor is it on the leadership structure or the organization in the communities or different positions of leadership. Instead, *the focus is on the ideals of the leader in the highest level of leadership* (a leader of a people/nation/state), regardless of formal position or title. By putting Matthew in the context of other ancient biographies that portray ideal leaders, clues about the presentation of Jesus' character and leadership in Matthew can be discovered. My aim is not to trace *the* ideal of leadership in antiquity or all ideals in this time, but to pay attention to common leadership ideals in ancient biographies. This study is thus *a comparative study, not with the purpose of clarifying literary dependence, but in order to cast light on the characterization in the Gospel of Matthew*, since these works are written in the same genre and thus, to some extent, have similar purposes. The comparative material gives suggestions and directions for what the reader of Matthew is expected to discover, and shows the distinctiveness of Matthew's portrait.¹⁰

The Gospel of Matthew is, nonetheless, the main focus of the study and three central questions are at the forefront: How is the theme of leadership present and developed in the story? What are the main moral character traits of Jesus in Matthew's portrait? Which main features in the relationship between Jesus and the people can be seen? In addition to these three main questions, there will be a discussion of whether Jesus is presented as a model to be imitated by other leaders.

The present study, with its focus on the presentation of Jesus as leader in Matthew, is beneficial in several ways. Firstly, the general understanding of Matthew's portrait of Jesus, concerning both his moral character and his relationship to his followers, is improved. Secondly, this perspective also clarifies the perception

¹⁰ Cf. James Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum: The Roman Discourse of Exemplarity and the Jewish and Christian Language of Leadership*, STAC 99 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 252, who concludes in his study about leadership discourses in the Roman context that "my project encourages the appreciation of the similarity of developing Christ-oriented leadership traditions to Roman approaches as well as the possibility of their moral peculiarity."

of the plot of the story and how Jesus' leadership and relationship to other leaders plays a part in this plot. Thirdly, the present study enriches our understanding of leadership ideals in antiquity generally, and in the Gospel of Matthew especially.

1.1.3 Previous research

Within Matthean research there are no studies that primarily deal with the overall presentation of Jesus as leader. Nonetheless, many studies clearly touch upon the subject, pave the way for such a study, and demonstrate its appropriateness. In this section I present some earlier studies which are related to the present study.

Christological studies

Several Christological studies relevant to the presentation of Jesus as leader have been produced by Matthean scholars. Necessarily, I here pay attention to the most relevant studies which includes leadership language, the moral character traits of Jesus, and his leadership roles.

With regard to leadership terminology, the shepherd metaphor has gained a lot of attention.¹¹ Young Chae has traced the tradition of the Davidic Shepherd imagery and how it is used in Matthew.¹² He concludes that the messianic activities of Jesus are authenticated in terms of the description of the eschatological Davidic shepherd in Ezekiel who comes to restore Israel.¹³

Terry Hedrick likewise has outlined the usage of the shepherd language in ancient literature and in Matthew.¹⁴ He proposes that Matthew is written after 70 CE, in a time of leadership crisis in Israel, with the purpose of presenting Jesus as the royal Shepherd-Messiah who provides leadership for the people of God. The main characteristics of the Shepherd-Messiah are righteousness, justice, and compassion.¹⁵

Joel Willits has examined the shepherd motif with the purpose to understand the meaning of the phrase "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6; 15:24) and to

¹¹ In addition to the more extensive studies presented below, see also Francis Martin, "The Image of Shepherd in the Gospel of Matthew," *ScEs* 27 (1975): 261–301, and John P. Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 698–708.

¹² Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew*, WUNT II/216 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

¹³ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 173.

¹⁴ Terry J. Hedrick, "Jesus as Shepherd in the Gospel of Matthew" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2007).

¹⁵ Hedrick, "Jesus as Shepherd," 297.

identify the group to which the mission of Jesus is directed.¹⁶ Willitts proposes that the use of the motif expresses a critique of the religio-political leadership of Israel and a promulgation of the hope for territorial restoration of the land of Israel under the leadership of Jesus, the Davidic King.¹⁷

A similar conclusion is reached by Wayne Baxter, who has studied the shepherd motif and its relationship to the social setting of the author.¹⁸ Baxter points out that the shepherd motif is “a significant sub-theme” which clearly plays a role in the Christology of Matthew.¹⁹ From his survey of the use of the shepherd motif, he concludes that Matthew is written in a Jewish setting and not in a Roman one. At the same time, Jesus is presented as a king with authority over the Roman Empire. According to Baxter, “the Evangelist uses the shepherd metaphor to offer a portrait of the ideal ruler.”²⁰ In contrast to the rulers of the Roman Empire, Jesus is presented as a humble king.²¹

These four studies helpfully outline the usage of the shepherd metaphor in other ancient literature and its importance for the presentation of Jesus in Matthew. But they do not analyze other leadership terms, the broader leadership theme in the story, or the characteristics of Jesus as leader. The identity of Jesus is at the forefront, rather than his character traits or leadership.

John A. Cabrido, however, moves in this direction with his detailed narrative study of the presentation of Jesus as Shepherd in Matthew.²² The purpose of the study is to clarify this presentation in the narrative itself and not from external sources.²³ Cabrido points out that the leaders of Israel are used as a foil in the presentation of Jesus and pays attention to the “obvious strategy” of the implied author to compare Jesus with other leaders in the story.²⁴ His conclusions about the traits of Jesus are that Jesus is presented as “compassionate, not militant; universal, not only for Israel; lowly, not overbearing; and most especially, suffering and drawing to communion.”²⁵ Cabrido suggests that “the portrayal of Jesus as Shepherd is deliberate and present in the entirety of the Gospel.”²⁶ He also points

¹⁶ Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of 'The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel'*, BZNW 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007).

¹⁷ Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King*, 225.

¹⁸ Wayne Baxter, *Israel's Only Shepherd: Matthew's Shepherd Motif and His Social Setting*, LNTS 457 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

¹⁹ Baxter, *Israel's Only Shepherd*, 163.

²⁰ Baxter, *Israel's Only Shepherd*, 192.

²¹ Baxter, *Israel's Only Shepherd*, 192–93.

²² John A. Cabrido, *The Portrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: A Narrative-Critical and Theological Study* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2012).

²³ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 13.

²⁴ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 442.

²⁵ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 14.

²⁶ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 14.

out that this theme is closely related to other themes and motives, such as “the presentation of Jesus as Leader and the following of his disciples.”²⁷

The study of Cabrido is commendable since it pays attention to the whole narrative in the presentation of Jesus as shepherd, and the contrast between Jesus and other leaders in the story. Cabrido is thus able to outline central aspects of the portrait of Jesus as leader. But the study is determined by the shepherd motif and it is only texts with references to this motif which are thoroughly examined. The consequence of this is that significant passages describing Jesus’ character and view of leadership, such as 11:25–30, 20:20–28, and 23:1–36, are not comprehensively analyzed. Likewise, aspects of Jesus’ teaching role are overlooked, since Cabrido differentiates Jesus’ ministry as shepherd from his ministry as teacher. Though Cabrido underlines the contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders, he does not thoroughly examine the character traits of these leaders. Cabrido does not deeply examine the followers of Jesus, the disciples and the crowds, how these groups are led by Jesus, and the function of these character groups for the portrayal of Jesus as leader. In addition, Cabrido pays no attention to the genre of Matthew or characterization in ancient biographies. Consequently, Cabrido’s study does not provide the whole biographical portrait of Jesus as leader in Matthew. Nonetheless, Cabrido helpfully outlines the shepherd motif, shows its importance in the narrative, and describes the presentation of Jesus as the true leader.

Matthean scholars have paid attention to different moral character traits in the characterization of Jesus, such as humility,²⁸ obedience,²⁹ and wisdom.³⁰ But no studies focus primarily on character traits and attempts to clarify the portrait as a whole. A study that most closely relates to this aim is Jerome Neyrey’s study, where he analyses the presentation of Jesus in light of ancient rhetoric instructions for encomium.³¹ Neyrey analyses the deeds of Jesus from the viewpoint of common virtues or “excellences” in ancient rhetoric, which he describes as “deeds of the soul,” and identifies justice, courage, prudence, self-control (to some extent), and magnanimity.³² Neyrey’s study is noteworthy since it observes main virtues in Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus. But the description of Matthew’s portrait is strongly

²⁷ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 476.

²⁸ Donald J. Versepunt, *The Rejection of the Humble Messianic King: A Study of the Composition of Matthew 11–12* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1986); Deirdre J. Good, *Jesus the Meek King* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999).

²⁹ Brandon D. Crowe, *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew*, BZNW 188 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

³⁰ See e.g. Jack M. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), and Frances T. Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology of Matthew* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997).

³¹ Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

³² Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 106–26.

directed by ancient rhetoric, and does not really pay attention to the idiosyncratic aspects of Matthew's Jesus. Neither does Neyrey observe the contrast between Jesus and other leaders in the story.

Matthean research has also clarified that ordinary leadership roles are attached to Jesus in Matthew's story. As seen above, scholars who have analyzed the shepherd motif have underlined Jesus' role as king. Sungho Choi has further examined the messianic kingship of Jesus and its background in the OT.³³ He highlights the kingship theme in this writing: "In Matthew's Gospel, the evangelist systematically presents Jesus primarily as the long-awaited messianic King from the house of David."³⁴ The leadership role of the king implies a leadership that is related to the people as a whole.

Scholars have even underlined the teaching role of Jesus. Samuel Byrskog has examined the didactic aspects of Jesus' ministry.³⁵ He points out that "[t]he characterization of Jesus as teacher is significantly introduced, amplified and closed in the narrative structure of Matthew."³⁶ Likewise, John Yieh has clarified the importance of the teaching role of Jesus in the story.³⁷ He concludes that Jesus is "remarkable presented as the One Teacher *par excellence*."³⁸ This leadership role is primarily related to the twelve disciples of Jesus, but also affects a wider circle of people.³⁹

In addition, some scholars have also accentuated the prophetic role of Jesus. David Turner has examined the motif of rejection of prophets in Jewish literature and the prophetic themes in Matthew. He points out that Jesus is presented as the climactic prophet of Israel.⁴⁰ The prophet addresses the nation as a whole by confronting the leadership.⁴¹ This leadership role is thus also related to the whole people. Matthean scholars have thus elaborated on different leadership roles, but no

³³ Sungho Choi, *The Messianic Kingship of Jesus: A Study of Christology and Redemptive History in Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Royal-Enthronement Psalms* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

³⁴ Choi, *Messianic Kingship of Jesus*, 37.

³⁵ Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*, ConBNT 24 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994).

³⁶ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 234.

³⁷ John Y.-H. Yieh, *One Teacher: Jesus' Teaching Role in Matthew's Gospel Report*, BZNW 124 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004).

³⁸ Yieh, *One Teacher*, 71. Italics his.

³⁹ Cf. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 222.

⁴⁰ David L. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015). See also Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction*, JSNTSS 68 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 148–61.

⁴¹ Cf. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 3.

studies have put together these roles and integrated them in an overall portrait of Jesus as leader.

Leaders and followers

When Matthean scholars have studied “leaders” in Matthew, this study has often been related to “religious” leaders other than Jesus.⁴² Sjef van Tilborg has examined the religious leaders in Matthew from a redaction-critical perspective.⁴³ He suggests that despite their differences, the author “looks upon the representatives of Israel as a homogeneous group.”⁴⁴ In the characterization of the religious leaders, Tilborg proposes that hypocrisy and evilness are the most underlined character traits. He also suggests that the religious leaders are compared with both the disciples and the crowds.⁴⁵ They are portrayed by the author as “the antithesis of the disciple of Jesus.”⁴⁶

The religious leaders have been observed by Mark A. Powell from a literary perspective.⁴⁷ He states that the evaluative point of view of the religious leaders, who can be treated as a single character, is different from God’s and thus they are never true. What they believe, think, say, and do is wrong. They can be described as “flat” characters, with a few predictable character traits. The basic character trait is evilness, which is the root character trait and the basis for their conflict with Jesus. Powell also points out that central to the storyline of the religious leaders is the element of conflict. They engage in conflict with Jesus especially, but also with the disciples of Jesus and the crowds. The conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus is mainly about the question of divine authority.⁴⁸

Greg A. Camp has also examined the religious leaders in Matthew and their conflict with Jesus, especially in Matt 23.⁴⁹ He uses a multi-methodological approach which makes use of both narrative criticism and biographical comparisons, like the present study. Unlike Tilborg and Powell, Camp points out that the religious leaders are contrasted with Jesus as leader. Camp suggests that “[t]hroughout the gospel Jesus’ leadership is contrasted with that of the leaders of

⁴² For an analysis of political leaders in Matthew, see Dorothy J. Weaver, “Power and Powerlessness: Matthew’s Use of Irony in the Portrayal of Political Leaders,” in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark A. Powell, SBLSymS 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 179–96.

⁴³ Sjef van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

⁴⁴ Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 1.

⁴⁵ Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 7.

⁴⁶ Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 26.

⁴⁷ Mark A. Powell, “The Religious Leaders in Matthew: A Literary-Critical Approach” (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1988).

⁴⁸ Powell, “Religious Leaders,” 202.

⁴⁹ Greg A. Camp, “Woe to you Hypocrites!: Law and Leaders in the Gospel of Matthew” (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2002).

Israel.”⁵⁰ In his conclusion, Camp points out: “Jesus is characterized, in part, in contrast to his opponents. The picture of Jesus emerges in the framework of a biography, which by its nature presents his character and not merely his teaching. He is the teacher and model of that teaching.”⁵¹ These studies clearly show a consequent negative portrayal of the religious leaders. Camp rightly notices the function of the characterization of the religious leaders for the biographical portrayal of Jesus, and the contrast between these leaders and the leadership of Jesus. But while the character traits of the religious leaders have been analyzed and outlined by Matthean scholars, this has not been the case with the traits of Jesus.

The followers of Jesus have also been analyzed by Matthean scholars. Michael Wilkins has thoroughly examined the term “disciple” in the ancient world and in the Gospel of Matthew.⁵² He concludes that μαθητής (and the Hebrew equivalent תלמיד) “were popular terms at the time of Jesus to designate a follower who was vitally committed to a teacher/leader and/or movement.”⁵³ In regard to Matthew, Wilkins points out: “In his story, Matthew consistently has only a small group of disciples around Jesus.”⁵⁴ Since the author also uses the terms μανθάνειν (9:13, 11:29, 24:32) and μαθητεύειν (13:52, 27:57, 28:19) it is made clear that “learning” is an important part of being a μαθητής of Jesus in Matthew’s story.⁵⁵ For the disciples, Jesus is the “supreme teacher and leader (23:7–10).”⁵⁶

J. R. C. Cousland has made a detailed investigation of the crowds in Matthew.⁵⁷ He suggests that the crowds function like a stylized literary character in the story, which is seen in repeated behavior and phraseology.⁵⁸ They have the function of a foil character, designed by the author to put focus on the main character.⁵⁹ Cousland notices that the crowds’ following (ἀκολουθεῖν) of Jesus, is “one of their most distinctive traits.”⁶⁰ With one exception, Jesus is always the object of the verb ἀκολουθεῖν. Cousland thus points out: “In Matthew, Jesus leads and all other follow.”⁶¹ The crowds are not following Jesus as disciples. Instead their following is related to the shepherd imagery, and the ability of Jesus to meet their needs: “The

⁵⁰ Camp, “Woe to you,” 10 n. 1.

⁵¹ Camp, “Woe to you,” 245.

⁵² Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

⁵³ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 221.

⁵⁴ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 228.

⁵⁵ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 159.

⁵⁶ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 221.

⁵⁷ J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

⁵⁸ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 43.

⁵⁹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 45.

⁶⁰ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 145.

⁶¹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 146.

crowds instinctively follow him because he, as their leader, can provide what their own leaders cannot. As shepherd to the sheep of Israel, he provides them with rest and fulfillment of their needs.”⁶² Cousland thus describes their relationship to Jesus as subjects to a king, rather than disciples to a master.⁶³ These studies helpfully describe the followers of Jesus in Matthew’s story and the presentation of Jesus as leader. But no studies integrate these two follower groups in order to clarify the overall presentation of Jesus as leader.

Leadership in “the Matthean church”

Modern leadership theories have been used by some Matthean scholars with a methodological approach that tries to reconstruct the community of the author, “the Matthean church.” Anthony J. Saldarini makes use of social-scientific theories about legitimation in his reconstruction of the setting of Matthew.⁶⁴ He proposes that “the author of Matthew seeks specifically to delegitimize rival Jewish leaders and legitimate himself and his group as the true leaders of Israel.”⁶⁵

Dennis C. Duling discusses different leadership roles in the “Matthean group” by making use of models from the social sciences.⁶⁶ He concludes that there is a tension between a limited egalitarian ideology and a hierarchical structure in the group.⁶⁷ A similar conclusion is made by Richard S. Ascough in his study of the development of the Matthean group.⁶⁸ He makes use of both social-scientific models and comparisons with voluntary associations in antiquity. Ascough proposes that Jesus is not the human founder of the community, but rather its divine patron. The human founder of the community is Peter.⁶⁹

Though these studies deal with questions about leadership, they are not very helpful for the understanding of Jesus as leader since they seek to reconstruct a hypothetical community that the author addresses. The biographical genre of Matthew, however, makes such an enterprise inappropriate. The use of this genre

⁶² Cousland, *The Crowds*, 168. Cf. p. 170: “The ‘following’ motif ... focusses attention on Jesus as the shepherd of the flock. The following of the crowds distinguishes Jesus as (to employ Johannine language) a good shepherd.”

⁶³ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 171.

⁶⁴ Anthony J. Saldarini, “Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 659–80.

⁶⁵ Saldarini, “Delegitimation of Leaders,” 661.

⁶⁶ Dennis C. Duling, “‘Egalitarian’ Ideology, Leadership, and Factional Conflict within the Matthean Group,” *BTB* 27 (1997): 124–37.

⁶⁷ See also Dennis C. Duling, “The Matthean Brotherhood and Marginal Scribal Leadership,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament and its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 124–37, where he proposes that the Matthean group is led by scribes.

⁶⁸ Richard S. Ascough, “Matthew and Community Formation,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson, S.J.*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 96–126 (122).

⁶⁹ Ascough, “Matthew and Community Formation,” 104–05.

makes it more plausible to understand the target audience in a wide sense rather than a specific community.⁷⁰ It also implies that the content of the text relates to the past and the life of Jesus, rather than the time of the author and his church.⁷¹ The natural approach, in light of other ancient biographies, is thus to strive for an understanding of the portrayal of the protagonist and the story world of the text.⁷²

The leadership of Jesus

Two studies on Matthew's presentation of Jesus have been made from a leadership theoretical perspective by scholars from the discipline of organizational leadership. The starting point of both studies is that leaders of today can learn from the leadership of Jesus. Both dissertations make use of Verner Robbins' socio-rhetorical methodology.

Frank A. Wiggin has examined the conflicts around Jesus with help of modern conflict theory.⁷³ Wiggin proposes that Jesus is not a passive and innocent person, but the one who most often initiates conflicts, and one who frequently makes comments in a way that escalates the conflict.⁷⁴ Sometimes Jesus intensifies the conflict even when he himself has not initiated it.⁷⁵ According to Wiggin, "Jesus was unafraid to stimulate conflict. He never avoided it, and always controlled it on his terms—even—when the statements that would stir conflicts were severe."⁷⁶ Wiggin's study gives useful information about the relationships of Jesus in

⁷⁰ See Richard A. Burridge, "Who writes, why and for whom?," in *The Written Gospel*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 99–115, and Justin M. Smith, *Why βίος? On the Relationship Between Gospel Genre and Implied Audience*, LNTS 518 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). Smith concludes that "the evangelists chose the genre of biography because it was the genre that was best suited to present the words and deeds of Jesus to the largest possible audience. This potential audience would include both a primary (Christian) audience and a broad secondary audience, including any who became interested in the person and work of Jesus" (p. 191). The secondary audience is implied in the text by the "all nations" motif (e.g. Matt 24:14, 28:19–20). Cf. Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Dept of Sin: The Economy of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel*, BZNW 196 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 19–22, also points out that the widespread usage of Matthew in early Christianity suggests a wide audience.

⁷¹ Cf. Eugene E. Lemcio, *The Past of Jesus in the Gospels*, SNTSMS 68 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). One of the conclusions Lemcio draws is that "because of the narrative's remoteness, it cannot function principally as a literary foil for the conflicts between opposing points of view in the gospel writers' congregations." See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 275–76.

⁷² See further pp. 41–42.

⁷³ Frank A. Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons of Jesus' Use of Conflict in the Gospel of Matthew" (PhD diss., Regent University, 2006).

⁷⁴ Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 280–82.

⁷⁵ Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 129, 186.

⁷⁶ Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 242.

Matthew's story and how Jesus engages in conflict. But since it mainly draws on conflict theories, from organizational settings, it is not very helpful for the understanding of the overall presentation of Jesus as leader in an ancient biography.

In another study, Manuel A. Zarate has analyzed Matt 4:17–5:12, making use of prominent leadership theories such as transformational, transactional, charismatic, and servant leadership.⁷⁷ Zarate suggests that Jesus' initiative in calling disciples is an intentional selection of persons who are going to be future leaders in his community.⁷⁸ The group of disciples forms an inner circle of the people around Jesus who are recruited and trained by him.⁷⁹ According to Zarate, Jesus is presented as a leader who challenges the present culture: "Jesus created a community that became countercultural with a different set of beliefs and behavior."⁸⁰ Zarate concludes that features of positive charismatic, transformational, and servant leadership are found in the text, but not transactional or negative charismatic leadership.⁸¹ He also summarizes that "[t]he Matthean author presents Jesus as a great thinker and leader, a strategist who had a specific plan in his mind and executed it to perfection."⁸² Zarate points out that more research needs to be done on Greek, Roman, and Jewish leadership approaches.⁸³

Since Zarate's study draws on several mainline leadership theories, it gives useful information about the leadership of Jesus in Matthew. But the limited scope of the analyzed material, Matt 4:17–5:12, raises doubts about the ability to make substantiated conclusions. The use of modern leadership theories can be a fruitful way to provide understanding of Jesus' leadership and his way of influencing his followers. This approach, however, is not the primary way to reach understanding of Matthew's overall presentation of Jesus as leader. In order to do that, one needs to examine the text as a whole, its language, genre, and its relationship to leadership ideals in the ancient world.

The contribution of the present study

The survey above has shown the need for a study that seeks to clarify the overall presentation of Jesus as leader in the Gospel of Matthew. Though other studies have shown the appropriateness of an examination of the presentation of Jesus as leader in Matthew, scholars have not been interested in this angle. The benefit of the present biographical-narrative study is a comprehensive and integrative study,

⁷⁷ Manuel A. Zarate, "The Leadership Approach of Jesus in Matthew 4 and 5" (PhD diss., Regent University, 2009).

⁷⁸ Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 7, 92.

⁷⁹ Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 105–06.

⁸⁰ Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 142.

⁸¹ Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 153.

⁸² Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 162.

⁸³ Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 163.

which pays attention to the theme of leadership throughout the story, focusing on leadership terminology, the moral character traits of Jesus, and the features of the relationship between Jesus and the people: disciples, crowds, and other leaders. At the same time, the present study seeks to understand the presentation of Jesus in relation to the biographical genre and the ideals present in similar kind of texts. Through an analysis of other portraits of good leaders, the features of Matthew's biographical portrait of Jesus are explored. The text as a whole is examined in order to clarify the overall presentation of Jesus as leader.

Three main questions direct the present study. *Firstly, how does the theme of leadership develop throughout the story?* The theme of leadership is detected through analyses of leadership terminology, images, and the development of the plot of the story. *Secondly, what are the main moral character traits of Jesus?* The genre of ancient biography suggests a focus on the moral qualities and virtues of the protagonist, which consequently is a main focus in the present study.⁸⁴ An important way to understand these character traits is to contrast Jesus with other leaders in the story. *Thirdly, what are the main features of the relationship between Jesus and the people?* Through an examination of Jesus' leadership roles and his behavior towards the people (and their attitude to him), central aspects of his leadership and influence are recognized. With these three main questions, the present study integrates different aspects of the presentation of Jesus as leader and clarifies his biographical portrait. In addition, the study also addresses the question of whether, and to which extent, Matthew's Jesus is presented as a model for other leaders.

1.2 Material and method

In order to understand and clarify how Jesus is presented as a leader in the Gospel of Matthew, a biographical-narrative approach will be used.⁸⁵ An appropriate method is related not only to the research questions, but also to the material, the genre, and characteristics of the text. After a short introduction to Matthew and its setting, the biographical genre and the narrative form of the text will thus be described and the related implications of the choice of method outlined. The focus of the biographical-narrative method is the moral character traits of the protagonist and his relationships to other characters. The methodological section also includes

⁸⁴ See 1.2.4.

⁸⁵ The expression "biographical-narrative" is taken from Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 304. Burridge does not outline how this approach is to be used in a more detailed way in the reading of a gospel, but in his later work, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), he makes a kind of redaction-critical interpretation of the gospels. In my study "biographical-narrative" refers to a combination of genre conventions and narrative criticism.

a discussion about how conclusions concerning the characterization of Jesus are to be drawn in the present study. Finally, the reasons for the chosen comparative material are presented.

1.2.1 Matthew, Judaism, and Hellenism

The title of first book of the NT, often called “the Gospel of Matthew,” in the oldest manuscripts is KATA MAΘΘΑΙΟΝ (“According to Matthew”).⁸⁶ Detailed conclusions about the author, the date, and the place of composition are difficult to reach. The early Christian tradition relates the text to Matthew, one of the apostles, but the information is unclear and the relationship between the present Greek text and the apostle is uncertain.⁸⁷ This also leads to uncertainty about the date of composition. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that Matthew was composed in the second half of the first century, probably some time between 60–90 CE.⁸⁸ Likewise, the place of composition of the text is unknown. Early Christian tradition seems to locate the text to Israel/Palestine, but many scholars propose that it was written in Antioch in Syria.⁸⁹ Some scholars have proposed a gentile origin of the text, based upon its theology and presentation of Jewish groups, but the vocabulary, style, and knowledge of the OT (in both Hebrew and Greek versions) points rather to a Jewish origin.⁹⁰

The Jewish setting of Matthew, however, is also, to some degree, a Hellenistic setting. For that reason, it is also part of the Greek culture. In his influential work, Martin Hengel has showed that Israel/Palestine in the time of the NT was more or

⁸⁶ These manuscripts are \aleph and B. In D and W the longer title, *εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ματθαίου/Μαθθαίου*, is found.

⁸⁷ See R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 52–66, for a helpful presentation of the earliest tradition about the text. See also Robert S. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions of the Gospel of Matthew: Background and Rhetoric*, WUNT 414 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 43–50. As stated above, when I use the term “Matthew” I refer to the text, not to the author. This designation is, nonetheless, appropriate since the early church tradition makes it probable that the apostle played some kind of role in the creation of the text, even if it cannot be proved.

⁸⁸ See France, *Matthew*, 82–91, and Donald A. Hagner, “Determining the Date of Matthew,” in *Jesus, Matthew’s Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willits, and Richard A. Burridge, LNTS 435 (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 76–92, who outline reasons for both an early date and a late date.

⁸⁹ See France, *Matthew*, 91–95, who argues that a Palestine setting is quite possible, and Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 21, who argues for a Syrian setting. See also Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 64–71, for a survey of different suggestions.

⁹⁰ See Carter, *Matthew*, 17–21. Carter concludes: “The author was clearly familiar with Jewish traditions and practices” (p. 21). See also France, *Matthew*, 102–08.

less Hellenized.⁹¹ The books of the NT is consequently a creative combination of both Jewish and Hellenistic traditions and thus “a third something,” to use the expression of David Aune.⁹² He suggests that “every book of the New Testament reflects to varying degrees an accommodation between Jewish religious and ethical values and traditions and Hellenistic forms of linguistic, literary, rhetorical, and conceptual expression.”⁹³ The Gospel of Matthew should thus be understood as a text that communicates in both the Jewish and the Greek world.

Matthew is often presented as “the Jewish gospel,” but the Hellenistic influence has been confirmed in a recent study by Robert Kinney.⁹⁴ Kinney points out that Matthean scholarship in general has neglected the Hellenistic dimensions of the text, though a consensus exists among NT scholars, about the Hellenistic penetration in Judaism: “Almost no attention is given to the *Hellenistic* part of *Hellenistic Judaism*.”⁹⁵ Even if his proposal is somewhat overstated, he rightly underlines that the Hellenistic setting of Matthew makes a wide range of research areas appropriate:

Hellenistic qualities could be identified in numerous aspects of Matthew’s Gospel: literary, linguistic, and grammatical characteristics; social and cultural practices; historical and geographical evidence; theological, philosophical, and religious ideas—all these could be analyzed in terms of possible Hellenistic resonance—whether conscious or unconscious on the part of Matthew.⁹⁶

The present study examines both literary and ideological aspects of Hellenism in order to understand and clarify how Matthew presents Jesus as leader. Both aspects relate to the biographical genre of the text.

⁹¹ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol 1, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1974). Cf. Dale C. Allison Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 144, who points out that “we now know that, by the first century, all of Judaism had been to some extent Hellenized.”

⁹² David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment*, LEC 8 (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1988), 12.

⁹³ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 12. Cf. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 98–99, and Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 156.

⁹⁴ See Robert S. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions of the Gospel of Matthew: Background and Rhetoric*, WUNT 414 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). He proposes that the language, sources, provenance, and literary genre of Matthew “suggests a text that is absolutely saturated with Hellenism and an author or editor who was likely the recipient of a Greek education” (p. 2). Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 4, who proposes that the author was trained in basic rhetoric skills in the *progymnasmata*.

⁹⁵ Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 41.

⁹⁶ Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 78–79.

1.2.2 The biographical genre of Matthew

Genre and its importance

The basic rule of the interpretation of a text is to read the text with attention to its literary context. Thus, a document should be located among other similar kinds of literature.⁹⁷ Graham Stanton rightly points out that different writings require different interpretation, and that “[t]he first step in the interpretation of any writing, whether ancient or modern, is to establish its literary genre.”⁹⁸ The importance of genre is not a new insight, but was discussed by Aristotle and other authors in antiquity.⁹⁹

What then is a literary genre? Alastair Fowler clarifies that genre can hardly be understood as classification by identifying necessary elements, since these elements are difficult to identify. Rather, genre is better understood by the concept of “family resemblance”: “Representatives of a genre may then be regarded as making up a family whose septs and individual members are related in various ways, without necessarily having any single feature shared in common by all.”¹⁰⁰ Genre thus includes different kinds of features, which embrace both form and content, that together shape the “family resemblance” of this kind of literature.¹⁰¹ In his influential study of the genre of the gospels, Richard Burridge underlines that genre is not to be understood as something fixed or static. Since new works are written and different features are grouped in new ways, genres are flexible and subject to developments.¹⁰²

The genre plays an important role in the communication between author and reader. It can be understood as a “contract” between the author, who shows that some conventions are to be followed, and the reader, who pays attentions to these conventions.¹⁰³ Burridge helpfully explains that genre is “a social construct that functions as an agreement between authors and readers to provide a conventional set of expectations to guide both the composition of a text and its later inter-

⁹⁷ Charles H. Talbert, “Once Again: Gospel Genre,” *Semeia* 43 (1988): 53–73 (53).

⁹⁸ Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 59. Cf. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 51; Joel B. Green, “Narrative Criticism,” in *Methods for Luke*, ed. Joel B. Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 74–112 (84).

⁹⁹ See Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 26–27, for examples.

¹⁰⁰ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 41.

¹⁰¹ For a similar understanding of genre as “family resemblance,” see Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 41–42, who also points out that genre is constituted by the combination of several different features, concerning both form and content. A literary work does not need to have every single feature of the genre, but needs enough of them so the reader can recognize the genre.

¹⁰² Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 43. See also Smith, *Why βίλος?*, 27.

¹⁰³ Heather Dubrow, *Genre*, CI 42 (London: Methuen, 1982), 31.

pretation.”¹⁰⁴ A genre is thus a kind of social convention which gives meaning to the text unit.¹⁰⁵ Through the identification of genre, and the “contract” between the author and the reader, some basic insights into the intentions and purposes of the author are given. The knowledge of the intentions of the author is generally restricted to the information given in the text and relates primarily to its genre.¹⁰⁶

Consequently, the conclusions regarding genre are important in order to understand the literary work in an appropriate way, according to the main purposes of the author. The recognition of genre does not only facilitate interpretation, it also makes comparisons possible, as Camp points out: “One of the values of considering genre as an important element in the reading process is to provide a pool of literature for comparative analysis.”¹⁰⁷

Biographies in antiquity

The generic term “biography” is first mentioned in the fifth century CE. The Greek writers, beginning in the Hellenistic age, used the word βίος (“life”) as a designation of writings that focus on the life of one person. Since this literary genre differs from modern biographies, it is important to stress that the literature here discussed is *ancient* biographies, *bioi*.¹⁰⁸ Plutarch shows awareness of genre and explicitly states in his *Alexander* that he writes a *bios*: “For it is not histories (ἱστορίας) that I write, but lives (βίους)” (1.2). But not all authors show an awareness of *bios* as a separate genre distinct from others, and practice differs from theory.¹⁰⁹ In addition, genres were mixed in the ancient world and the boundaries between different genres were not clear; overlaps were common.¹¹⁰ Biographical writing is closely related to both historical writing and encomiastic literature.¹¹¹ The genre of ancient biography was thus used both to present different kinds of authoritative persons as well as to present

¹⁰⁴ Burridge, “Gospel Genre and Audiences,” 131. In *What are the Gospels?*, 32–33, he underlines that genre should be understood as “conventions” and “expectations,” rather than mere descriptive classifications or legalistic prescriptions. See also Smith, *Why βίος?*, 62.

¹⁰⁵ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 13. Cf. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 49–50. “Intention” should not be understood as psychological speculations of the thoughts and feelings of the author, but rather “adverbially,” as Anthony C. Thieselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 560, points out: “to write with an intention is to write in a way that is directed towards a goal.”

¹⁰⁷ Camp, “Woe to you,” 62.

¹⁰⁸ See Aune, *Literary Environment*, 27–28, for a discussion about differences.

¹⁰⁹ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 60–62. See also Smith, *Why βίος?*, 23.

¹¹⁰ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 56–57.

¹¹¹ See Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst*, TANZ 22 (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1997), 237: “Die Biographie erlaubte sowohl die Verwendung historiographischen Materials und dort zum Ausdruck kommender Darstellungs-Techniken als auch die Verwendung enkomiasischer Erzählweisen, ohne deshalb gleich mit dem einen oder anderen bis zur Verwechslung identisch zu sein!”

authoritative values, through the presentation of the protagonist.¹¹² Ancient biographies are closely related, not only to historiography and rhetoric, but also to moral philosophy. Burridge concludes: “Ancient βίος was a flexible genre having strong relationships with history, encomium and rhetoric, moral philosophy and the concern for character.”¹¹³

What kind of literature, then, is an ancient biography, a *bios*? The character of literary genres makes them less suitable for pregnant definitions.¹¹⁴ It should also be noted that the genre of ancient biography was quite varied and that the author was selective in the telling of the protagonist’s life.¹¹⁵ Hägg’s basic definition, as “a literary text of book length telling the life story of an historical individual from cradle to grave (or a substantial part of it),” is thus appropriate.¹¹⁶ This definition points to the fundamental character of an ancient biography as a literary work that *focuses on the life of one individual*. An ancient biography narrates the career of one famous person and is often framed by the origins and youth, as well as death and significance of the protagonist.¹¹⁷ An important feature in the biography is the focus on the character, or essence of the person.¹¹⁸

The subjects of ancient biographies are often different kinds of leaders. Clyde W. Votaw distinguishes between two categories of biographies, namely political leaders (generals and statesmen) and intellectual leaders (philosophers and teachers).¹¹⁹ While this categorization is clarifying in general, there is sometimes an overlap between political and philosophical/religious roles in antiquity, which

¹¹² Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 211–16.

¹¹³ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 67. He also points out that ancient biographies are closely related to entertaining stories/novels and political and philosophical teaching and polemic. See p. 64 for a helpful illustration.

¹¹⁴ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 40.

¹¹⁵ Talbert, “Gospel Genre,” 56.

¹¹⁶ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, ix. Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 11, defines biography as “[a]n account of the life of a man from birth to death.” Cf. Aune, *Literary Environment*, 29; Simon Swain, “Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire,” in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 1–37 (1–2). For a different view, see Albrecht Dihle, “The Gospels and Greek Biography,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 361–86 (371–78), who defines Greek biographies in a much more narrowing way according to the moral-philosophical theory of Plutarch.

¹¹⁷ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 27. Cf. David E. Aune, “Greco-Roman Biography,” in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. David E. Aune (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 107–26 (107): “Greco-Roman biography is a type of independent literary composition which typically focused on the character, achievements and lasting significance of a memorable and exemplary individual from birth to death, emphasizing his public career.”

¹¹⁸ Talbert, “Gospel Genre,” 55, 61.

¹¹⁹ Clyde W. Votaw, “The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies,” *AJT* 19 (1915): 45–73 (52).

implies that these two kinds of leaders should not be understood as totally separate groups.¹²⁰ From its beginning, ancient biography was concerned with the presentation of a ruler.¹²¹ Possibly the genre rose, through Persian influence, by those who were in the service of the Persian king.¹²² The origins of the genre are also related to the honouring of a dead person in memorial speech.¹²³

Greco-Roman biographies were mainly written by and for the educated upper classes of the society and thus reflect the values of those social classes.¹²⁴ At the same time, it should be recognized that there are ancient biographies which originate from different social levels.¹²⁵ Justin Smith points out: “Contemporary biographies were often written by friends, students or relatives as a way of presenting an authoritative (and positive) memory of the subject. The literary memory was intended to be read widely and to stand as an example for generations to come.”¹²⁶

The genre of Matthew

The genre of the “gospels” in the NT has been discussed thoroughly over the last decades and is still being discussed. Though there is no consensus among scholars, comprehensive studies by Burridge, Frickenschmidt, and Hägg have convincingly shown the close relationship between the gospels in the New Testament and ancient biographies.¹²⁷ Smith seems right when he points out that “the scholarly consensus has begun to turn toward the acceptance of Graeco-Roman biography as the genre of the canonical gospels.”¹²⁸ Because of the complexity of the ancient biographical

¹²⁰ See 2.3.2 and 2.4.2 and the biographical presentation of both Moses and Numa as “philosopher-kings.”

¹²¹ Klaus Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,” *ANRW* 25.2:1231–45 (1242).

¹²² Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, 35–36. See also Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 67.

¹²³ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, “Plutarch as Biographer,” in *Essays on Plutarch’s Lives*, ed. Barbara Scardigli (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 47–74 (62).

¹²⁴ David E. Aune, “Genre Theory and the Genre-function of Mark and Matthew,” in *Mark and Matthew I. Comparative Readings: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in their First-Century Settings*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson, WUNT 271 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 145–75 (167).

¹²⁵ Burridge, “Gospel Genre and Audiences,” 138.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Why βίος?*, 211.

¹²⁷ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*; Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*; Hägg, *Art of Biography*. See also Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen,” *ANRW* 25.2:1231–45. For a different view, see Dihle, “The Gospels and Greek Biography,” who rejects the view of the gospels as Greek biographies, since he defines Greek biographies according to the moral-philosophical theory of Plutarch. Nonetheless, he admits that “a biographical framework unquestionably determines their literary form and biographical interest shapes the development of their content” (p. 383).

¹²⁸ Smith, *Why βίος?*, 20. Similarly, Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 32, states that “Gospel critics have almost reached a consensus that the Gospels, in terms of genre, belong or correspond to the Greco-Roman

genre, with its many subtypes, several scholars understand the gospels as a subgenre of ancient biography. Aune, for example, suggests that the canonical gospels should be classified as “a distinctive type of ancient biography combining (to oversimplify slightly) Hellenistic form and function with Jewish content.”¹²⁹

Among the four gospels in the NT, Matthew and Luke most clearly resemble the genre of ancient biography, since they provide genealogies and narrate the birth of Jesus in the beginning and extend the material in the end.¹³⁰ The basic structure of a life, the presentation of an individual “from cradle to grave,” is seen in the Gospel of Matthew.¹³¹ Though there is no consensus, several Matthean scholars understand the gospel as a kind of ancient biography.¹³² But it should also be noted that the author is clearly influenced by Jewish history writing. Craig Keener rightly states that “while adapting the genre of the hellenistic *bios*, or ‘life,’ the Gospel writers developed a style steeped in Old Testament historiography.”¹³³ Also the special

biography or βίος.” See further Steve Walton, “What are the Gospels? Richard Burridge’s Impact on Scholarly Understanding of the Genre of the Gospels,” *CurBR* 14 (2015): 81–93.

¹²⁹ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 22.

¹³⁰ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 65. See also Graham Stanton, “Matthew: BIBAΘΣ, EYATTEAION, OR BIOΣ?” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, vol. 2, ed. Frans van Segbroeck et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1187–1201 (1200); Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 241.

¹³¹ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 150. See also pp. 165–66. Commenting on the content of Matt 1–2, Hägg points out: “Anyone reading this at the beginning of a book, whether today or in the first century AD, would form the expectation that the book was going to tell the life story of this man Jesus” (p. 148).

¹³² Cf. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 72–73: “It seems that several, even most, modern commentators on Matthew have agreed with Burridge’s premise in that it properly belongs to the genre of Greco–Roman βίος.” For scholars who accept the view of the gospel as an ancient biography, see e.g. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2 vols., WBC 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 1: lvii; Carter, *Matthew*, 40–42; David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literal and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 6; Graham Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 192; Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 143; Ben Witherington III, *Matthew*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2006), 12. Cf. Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus*, 3rd ed., FRLANT 82 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 184; Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew*, PC, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), 12–13; Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 2, 11–12, 91. For a different view, see e.g. Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, trans. Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 30, 77.

¹³³ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 22. For a similar view, see also Detlev Dormeyer, “Mt 1,1 als Überschrift zur Gattung und Christologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums,” in *The Four Gospels: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, vol. 2, ed. Frans van Segbroeck et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1361–83 (1367); Loveday Alexander, “What is a gospel?” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13–33 (29). Cf. Swain, “Biography and Biographic,” 27.

identity of the protagonist makes the gospels distinctive in relation to other ancient biographies.¹³⁴

Even if there is a widespread opinion that the gospels resemble the genre of ancient biography, there is no consensus on which type of ancient biography has the closest kinship with the gospels. This is also true in the case of Matthew. Philip Shuler claims that the gospels are best understood as epideictic literature and proposes that they are examples of the encomium. One reason for this view is the lack of neutrality in the writings.¹³⁵ Charles Talbert also suggests that Matthew is an encomiastic biography, written with the purpose of both praising and defending its hero.¹³⁶ It is, however, misleading to describe Matthew as an encomium, since a biography often has several purposes, and praising the protagonist is only one of them. The encomiastic aspects are, furthermore, not central in Matthew.¹³⁷ Scot McKnight, who also discusses what kind of biography Matthew is, underlines the evangelistic purpose of Matthew and suggests that it is a “*gospelling βίος about Jesus, who is Messiah and Lord and Saviour*.”¹³⁸ Even if this proposal points to a central purpose and thus is correct, it also reduces Matthew to only one purpose.¹³⁹

A more helpful description is given by Klaus Berger, who proposes that Matthew (and Luke) resembles biographies of kings/rulers, which is seen in the presentation

¹³⁴ See Aune, “Greco-Roman Biography,” 122, who points out that the gospels are unique in their content, the unique life of Jesus Christ, but “fully comparable” to Greco-Roman biography in their form and function, and Witherington, *Matthew*, 12. Cf. Alicia D. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus: A Rhetorical Analysis on the Fourth Gospel’s use of Scripture in its Presentation of Jesus*, LSNT 458 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 61.

¹³⁵ Philip L. Shuler, “Philo’s Moses and Matthew’s Jesus: A Comparative Study in Ancient Literature,” *SPhiloA* 2 (1990): 86–103 (87).

¹³⁶ Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 6. According to Talbert, Matthew is “a biographical encomium (praise) of the ideal king as the non-Jewish world saw him. A Jewish auditor would have heard Matthew’s narrative in the same way but in terms of the ideal king of Jewish tradition. The First Gospel communicates with both Jewish and gentile audiences” (p. 69). Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 11–12.

¹³⁷ Cf. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 180–81, and his discussion of Tacitus’ *Agricola*. With regard to the synoptic gospels Burridge recognizes, “to a certain extent,” an encomiastic purpose, but points out that “the attitude of the gospels to both subject and reader has little of the atmosphere of encomium” (p. 208). Matthew is also concerned with history, as pointed out by Samuel Byrskog, “Performing the Past: Gospel Genre and Identity Formation in the Context of Ancient History Writing,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for his 80th Birthday*, ed. Sang-Won (Aaron) Son (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 28–44 (43): “Jesus Christ was presented in the form of a historicizing biographic genre which synchronized narratively the pastness of oral history and the encomiastic praise of its main character.” Cf. Aune, “Greco-Roman Biography,” 125; Smith, *Why βίος?*, 212.

¹³⁸ Scot McKnight, “Matthew as ‘Gospel,’” in *Jesus, Matthew’s Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge, LNTS 435 (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 59–75 (67). Italics his.

¹³⁹ See further pp. 315–16 for a discussion of the purposes of Matthew.

of Jesus in the beginning of the biography.¹⁴⁰ Camp also notices that the material in the beginning of the writing leads the reader in this direction:

Expectations are formed early in the text by the reference to Jesus as the Christ, portrayed in Mt 1–2 as one in the line of the kings of Israel in conflict with the current king. This might lead the reader to expect a biography of a ruler with features from Greek political biographies, but also certainly with overtones from Israelite history.¹⁴¹

The description of Matthew as a biography of a king/ruler is confirmed by the central presentation of Jesus as the Messiah, the Davidic King, throughout the biography.¹⁴² Yet it should be noted that the teaching role of Jesus is also central in Matthew's presentation.¹⁴³ Jesus' roles as king/ruler and teacher are repeatedly intertwined in the portrait of the leader (cf. 11:28–30, 28:18–20).¹⁴⁴ *The multiple purposes of biographies thus make it preferable to not classify the Gospel of Matthew as more than an ancient biography of a king/ruler.*

1.2.3 The narrative form of Matthew

A story about the life of Jesus

Like other ancient biographies, the Gospel of Matthew is a narrative.¹⁴⁵ As an ancient biography Matthew thus shares characteristics of other narrative texts and

¹⁴⁰ Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen," *ANRW* 25.2:1242–43. He suggests that the Gospel of Mark portrays a philosophical prophet. Cf. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 240, who proposes that all four gospels are similar to philosophical or religious biographies.

¹⁴¹ Camp, "Woe to you," 82.

¹⁴² See pp. 130–32.

¹⁴³ For the Messiah as a teacher in Jewish tradition, see Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, WUNT II/7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 304–30, and Samuel Byrskog, "Jesus as Messianic Teacher in the Gospel According to Matthew: Tradition History and/or Narrative Christology," in *New Testament as Reception*, ed. Mogens Müller and Henrik Tronier, JSNTSup 230 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 83–100, who also discusses the presentation of the Messiah as a teacher in Matthew.

¹⁴⁴ See further pp. 185, 220–21.

¹⁴⁵ See David E. Aune, "The Gospels as Hellenistic Biography," *Mosaic* 20 (1987): 1–10 (7), and Hågg, *Art of Biography*, 4. The term "narrative" has sometimes been understood as a synonym to "fiction," since it has been used mostly when discussing novels (see e.g. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978], 126). As I understand it, however, it does not evaluate the historical truthfulness of the text, since it is nowadays used for both fiction and nonfiction. See Mark A. Powell, "Narrative Criticism: The Emergence of a Prominent Reading Strategy," in *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 21, and Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 28. Some scholars also point out that the "narrative" of Matthew is not fiction. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 26, remarks: "It is a story, but it is in large measure 'story as report.' Matthew's story intends to tell about something

should be read as a coherent narrative.¹⁴⁶ Since the 1980s narrative criticism has been beneficially used frequently among Matthean scholars to understand the gospel. Literary-critical readings have shown that Matthew makes sense as a unified story where the actions, thoughts, and interactions of the characters are organized by a plot, which has a beginning, middle, and ending.¹⁴⁷ Even scholars who do not underline the biographical genre conclude that Matthew is *a story about Jesus*.¹⁴⁸

It has not only been recognized that Matthew is a story and has a narrative form. Several scholars emphasize the literary skill in Matthew. Douglas Hare points out that “Matthew skillfully employs narrative to tell us who Jesus is.”¹⁴⁹ Powell even suggests that the gospels are similar to modern historical fiction, since they make use of irony, symbolism, foreshadowing, and plot. The gospels are thus suitable for narrative criticism, since the genre of ancient biography treated history as story. Powell points out:

In many ways, the literary style of the New Testament Gospels is closer to that of modern fiction than it is to modern historical reporting. To say this is not to cast any aspersions on the accuracy of what is reported: scholars who regard the content of the Gospels as historically reliable, can still recognize that the style of writing is quite similar to that of works that we now classify as historical fiction. The Gospel authors knew the art of storytelling.¹⁵⁰

The narrative form of Matthew makes the use of narrative criticism to its benefit in the understanding of the portrayal of Jesus. Though ancient biographies are essentially narratives, attention to biographical conventions has, surprisingly, seldom been combined with narrative criticism.¹⁵¹ Narrative theories are helpful

which happened in the past.” See also Dorothy J. Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis*, JSNTSup 38 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 36. Cf. David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 5, who suggest that the story is “a version of historical events.”

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 15.

¹⁴⁷ Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 1–2; David B. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSS 42 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 13; Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 25.

¹⁴⁸ See e.g. Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 12; David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, JSNTS 31 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 132; Terence L. Donaldson, “The Vindicated Son: A Narrative Approach to Matthean Christology,” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 100–121 (104).

¹⁴⁹ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 3.

¹⁵⁰ Mark A. Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 84–85.

¹⁵¹ One exception is Camp, “Woe to you,” who makes use of biographical comparisons and narrative criticism (and rhetorical criticism) in his study of conflicts in Matthew. Cf. Fernando F. Segovia, “The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel,” *Semeia* 53

also in the understanding of ancient narratives. The present study uses a biographical-narrative approach, which means that attention to biographical conventions is combined with narrative criticism. I refer here to the methodological framework which biblical scholars, for example Jack Kingsbury and Mark Powell, have used and applied for the study of Matthew. In agreement with Powell, “narrative criticism” is understood as a text-oriented approach and thus separated from “reader-response criticism” when it is understood as a synonym for “ideological criticism.”¹⁵² A *biographical*-narrative approach implies, however, that preference is given to ancient means of narration/characterization before modern narrative theories, which mainly analyze modern literature.¹⁵³

The implied reader in Matthew

The importance of the reader is underlined in most of the literary approaches.¹⁵⁴ In narrative criticism, attention is paid to the communication between author and reader as reconstructed by the text, thus “the implied author” and “the implied reader.”¹⁵⁵ Powell explains that “[t]he field of narrative criticism focuses on meaning that may be ascribed to a text’s implied reader, interpreting the work from the perspective of readers who receive the text in the manner that appears to be expected of them.”¹⁵⁶ The reader concept of narrative criticism is thus neither an

(1991): 23–54. Jennifer K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 151, points out that “more work seems to be necessary in the area of reading Matthew with an awareness of conventions of ancient narrative/biography.” She also refers to Stanton’s contribution and concludes: “This kind of attention to genre and convention should be a strong emphasis within the narrative-critical guild.”

¹⁵² Mark A. Powell, “Literary Approaches in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark A. Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44–82 (55–56).

¹⁵³ See 1.2.4.

¹⁵⁴ Scholars have rightly emphasized that most of the first recipients/addressees *heard* the text of the NT, not *read* it. Some interpreters thus speak of “hearer” instead of “reader.” This literary study, however, concerns how the reader understands the text. Some people did in fact read the text. For that reason I use the term “reader.” Cf. Mark A. Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 85–86. He points out that “Matthew’s Gospel is a *written* text and a written text by definition presupposes readers” (p. 86).

¹⁵⁵ In the discussion of Matthew, hereafter the term “reader” refers to “implied reader” and “author” to “implied author” if nothing else is stated.

¹⁵⁶ Powell, “Literary Approaches,” 59. In similarity with Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 124–25, I regard the implied reader to be “a textually-derived implied reader” in contrast to an understanding that “promote the reader’s active participation in the realization of the meaning of the text” (following Wolfgang Iser). One who lies closer to the latter approach is Richard Edwards, who stresses the importance of “gaps” for the implied reader’s understanding of the text (Richard A. Edwards, “Characterization of the disciples as a feature of Matthew’s narrative” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, vol. 2, ed. Frans van Segbroeck et al. [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992] 1305–1323 [1307]).

actual, historical reader nor a modern reader, but the reader that the text implies. Kingsbury clarifies that “the implied reader is that imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always reaching its fulfillment.”¹⁵⁷

Since the goal of narrative criticism is to understand the text from the perspective of the implied reader, the understanding of the text is closely related to the knowledge of this reader. If the interpreter does not take into account the knowledge of the implied reader or depends on knowledge that the implied reader does not possess, it will result in unexpected readings.¹⁵⁸ What can then be said about the reader of Matthew? The implied reader of this text is mastering the Greek language and is familiar with the Palestinian society in the first century (e.g. geographical, social, cultural knowledge).¹⁵⁹ This knowledge includes some basic familiarity with Greek writings and the biographical portrayal of a life from birth to death.¹⁶⁰ Since Jesus’ ministry is particularly Jewish and the author does not explain Jewish customs, it can be concluded that the implied reader is also familiar with Jewish thought, traditions, and customs.¹⁶¹ From the many quotations from the OT it can be concluded that the implied reader does know the Old Testament writings (LXX). Powell also points out that the implied reader knows the OT “well enough to

¹⁵⁷ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 38. It should be noted that “intention” refers to the implied author’s communication with the reader as constructed by the text only and not by a specific historical situation. See also Alan R. Culpepper, *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 7: “The implied reader is defined by the text as the one who performs all the mental moves required to enter into the narrative world and respond to it as the implied author intends.” Cf. Powell, “Literary Approaches,” 60; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 138. With the term “implied author” I refer to, like Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 31, the “literary version” of the real author, “which the reader comes to know through the process of reading the story of the narrative.”

¹⁵⁸ Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows,” *AsTJ* 48 (1993): 31–51 (32).

¹⁵⁹ See Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 97; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 147; James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 39. Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” 24 n. 11, calls this “knowledge of the discourse setting.” Cf. John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 29, who proposes that “reading is a complex activity entailing the dynamic interaction of reader, text, and extratext.” The extra textual aspects are related to social and cultural factors (p. 170).

¹⁶⁰ See Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star*, 86, who presupposes a “literary competence” of the implied reader: “The assumption of literary competence also carries the notion that readers are expected to be able to follow the general rhetoric of the narrative and to recognize and accept principles basic to its perceived genre.” Darr, *On Character Building*, 48, likewise points out that genre and other literary conventions (e.g. ancient characterization) are some of the extra textual issues which one needs to consider. Cf. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 20; Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 148; Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 75. The literary competence of the implied reader of Matthew, however, does not include knowledge of the specific biographies which I examine in this study.

¹⁶¹ See Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 42. Cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 212, and Carter, *Matthew*, 21.

recognize subtle allusions to them.”¹⁶² The implied reader of Matthew is thus a reader who, to some extent, is informed about both the ancient Jewish world and the ancient Greek world.¹⁶³ As an ideal reader, the implied reader is expected to read the story from the beginning to the end and remember what has been said earlier, and thus connect later statements with earlier.¹⁶⁴ The narrative critic therefore pays attention “to the manner in which the reader is expected to be educated in the process of reading this narrative.”¹⁶⁵

Implications of a biographical-narrative reading

As seen above, the methodological approach in the present study of Jesus as leader in Matthew is related to the literary character of the material. The methodological approach of the study follows from the recognition of Matthew as an ancient biographical narrative. Burridge clarifies that

first and foremost, the gospels are *narrative accounts* written *within the conventions of ancient biography*, on a limited canvas, with some things included and others omitted, in order to bring out each evangelist’s particular *portrait* of Jesus’ ministry and teaching, his deeds and words, his life, death and resurrection.¹⁶⁶

The main implication of the biographical-narrative reading is that *the characterization of the protagonist comes to the foreground*. Ancient biographies give primarily information about the protagonist of the story and only secondly information about other characters.¹⁶⁷ The purpose of this kind of literature is to give a presentation of the life and death of one person in accordance with the specific understanding of the author.¹⁶⁸ For that reason, the purpose of the present study is not to reconstruct a hypothetical situation “behind” the text (e.g. “the Matthean church”).¹⁶⁹ Burridge helpfully explains that the gospels should not be understood

¹⁶² Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings,” 42.

¹⁶³ Cf. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 149.

¹⁶⁴ Powell, “Literary Approaches,” 65. For the implied reader as an ideal reader, see Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 209–10; Roads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 138; Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 125. Cf. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 21: “To the extent that the implied reader is an idealized abstraction, the goal of reading the text ‘as the implied reader’ may be somewhat unattainable, but it remains a worthy goal nevertheless. The concept is actually a principle that sets criteria for interpretation.”

¹⁶⁵ Mark A. Powell, “Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew,” *Int* 66 (1992): 341–46 (343). Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” 24 n. 11, calls this “knowledge of the story setting.”

¹⁶⁶ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 25. Italics mine.

¹⁶⁷ See Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 288–91. Cf. Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 28.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Richard Bauckham, “For Whom Were Gospels Written?,” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 9–48 (28–29).

as “clear glass windows,” which give us information about the world behind the text or “mirrors,” reflecting the thoughts that are brought before them. Instead he speaks about the gospels as “stained glass,” and explains that the focus is “the picture *within* the glass, how the artist has composed it in a limited space and used the conventions about depicting the hero or saint, what has been included and what left out.”¹⁷⁰ The description of an ancient biography as a “portrait,” can be somewhat misleading since the biography includes movement, development, and change. Hägg thus proposes that “[a] combination of the two, life story and serial portrait, may be said to constitute biography.”¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, as Hägg underlines, “characterization is an essential part of biographical art.”¹⁷² As will be seen below, virtues and vices are central in the characterization in ancient biographies. A biographical-narrative reading thus necessarily pays attention to the moral character traits of the protagonist.

A biographical-narrative reading also implies that *the text of Matthew is the focus of the study*. In contrast to redaction-critical readings, it is text-internal factors which are determinative for the interpretation, not historical factors or analyses of source material. Powell describes the benefit of a text-centered approach for determining what could be an expected reading of the text: “An *expected reading* is one that seems to be invited by signals within the text itself ... one compatible with the response of a text’s implied reader.”¹⁷³ This does not, however, rule out general historical or cultural information, since the implied reader of Matthew is informed about the common knowledge of the discourse setting.

Another implication of the biographical-narrative reading is that *Matthew as a whole is taken into account*. To do justice to the integrity of a biographical narrative one needs to pay attention to the text as a whole, as Larry Chouinard points out: “The literary integrity of a work is established only by a holistic examination in which all the parts are examined to ascertain their contribution to the finished work.”¹⁷⁴ The present study takes the whole narrative account of Matthew into account in order to clarify the biographical portrait of Jesus as a leader.

¹⁷⁰ Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 25. Alan R. Culpepper, “Story and History in the Gospels,” *RevExp* 81 (1984): 467–78 (471), likewise points out: “If the gospels are windows, they are stained glass windows. Light shines through from the other side, but the figures are on the surface of the window, fashioned there by the literary artist.” Cf. Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 24–25; Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 134 n. 60; Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, 82.

¹⁷¹ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 5.

¹⁷² Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 5.

¹⁷³ Powell, “Literary Approaches,” 62.

¹⁷⁴ Larry Chouinard, “A Literary Study of Christology in Matthew” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988), 173. See also Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 156.

1.2.4 Characterization

As pointed out above, a main implication of a biographical-narrative reading is the focus on the characterization of the protagonist. But what kinds of character traits are common in ancient biographies and how are these recognized in the reading? In order to make conclusions about the traits of Jesus, some theoretical starting points about characterization need to be discussed.¹⁷⁵

Characterization in ancient and modern narratives

Several scholars underline the difference between characterization in the ancient Greco-Roman world and in modern literature. While the characters in the former literature are regarded as unchangeable, static, and uncomplicated, the characters in the latter literature are psychologized, developed, and individualized.¹⁷⁶ When Aune outlines characteristics of Hellenistic biographies he mentions that they tend to present the individual in a stereotyped way according to the social role and type. The protagonist was characterized by a stereotyped list of character traits, where the ideals overshadowed the particularity of the individual.¹⁷⁷ According to Christopher Pelling, a difference can be seen in “our modern preoccupation with mental individuation.”¹⁷⁸ The personality of an individual in antiquity was also supposed to be the same and not to change. Instead of describing the development of a character, ancient characterization focuses on the revelation of a character, the true essence of a person.¹⁷⁹ These features of ancient characterizations have led some

¹⁷⁵ Edwards, “Characterization,” 1308, gives a helpful definition of “characterization”:

“‘Characterization’ is a term used to describe the technique(s) employed in the narrative which guides the implied reader to attach specific traits or attributes to the characters.” Cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 105. Concerning the use of the term in “historical” material Culpepper points out: “Even if one is disposed to see real, historical persons behind every character ... and actual events in every episode, the question of how the author chose to portray the person still arises ... Even if the figure is ‘real’ rather than ‘fictional,’ it has to pass through the mind of the author before it can be described.”

¹⁷⁶ Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 24–27, describes this view as a part of an existing *mistaken* paradigm of characterization in NT studies.

¹⁷⁷ Aune, “The Gospels as Hellenistic Biography,” 5. See also Christopher Pelling, “Biographical History? Cassius Dio on the Early Principate,” in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 117–44 (117).

¹⁷⁸ Pelling, “Biographical History?,” 141. See also William M. Wright IV, “Greco-Roman Character Typing and the Presentation of Judas in the Fourth Gospel,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 544–59 (546); Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 6–7 n 20, 60.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Jennifer K. Brown, “The Rhetoric of Hearing: The Use of the Isaianic Hearing Motif in Matthew 11:2–16:20,” in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 248–69 (251 n. 13). Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 27, points out that three prominent qualities of ancient narratives are often outlined in the rhetorical handbooks, namely clarity, conciseness, and credibility. Concerning the last ideal Myers points out: “As a key goal of narratives in general, credibility was enhanced through consistent characterization and harmed by inconsistent characterization” (p. 60).

scholars to conclude that modern theories of characterization are not appropriate for the study of the gospels.¹⁸⁰

The ancient characterization is, however, more varied than sometimes perceived.¹⁸¹ Pelling has pointed out that there is some kind of individuality in ancient characterization, since the character traits of similar types (in the Greek drama) differ.¹⁸² It thus seems appropriate to speak about a tension between the real and the stereotypical.¹⁸³ Christopher Gill also proposes that the differences between modern and ancient biographies concerning the character change and development are somewhat exaggerated. He suggests that it is more helpful to describe ancient biographies as “character-centered” compared to modern biographies which are “personality-centered.”¹⁸⁴ While the former focus on the moral qualities of the protagonist, the latter does not evaluate the person morally, but tries to understand and explain the protagonist.¹⁸⁵ It should also be noted that the characters of ancient biographies are not always unchangeable.¹⁸⁶ In addition, Matthew is influenced by the characterization in OT literature, where the characters are changeable.¹⁸⁷ Some scholars, who have made character studies of the gospels, also conclude that there is a kind of individuality in the characterization in NT texts.¹⁸⁸ According to Kingsbury, both Jesus and his followers (the disciples) in Matthew’s story are

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 9.

¹⁸¹ Cf. L. V. Pitcher, “Characterization in Ancient Historiography,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, vol. 1, ed. John Marincola (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 102–17 (103): “Sweeping statements about the nature of characterization in the ancient historians run a serious risk of imposing homogeneity where none exists.”

¹⁸² Christopher Pelling, “Conclusion,” in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, ed. Christopher Pelling (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 245–62 (255). See further his article “Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography,” 213–44, in the same edition. See also Anastasios G. Nikolaidis, “Morality, Characterization, and Individuality,” in *A Companion to Plutarch*, ed. Mark Beck, BAW (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 350–72 (362–64), who likewise notices individuality in Plutarch’s *Lives*.

¹⁸³ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 178–79. When he discusses the synoptic gospels he points out that “there is a ‘real’ character which comes through the portraits” (p. 205).

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Gill, “The Question of Character-Development: Plutarch and Tacitus,” *CIQ* 33 (1983): 469–87 (471).

¹⁸⁵ Gill, “The Question of Character-Development,” 470–71.

¹⁸⁶ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 178. Cf. Pitcher, “Characterization in Ancient Historiography,” 115–16; Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 59.

¹⁸⁷ See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 129; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 103; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 100; Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 34.

¹⁸⁸ See Fred W. Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels,” *Semeia* 63 (1993): 3–28, and Timothy Wiarda, “Peter as Peter in the Gospel of Mark,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 19–37. Cf. Louise J. Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies*, WUNT 165 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 249–59. Lawrence also shows that introspection is important in the characterization of the political leaders in Matthew (pp. 115–29).

presented to the readers as “round characters,” which means that they have several different traits that make them “real” people and thus not predictable as “flat characters” are.¹⁸⁹

Cornelis Bennema thus rightly proposes that modern literature emphasizes individuality and psychology more than ancient literature, but “differences in characterization in ancient and modern literature are differences in *emphasis* rather than kind, and it is better to speak of *degrees* of characterization along a continuum.”¹⁹⁰ For that reason, he concludes that it is legitimate to use modern literary methods to analyze characters in ancient texts, if one also pays attention to social and cultural differences.¹⁹¹ Stanton makes a similar conclusion, when he proposes that modern methods of characterization are not inadequate, but that priority must be given to ancient methods of characterization.¹⁹² He concludes that “although modern literary theory is stimulating and helpful, precedence must be given both to the literary conventions which influenced the evangelist and to the expectations of his first century readers.”¹⁹³

What then are the ancient methods of characterization which it is necessary to pay attention to? There are mainly three features a biographical-narrative reading needs to take into account, namely the focus on moral character traits, the use of indirect characterization, and the use of contrast and comparison.

Moral character traits

As pointed out above, ancient characterization deals primarily with moral judgments. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle begins his discussion about characterization with the following statement: “In regard to characters (ἥθη), four things need to be aimed at—first and foremost, that they are good (χρηστά)” (1454A).¹⁹⁴ His student, Theophrastus, wrote a treatise called *χαρακτῆρες* (“Traits”) where he outlined thirty vices or traits one should avoid.¹⁹⁵ Ancient writers often give lists of virtues they

¹⁸⁹ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 12–13.

¹⁹⁰ Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 52. Bennema is here influenced by Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction,” 15.

¹⁹¹ Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 54, 59.

¹⁹² Stanton, “ΒΙΒΛΟΣ, ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ, OR ΒΙΟΣ?,” 1200. Cf. Christopher W. Skinner, “Toward a Theory of Character for Interpreting the Gospel of John” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Society of Biblical Literature, San Diego, CA, 24 November 2014), who points out that character discussions (in the Gospel of John) need to be in a dialogue with narrative-critical scholarship, genre discussions and relationship to ancient biographies, and the gospel’s theological and literary features.

¹⁹³ Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 56. Cf. Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 151.

¹⁹⁴ See also 1448A, 1450A.

¹⁹⁵ The translation of the title as “Traits” is more appropriate than the traditional translation “Characters.” See Theophrastus *Characters*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Rusten, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 11.

thought worthy to embrace.¹⁹⁶ The “cardinal virtues”—wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice—are frequently presented as moral qualities one should seek to gain.¹⁹⁷ William Wright thus correctly points out that “a fundamental component of characterization” in Greco-Roman literature is “the relationship between character and moral judgment.”¹⁹⁸ In ethical studies, the focus on the moral traits and the character is commonly described as “virtue ethics.”¹⁹⁹

The focus on the moral character is also a main concern in ancient biographies. The famous quotation from Plutarch’s biography of Alexander underlines this feature:

For it is not histories that I write, but lives (βίους); and in the most remarkable deeds there is not always a revelation of virtue (ἀρετῆς) or vice (κακίας), but often an insignificant deed like a word or a joke make a clearer presentation of character (ῥῆθους) than battles with thousands of dead or the greatest mobilizations or sieges of cities. Therefore, like painters get likeness of their images from the face and its features, through which the character is displayed, but pays very little attention to other parts [of the body], so I must rather occupy myself with the signs of the soul (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα) and by these portray the life of each, leaving the great matters and contests to others (1.2–3).²⁰⁰

Similarly, Xenophon describes the moral character traits of his protagonist as “the virtue of his soul (τῇ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ ἀρετῇ)” (*Agas*. 3.1).²⁰¹ Ancient biographies often enumerate the virtues or vices of the protagonist, especially in the middle part.²⁰² The material included in this part, mainly deeds and words of the

¹⁹⁶ See Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1107A33–1108B7; Nepos, *Epam.* 15.3; Philo, *Sacr.* 27; Theon, *Prog.* 110–11.

¹⁹⁷ See e.g. Plato, *Resp.* 4.427–28; Plutarch, *Mor.* 1034C. Cf. Plato, *Prot.* 330B, where “piety” (ὁσιότης) is also mentioned.

¹⁹⁸ Wright, “Greco-Roman Character Typing,” 545.

¹⁹⁹ See Cornelis Bennema, “Virtue Ethics in the Gospel of John,” in *Rediscovering John: Essays on the Fourth Gospel in Honour of Frédéric Manns*, ed. L. Daniel Chrupcala (Milano: Edizioni Terra Santa, 2013), 167–81 (167): “Virtue ethics emphasizes the importance of character and the virtues, i.e. traits of (moral) excellence, that a character embodies for determining or evaluating ethical behavior.”

²⁰⁰ Cf. *Nic.* 1.5 and *Cat. Min.* 24.1, 37.5, where Plutarch again underlines the purpose of revealing the character and the soul of the protagonist. See also Isocrates, *Evag.* 73, for the comparison between biographical writing and pieces of art.

²⁰¹ Cf. Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Antikkens etiske tradition: Fra Sokrates til Marcus Aurelius* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1996), 119, who also relates “virtue” to the soul: “Dyd er en tilstand af sjælen, der centralt (men ikke udelukkende) giver sig udtryk i, at mennesket kan se, hvad der er godt og slet i den situation, mennesket befinder sig i, og med hvilke følelser og handlinger mennesket skal reagere på situationen.” Ancient writers often speak about three kinds of “goods,” namely that concerns the body, the soul, and one’s fortune/external. See e.g. Theon, *Prog.* 109. See further Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 80–83.

²⁰² Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 278.

protagonist, aim to reveal the “Wesen” of the protagonist, to use Dirk Frickenschmidt’s term.²⁰³ The author presents the character of the protagonist through a description of moral traits.²⁰⁴ Gill describes this kind of characterization in ancient biographies as “character-viewpoint” and explains:

The salient feature of the character-viewpoint is that it regards the person evaluative (often morally) as the possessor of good or bad qualities that merit praise or blame. The person is judged or assessed in this viewpoint, by reference to a determinate standard of excellence, such as ‘virtue’ or ‘good character.’ He is regarded, as we say nowadays, as a moral agent, responsible, under normal circumstances, for his actions, and having some responsibility too for his dispositions or character-traits.²⁰⁵

Aune proposes that there is a difference in the purpose of the characterization between the gospels and other ancient biographies. According to Aune, the deeds and words of Jesus “do not primarily function as revelations of *character* (as in Greco-Roman biography), they are literary vehicles that legitimate the presentation of Jesus as Messiah, or Son of God.”²⁰⁶ Though Aune rightly underlines the gospels’ focus on Jesus’ identity, it is doubtful if it is possible to distinguish it from his character. Some of the qualities of Jesus, for example, his humility, are closely related to his role as Messiah. Or to put it in other words, the moral character of Jesus is important for the understanding of his identity. In addition, were the gospel authors unconcerned about the character of the person they wanted people to follow and obey?²⁰⁷ Even if it is appropriate to speak about a difference between Matthew and other ancient biographies, regarding the *emphasis* on the character of the protagonist, since Matthew is *also* highly concerned about his identity as Messiah

²⁰³ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 289 n. 135, uses the wider German term “Wesen,” since “Charakter” (ἥθος) had a specific meaning in some traditions: “Antike Biographien variierten in der Wahl der Begriffe, mit denen sie das verborgene Wesen der Hauptperson bezeichneten.” Cf. Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man*, TCH 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 65, who points out that ancient biographies aim to portray character, “since character was viewed as the essence of the life.”

²⁰⁴ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 289.

²⁰⁵ Gill, “The Question of Character-Development,” 470–71. See also Dihle, “The Gospels and Greek Biography,” 368–70.

²⁰⁶ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 57. Italics his. Cf. David P. Moessner, “And Once Again, What Sort of ‘Essence?’: A Response to Charles Talbert,” *Semeia* 43 (1988): 75–84, who discusses Luke, and Dirk Wördemann, *Das Charakterbild im bíos nach Plutarch und das Christusbild im Evangelium nach Markus*, SGKA19 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 286–87, who analyzes Mark. Wördemann proposes that while *bioi* are concerned with the question of “how” the character is, the gospels are concerned with the question of “who” Jesus is.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, SNTSMS 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), who convincingly shows the early church’s interest in the character of Jesus, and what sort of person he was. See e.g. pp. 7, 135–36, 171.

and Son of God, there are no reasons to suppose that Matthew is not concerned about the character of Jesus.²⁰⁸

Narrative theorists also describe traits as essentials for the construction of a character, though they do not underline the moral aspects in the same way. Seymour Chatman proposes “a conception of character as a paradigm of traits.”²⁰⁹ He defines a trait as “a narrative adjective out of the vernacular labeling a personal quality of a character, as it persists over part or whole of the story.”²¹⁰ As persistent qualities, traits are to be separated from feelings, thoughts, motives, attitudes, and other psychological phenomena.²¹¹ Likewise, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan defines “character” as “a construct, put together by the reader from various indications dispersed throughout the text.”²¹² She points out that the character is formed by the combination of different character traits.²¹³ The naming of traits is culturally coded since characterization of qualities is done according to the interests and standards of that time. However, the name of the trait is not the same as the trait.²¹⁴ It is thus appropriate to make use of trait-names that are common in the contemporary world.²¹⁵ But it should be noted, with Bennema, that “the use of modern trait-names to describe ancient character must be governed by knowledge of the first-century world.”²¹⁶

How then can character traits be established in the reading? Rimmon-Kenan helpfully points out that a character trait is a generalization, which is established when a common denominator “emerges from several aspects.”²¹⁷ She suggests that a more or less unified “character” is established by repetition, similarity, contrast,

²⁰⁸ Cf. Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 5, who points out that the biographical genre of Mark implies that these questions are answered: “Who was Jesus, what was he like, and why is he worth writing a biography about?” Cf. also Felix John, “The Gospels and Biographical Literature” (paper presented at the International Meeting of Society of Biblical Literature, Berlin, 9 August 2017), who suggests that the Gospel of Mark concerns both *who* Jesus is and *how* he is.

²⁰⁹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 126. He also points out: “At the present moment, the concept of ‘trait’ is about all we have for the discussion of character.”

²¹⁰ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 125 (cf. p. 126). Cf. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism*, 54, and Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 128.

²¹¹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 126.

²¹² Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 36.

²¹³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 38.

²¹⁴ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 123–24, who refers to Gordon W. Allport and Henry S. Odbert, *Trait-Names: A Psycholexical Study* (Princeton: Psychological Review Company, 1936).

²¹⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 125, points out that “narrative theorists may justifiably rely on the rich coding of trait-names stored by history in ordinary language.” See also p. 138. Cf. Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 54–55: “It is therefore inevitable that when we infer a character’s trait from an ancient text we use trait-names that are familiar to the contemporary world.”

²¹⁶ Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 60.

²¹⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 38.

and implication (logical inference). Closely related to repetition is when a character shows similar behavior in a different occasion.²¹⁸ Habits or repeated actions, which show the persistence of a trait, are important for the construction of traits.²¹⁹ But the traits are also established by the combination of different means and different voices in the story that point in the same direction.²²⁰ Sometimes a character trait can be established if it is mentioned only once, if it is a significant trait in the narrative framework, but often traits are established by repetition or by different means (explicitly and implicitly).²²¹

Telling and showing

In order to construct characters in ancient biographies one needs to pay attention to both what is told and shown in the text. The method of characterization in the antiquity was often done in an indirect way through the words and deeds of the person.²²² In the beginning of *Agesilaus*, Xenophon explains: “I will now describe all that he achieved in the kingdom, for I deem that his deeds will give the best manifestation of his qualities (τοὺς τρόπους)” (1.6).²²³ The character is thus revealed, not only directly by the narrator, but also by the words and deeds of the person. Stanton even states: “In ancient biographical writing (including Matthew) there is a deeply-rooted convention that a person’s actions and words sum up the character of an individual more adequately than the comments of an observer.”²²⁴ While sometimes the virtues are described explicitly to the reader, as in the case of Xenophon’s *Agesilaus* (3.1b–9.7), the authors of biographies often use a more impactful way and let the protagonist speak for himself through the narration of his deeds.²²⁵

In modern literature, characters are also characterized in an indirect way and character construction is made by inference from information in the text, as noted above. The difference is that there is less direct characterization in ancient

²¹⁸ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 39.

²¹⁹ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 122.

²²⁰ See Susan S. Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 220: “The most fully reinforced ideology would probably be the one that is demonstrated by more than one voice and in more than one way, for example, through both the story’s outcome and the comments of a narrating consciousness.” See also Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark’s Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 53–55.

²²¹ Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 74.

²²² See e.g. Pitcher, “Characterization in Ancient Historiography,” 107–12.

²²³ See also Plutarch, *Cat. Min.* 37.1–5. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1367B.

²²⁴ Stanton, “ΒΙΒΛΟΣ, ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ, OR ΒΙΟΣ?,” 1200. See also Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 117.

²²⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 289. Cf. Dihle, “The Gospels and Greek Biography,” 373, and Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 117.

literature.²²⁶ Rimmon-Kenan points out that the speech of a character “can be indicative of a trait or traits both through its content and through its form.”²²⁷ In addition to words from the character, actions, descriptions, reactions of other characters in the story, and the expectations expressed by other characters in the story, are rhetorical techniques that influence the implied reader’s understanding of a character.²²⁸

There are, quite naturally, differences in ancient biographies regarding characterization. The style of the characterization in Matthew is primarily showing, while the characterization in other biographies is a more explicit telling style.²²⁹ Hägg notices “the ascetic narrative style that dominates all four gospels, as soon as it comes to the description of persons and their character traits.”²³⁰ The reader of Matthew thus primarily understands the person of Jesus by his own words and deeds, since the author mainly lets the protagonist speak for himself.²³¹ Consequently, to construct the character of Jesus in Matthew one has to pay attention to both the words and the deeds of Jesus. In this way it is possible to see the full portrait of the author.²³²

Comparing and contrasting

One technique of characterization which often is used in ancient biographies is comparison. A character can be compared to another character in order to underline similarities, or contrasted with another character in order to underline differences.²³³ Timothy Duff traces *synkrisis* (σύγκρισις), as it was called in the Greek and Roman world, back to the fifth and fourth centuries BC when it became a common way to demonstrate moral characterization in Greek literature. The technique is used already in the earliest biographies of Isocrates and Xenophon, where the protagonist is contrasted with Persian kings, to the advantage of the protagonist.²³⁴ Isocrates

²²⁶ See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 60–67, and Bennema, *A Theory of Character*, 56–57.

²²⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 63.

²²⁸ Edwards, “Characterization,” 1309. Cf. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 116.

²²⁹ See Perry V. Kea, “Writing a *bios*: Matthew’s Genre Choices and Rhetorical Situation,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 33 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 574–86 (581–82).

²³⁰ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 185. For Hägg “this respect reduces markedly the gospel’s character of biographies, even by ancient standards.” Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 199, 202, however, underlines that the indirect characterization, through words and deeds, is common in ancient biographical literature.

²³¹ See Kea, “Writing a *bios*,” 582. Cf. Edwards, “Characterization,” 1311.

²³² Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 28.

²³³ For pedagogical reasons I use the term “comparing” to refer to the notion of similarities, and the term “contrasting” to the notion of differences.

²³⁴ Timothy E. Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 243–44. Cf. C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 105.

contrasts Evagoras with Cyrus and states that while Evagoras “did everything in a pious and just way, some of the achievements [of Cyrus] were not made reverently” (38).²³⁵ Later Plutarch uses *synkrisis* in a comprehensive way to compare and contrast protagonists with other great men. He does not only make wide-ranging comparisons of the two men (one Greek and one Roman) he puts together, but also makes comparisons within the individual biographies. Sometimes the protagonist is contrasted with contemporaries and sometimes he is compared with subjects of other biographies.²³⁶ In some of his biographies, Plutarch contrasts his protagonist with a number of other figures.²³⁷ In the introduction to his work *Bravery of Women* in *Moralia*, Plutarch explains why he makes use of comparison and contrast: “And surely there is no better way to learn the similarity and the difference between the virtues of men and of women in any other way, than to put together lives and lives, actions and actions like great works of art” (243).

The use of *synkrisis* was also encouraged commonly by the ancient teachers in rhetoric when one made an encomium.²³⁸ It was even included in the “elementary exercises” (προγυμνάσματα) of rhetorical skills. According to Theon, “[s]ynkrisis is the language which places the better or the worse side by side” (*Prog.* 112). It can be used to compare objects which are greater, lesser, or equal.²³⁹ Theon also prescribes that *synkrisis* should be of similar and not totally different persons.²⁴⁰ Witherington points out that “*synkrisis* became especially effective as a means of persuasion, the better one could paint the contrast between that which was to be emulated and that which was to be avoided.”²⁴¹

Contrast and comparison is not limited to ancient Greco-Roman literature, but is used widely in narratives. Robert Alter notices that it is frequently used in the narratives of the OT.²⁴² It is also recognized by modern narrative theorists.

²³⁵ For an example in Xenophon, see *Ages.* 1.10.

²³⁶ Alan Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 27. Cf. Hans Beck, “Interne ‘synkrisis’ bei Plutarch,” *Hermes* 130 (2002): 467–89 (486); Nikolaidis, “Morality, Characterization, and Individuality,” 361.

²³⁷ Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 33. See also D. A. Russell, “On Reading Plutarch's *Lives*,” *GR* 13 (1966): 139–54 (150–51).

²³⁸ See e.g. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1368A19–26; *Quint. Inst. Orat.* 2.4.20–21; Menander Rhetor 2.372.21–5, 376.31–377.9. See further Christopher Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony: Paul's Boasting and the Conventions of Hellenistic Rhetoric,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 1–30 (2–8).

²³⁹ Theon, *Prog.* 108. See also Hermogenes, *Prog.* 19.

²⁴⁰ Theon, *Prog.* 112–13. Cf. Jerome H. Neyrey, “Encomium versus Vituperation: Contrasting Portraits of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 126 (2007): 529–52 (538): “Σύνκρισις generally compares persons and things similar in honor or prowess (=two encomia) or contrasts them (=encomia and vituperation).”

²⁴¹ Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 167.

²⁴² See e.g. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 115, who speaks about “the repeatedly contrastive or comparative technical strategies used in the rendering of biblical characters.”

Rimmon-Kenan points out: “When two characters are presented in similar circumstances, the similarity or contrast between their behavior emphasizes traits characteristic of both.”²⁴³ Narrative critics pay attention to the different characters of the story and how they interact. The character is constructed by the context and the relationship between different characters.²⁴⁴ Characterization is thus closely related to plot, as Yieh helpfully clarifies:

Characterization is best examined in the context of plot, because the decisions, actions, and moral traits of a character, especially a round or developed character, are gradually and cumulatively disclosed in the sequential events in which he or she handles different kinds of situations and interacts with other characters.²⁴⁵

Some characters in a story clearly function to highlight characteristics of the protagonist. Literary critics thus speak about some characters as foils. A foil character is a character that contrasts another character and thus emphasizes the distinctive traits of the other character.²⁴⁶ W. J. Harvey distinguishes between protagonists, intermediate characters, and background characters. The protagonists are the most important characters, whose conflicts determine the development of the story. They are also the characters who mostly affect the beliefs and emotions of the reader, since “they incarnate the moral vision of the world inherent in the total novel.”²⁴⁷ These characters are an end in themselves and the purpose of the narrative is to reveal the protagonists.²⁴⁸ The least important characters are the background characters, anonymous figures that “may be merely useful cogs in the mechanism of the plot.”²⁴⁹ Between these two categories, there are also intermediate figures. One kind of these are the *ficelles*, characters which have a function in the revealing of the main character. They can be used as foils and contrast the protagonist.²⁵⁰

According to Stanton, Matthew uses *synkrisis* in both unfavorable and favorable ways. Differences are expressed between the disciples and the religious leaders and similarities are expressed between Jesus and Moses, John the Baptist, the temple,

²⁴³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 70.

²⁴⁴ See Darr, *On Character Building*, 62.

²⁴⁵ Yieh, *One Teacher*, 71.

²⁴⁶ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 124. Resseguie cites William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999), 216, who state: “In literature, the term is applied to any person who through contrast underscores the distinctive characteristics of another.”

²⁴⁷ J. W. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (New York: Cornell University, 1965), 56.

²⁴⁸ Harvey, *Character and the Novel*, 56.

²⁴⁹ Harvey, *Character and the Novel*, 56.

²⁵⁰ Harvey, *Character and the Novel*, 63. See also Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 104. Culpepper points out that one of the functions of characters (in the Gospel of John) is “to draw out various aspects of Jesus’ character successively by providing a series of diverse individuals with whom Jesus can interact” (p. 145).

Jonah, and Solomon.²⁵¹ Jesus is portrayed as superior to all, but “[t]he comparisons are not used in order to denigrate the lesser of the two, but in order to enhance the greater in the eyes of the audience.”²⁵² Stanton rightly pays attention to the use of comparison and contrast in the characterization of Jesus in Matthew. He neglects, however, the contrast between Jesus and other leaders, which plays a significant role in the characterization of Jesus.²⁵³

1.2.5 The comparative material

Four ancient biographies—Isocrates’ *Evagoras*, Xenophon’s *Agesilaus*, Philo’s *Moses*, and Plutarch’s *Numa*—serve as comparative material in the present study. The selection of this material has been made for several reasons. Firstly, these texts belong to the flexible genre of ancient biographies, since they narrate a substantial part of one individual’s life. With the exception of Isocrates’ *Evagoras*, where the death of the protagonist is not mentioned, they follow a protagonist from birth to death, from cradle to grave. *Evagoras* and *Agesilaus* are encomia and thus closely related to rhetoric; at the same time they both belong to the origins of the biographical genre.²⁵⁴ Burridge helpfully describes *Evagoras* as “crossing over from rhetoric to βίος,”²⁵⁵ and both works as “at the edges of the genre.”²⁵⁶ Since Isocrates praises and narrates the whole life of Evagoras, with several important phases in life from birth to death, it is not inappropriate to place the work within the flexible genre of ancient biography.²⁵⁷ Xenophon likewise narrates a significant part of Agesilaus’ life and outlines his career and character, which arguably makes it a biography.²⁵⁸ The four works of the comparative material share sufficient

²⁵¹ See Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 80–83.

²⁵² Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 83.

²⁵³ Camp, “Woe to you,” 10 n. 1, however, pays attention to this contrast: “Throughout the gospel Jesus’ leadership is contrasted with that of the leaders of Israel.”

²⁵⁴ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 124. See also Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 110–12, and Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 33–34. Concerning *Evagoras* Hägg points out that “its literary structure came to function as a model for future Lives, whether encomiastic or more generally biographic. In this work, we meet for the first time, in the Life of an historical person, a number of the typically biographical topoi, ordered in a chronological sequence” (p. 34). In the case of *Agesilaus* he concludes that “Xenophon had created what was to become the standard structure of a biography” (p. 50).

²⁵⁵ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 125. Cf. Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, 82, and Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 109, who describe *Evagoras* as a “biographical encomium.”

²⁵⁶ Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 212. Cf. Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen,” *ANRW* 25.2:1236–37.

²⁵⁷ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 109.

²⁵⁸ Cf. Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 45, who describes Agesilaus as a “professional” biography, narrating the adult career of the protagonist in a similar way as e.g. the Gospel of Mark.

features to recognize the “family resemblance” and to put them in the genre of ancient biographies.

Secondly, this comparative material is chosen since it is written in ancient Greek, which is the same language as the Gospel of Matthew. To get a breadth of research I consider *bioi* from different times (approximately 400 BCE to 100 CE). Nonetheless, these writings all belong to the sphere of ancient Greek culture and thought. The reason for not choosing more Jewish writings is simply the lack of ancient Jewish biographies.²⁵⁹ Thirdly, these biographies have a purpose to portray an ideal leader on the highest level of leadership (leader of a people/nation/state). The biographies in the comparative material are not chosen for the reason that the protagonist is the most similar type of leader as Matthew’s Jesus, but for the reason that he is presented as an ideal leader.²⁶⁰ By examining the moral character traits of the leader and his relationship to the people in these works leadership ideals are revealed. In this way a representation of leadership ideals in ancient biographies in the time of Matthew is given.

The function of the comparative material is twofold. The first function of the examination of these biographical writings, which portray good leaders, is that *indications about the characterization of Jesus in Matthew’s biographical story are given*. The leadership ideals in the comparative material shed light on Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as leader. Though Matthew does not necessarily need to conform to the other portraits in every aspect, the analysis of these writings provides examples and common traits of the good leader, which are helpful in the clarification of Matthew’s portrait of Jesus.

The study of the comparative material is related to the main moral character traits, “Haupteigenschaften,”²⁶¹ of the leader and features of the relationship between the leader and the people. Since most scholars agree that the essence of “leadership” is a social relationship where one leader influences followers,²⁶² I examine how the leader relates to the people and influences them. The identification of main character traits is quite easy in Xenophon’s *Agésilas*, since they are explicitly pointed out by the author and give structure to the work. In the other biographies one needs to infer

²⁵⁹ See e.g. Philip S. Alexander, “Rabbinic Biography and the Biography of Jesus: A Survey of the Evidence,” in *Synoptic Studies: The Ampleforth Conferences of 1982 and 1983*, JSNTSup 7, ed. Christopher M. Tuckett (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 19–50, and Richard A. Burrige, “Appendix II: Gospel Genre, Christological Controversy and the Absence of Rabbinic Biography: Some Implications of the Biographical Hypothesis” in *What Are the Gospels?*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 322–40. Josephus has written an autobiography, but it is not included in this study since an autobiographic work has its peculiarities and Matthew is not an autobiography. For a discussion about differences and similarities between biography and autobiography, see Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, 11–15, and Hagg, *Art of Biography*, ix.

²⁶⁰ See further the presentation of the different biographies in chapter two.

²⁶¹ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 268.

²⁶² See 1.3.1

the traits through what the author tells and shows about the character. Are these character traits then leader traits or traits of the good man generally? This study presupposes that the texts describe ideal *leaders* and thus it follows that the traits in some sense are leader traits. It is also pointed out in these writings that some character traits are especially relevant for leaders.²⁶³ These moral traits obviously overlap with traits that are related to good people generally, but the occurrence of similar traits in other texts that present ideal leaders gives reason to also regard them as leader traits. In addition, if a trait is constructed through comparison or contrast with other leaders in the story, it can be recognized as a leader trait.²⁶⁴

A second function of the examination of the other biographies is *making comparison possible*. As pointed out above, a main benefit of genre characterizations is the ability to find similar kinds of literature for comparison. An understanding of genre as “family resemblances” implies that the texts of the same genre are not similar in all ways, but in several aspects. Even if there are differences and variances in the genre of ancient biographies, these biographies belong to the same kind of literature and cultural sphere, and comparison is thus possible and adequate. When the portrait of Jesus is put side by side with other portraits of good leaders, Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as leader becomes clearer. The comparison between Matthew and the other writings pays attention to both similarities and differences. The focus of the present study is the Gospel of Matthew, and the other biographies are examined in a more superficial way. A comprehensive comparison is thus not possible in this study. Nonetheless, these four texts, which belong to the same genre, are examined in a similar way and consequently a comparative analysis is adequate.

Since all the comparative writings belong to the genre of ancient biography, a similar methodological approach, with a focus on the characterization of the protagonist, is used in the examination of this material. A text-centered approach, as outlined above for the study of Matthew, will also be used in the investigation of the comparative material.²⁶⁵ The examination of these writings is, however, necessarily more superficial and no detailed narrative analysis are made.

²⁶³ See Isocrates, *Evag.* 80, and Philo, *Mos.* 1.153–54.

²⁶⁴ This is the case with most of the main traits of Jesus, which will be argued in the following analysis of Matthew.

²⁶⁵ As the case with Matthew, I try to understand the *texts* of the other biographies and not their authors. But since these texts are written by authors who have written more texts, which are available to us, I sometimes make use of these texts in order to understand the text which I examine. The focus is, nonetheless, on the portrait of the leader in the text.

1.3 Leadership, literature, and language

Since the purpose of this study is to understand and clarify how Jesus is presented as *leader* in the Gospel of Matthew, several questions arise. What is the definition of “leadership” and who is a “leader”? Is leadership a modern concept foreign to the ideas of antiquity? Is a literary study compatible with the study of leadership? How does this study relate to other leadership studies? The purpose of this section is to give answers to these questions and to show that the fundamental understanding of “leadership” is similar in both the ancient and modern concept, and that a literary approach is appropriate in the study of leadership.

1.3.1 The study of leadership

The problem of definition – what is leadership?

It is not easy to define what a “leader” is or what we mean by “leadership.” Already in 1959 Warren Bennis pointed out that “the concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity.”²⁶⁶ Several different definitions have been suggested,²⁶⁷ but among leadership scholars there is no agreement of a precise definition of leadership. In her philosophical discussion of the term “leader,” Joanne Ciulla concludes that a “*one-size-fits-all* definition of leadership is not possible ... Hence, it makes more sense for leadership scholars to focus on revealing the moral, social and psychological properties of leaders than on trying to come up with the ultimate definition of a leader.”²⁶⁸ The concept of “leader” is dependent upon the relationship between leader and followers, and the values, norms, beliefs, and needs of the followers. Consequently, there are situational and contextual dimensions which determine if a person is a “leader” or not.²⁶⁹ Another aspect that obstructs a straightforward definition of “leadership” is the connotations of leadership, which are determined by a range of antecedents of the person who is concerned about leadership.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Warren G. Bennis, “Leadership theory and administrative behavior,” *ASQ* 4 (1959): 259–301 (260).

²⁶⁷ See e.g. Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-first Century* (Westport: Praeger, 1991), for an overview of different definitions of leadership during the twentieth century.

²⁶⁸ Joanne B. Ciulla, “Handmaiden and queen: what philosophers find in the question: ‘What is a leader?’,” in *Leadership Studies: The Dialogue of Disciplines*, ed. Michael Harvey and Ronald E. Riggio (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 54–65 (62).

²⁶⁹ Antonio Marturano, “Understanding Leadership: Is It Time for a Linguistic Turn?,” in *Leadership and the Humanities*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla, vol. 3 of *Leadership at the Crossroads*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla (Westport: Praeger Perspectives, 2008), 117–31 (124–27). See also Ciulla, “‘What is a leader?’,” 62.

²⁷⁰ James G. Hunt, “What Is Leadership?,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 19–47 (46).

The lack of a precise definition of leadership does not mean, however, that there are no agreements among scholars concerning what leadership is. Ciulla, influenced by Ludwig Wittgenstein, clarifies that even if people use a word differently, since they have different definitions of the word, we are able to understand what they are saying, because there is a family resemblance in how people use the word.²⁷¹ Despite a multitude of different definitions of “leadership” one can recognize a family resemblance between them. The difference between different definitions is thus mainly a difference in the connotation of “leadership.”²⁷²

The proposition of Ciulla is confirmed when one considers the suggestions of different leadership theorists. Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg point out that most scholars agree that “leadership can be defined as the nature of the *influencing process*—and its resultant outcomes—that occurs between a leader and followers and how this influencing process is explained.”²⁷³ When James Hunt answers the question of what leadership is, he mentions two words: process and influence.²⁷⁴ In the same way, Gary Yukl states that “influence is the essence of leadership.”²⁷⁵ According to Ciulla, leadership is a human relationship that is characterized by influence and/or power, vision, responsibility, and obligation.²⁷⁶ The statements above show the agreement among scholars that leadership is a process in a social relationship where one individual influences other people.²⁷⁷ The emphasis on

²⁷¹ Ciulla, “‘What is a leader?’,” 57. Cf. Deanne N. Den Hartog and Marcus W. Dickson, “Leadership and Culture,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 249–78 (250).

²⁷² Joanne B. Ciulla, “Leadership Ethics: Mapping the Territory,” *BEQ* 5 (1995): 5–28 (12).

²⁷³ John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg “Leadership: Past, Present, and Future,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 3–15 (5). Italics mine. See also Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2010), 21.

²⁷⁴ Hunt, “What Is Leadership?,” 25.

²⁷⁵ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 198. Cf. Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, LNTS 362 (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 156: “To the extent that someone is successful in persuading or influencing the lives of others, that person is by definition also a leader.” Richard Beaton, “Leader, Leadership, NT,” *NIDB* 3:617–20 (617), likewise points out: “Fundamentally, leadership is a relationship of influence, whether within governments, organizations, groups, or among family and friends.”

²⁷⁶ Ciulla, “Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 302–27 (302). Even Rost, *Leadership*, 102, emphasizes leadership as a relationship. Cf. Bruce Malina, *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 107, who underlines reciprocity as an essential component in leadership, and Kurt Lang, “Leadership,” *DSS*, 380: “The manifestation of leadership behavior can be observed only in relation to other persons who act in response to the leader and who are collectively referred to as the *following*.” Italics his.

²⁷⁷ See also James McGregor Burns, “Afterword” in *The Quest for a General Theory of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Georgia L. J. Sorenson, NHLS (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006), 234–39 (239), and Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 3. For a different view see E. D. Kort, “What, after all, is leadership? ‘Leadership’

“influence” in the definition of leadership shows that leadership implies that there is a degree of autonomy and willingness among the followers.²⁷⁸

In order to define “leadership” it is important to distinguish it from “power” and “management.” These concepts are closely related to leadership but should not be identified with it. In commonplace language, “leader” can designate both a position and a function. But leadership scholars usually make a distinction between leadership and headship (or positional leadership). Holding a formal leadership position does not imply that leadership is exercised and it is not necessary to hold a formal position to be a leader.²⁷⁹ “Power” refers to the potential or capacity to influence others, while leadership refers to an influence process.²⁸⁰ While power, to some degree, has to do with control over other people who are subject to an authority, influence has to do with persuasion and thus requires the possibility of a free choice for the followers.²⁸¹ Another concept which also is related to leadership is “authority.” “Authority” refers, however, to the “right to influence others in specified ways” and is dependent upon a particular position.²⁸² The term “leader” should thus not be confused with position. Instead it is more appropriate to describe a “leader” as a “focal figure” in a group.²⁸³

For some people and scholars, the words “leadership” and “management” are interchangeable. But leadership theorists often distinguish between the two. Management is more driven by objectives than leadership, which is often driven by

and plural action,” *LQ* 19 (2008): 409–25, who has a more narrow definition of leadership dependent on actions rather than relationships.

²⁷⁸ Lang, “Leadership,” 380; Rost, *Leadership*, 161; Alejo J. G. Sison, *The Moral Capital of Leaders: Why Virtue Matters*, NHLS (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2003), 36; Ciulla, “Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness,” 307.

²⁷⁹ Ciulla, “Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness,” 307. See also Craig E. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges: Casting Light or Shadow*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), xx. Cf. Malina, *Christian Origins*, 107, who distinguishes between “managers” and “leaders.”

²⁸⁰ See e.g. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7; Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 199. Cf. John J. Pilch, “Power,” in *Biblical Social Values and their Meaning: A Handbook*, ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 139–42 (139), who defines power as “the ability to exercise control over the behavior of others.”

²⁸¹ Edwin P. Hollander, “Legitimacy, Power, and Influence: A Perspective on Relational Features of Leadership,” in *Leadership Theory and Research: Perspectives and Directions*, ed. Martin M. Chemers and Roya Ayman (San Diego: Academic Press, 1993), 29–47 (31).

²⁸² Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 232 (see also p. 199). See also Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*, ConBNT 11 (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 129, who suggests that “the real difference between an authority relation and a leadership relation is that while the latter is voluntary, the former is not: the internalized and socially upheld group norm that it is a duty to obey the legitimate ruler constrains the subordinate to obey him.” Cf. Bruce J. Malina, “Authoritarianism,” in *Biblical Social Values and their Meaning: A Handbook*, ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 11–17 (11).

²⁸³ Malina, *Christian Origins*, 106. See also Lang, “Leadership,” 380, who points out that leadership cannot be reduced to influence, in a way that everyone who influences is a leader to some extent.

purposes and is broader than management.²⁸⁴ Leadership is about producing a constructive change, while management is about making the organization operate in a smooth manner.²⁸⁵ Another difference between management and leadership is that management (and supervision) is based on a contractual relationship, which is not the case with leadership.²⁸⁶

Consequently, the definition of “leadership” in the present study is thus *a social process where one individual influences other people*. Leadership is to be distinguished from both power/authority and management. It designates a *voluntary relationship* between leader and followers and how the influence process is worked out. In the present study the term “leader” is used from the viewpoint of the implied reader, with a reference to both position and function.²⁸⁷ It is used both to designate the protagonist, who is considered to be a good leader, and other characters in the story who influence people and/or hold positions of authority.

The understanding of good leadership

“Leadership is a complex and diverse field of knowledge and trying to make sense of leadership research can become an intimidating endeavor.”²⁸⁸ This quotation about the complexity of leadership explains why leadership studies have an interdisciplinary nature.²⁸⁹ Scholars who study leadership have often been trained in disciplines such as psychology or management. Recently, however, leadership studies have also become more common within the humanities.²⁹⁰ Leadership studies can thus be compared with other emerging disciplines like gender studies or ethnic studies, which began with different scholars starting to focus on a common topic and have since become distinct disciplines.²⁹¹

²⁸⁴ Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg, “Leadership: Past, Present, and Future,” 5. See also Hunt, “What Is Leadership?,” 26.

²⁸⁵ Hunt, “What Is Leadership?,” 27.

²⁸⁶ Sashkin, “Transformational Leadership Approaches: A Review and Synthesis,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 171–96 (173). See further Rost, *Leadership*, 129–52, for a detailed discussion about the relationship between leadership and management.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 7–8 n. 16, who makes use of a broad definition of a “leader” in his study—“an individual in a position of communal authority.”

²⁸⁸ Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg, “Leadership: Past, Present, and Future,” 3.

²⁸⁹ Ronald E. Riggio, “Is Leadership Studies a Discipline?,” in *Leadership Studies: The Dialogue of Disciplines*, NHLS, ed. Michael Harvey and Ronald E. Riggio (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 9–19 (15). See also Ronald E. Riggio, “Introduction: The Dialogue of Disciplines,” pp. 3–8 in the same book and Mark C. Walker, “The Theory and Metatheory of Leadership: The Important but Contested Nature of Theory,” in *The Quest for a General Theory of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals and Georgia L. J. Sorenson, NHLS (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006), 46–73 (53).

²⁹⁰ See e.g. Joanne B. Ciulla, ed., *Leadership and the Humanities*, vol. 3 of *Leadership at the Crossroads*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla (Westport: Praeger Perspectives, 2008).

²⁹¹ Riggio, “Is leadership studies a discipline?,” 15.

Traditionally seeking just to explain leadership, scholars now also seek to understand leadership.²⁹² Leadership research, especially in psychology and business, has been highly influenced by the positivistic paradigm. In order to be “scientific” leadership scholars have tried to break the codes of leadership, which has offered many insights but also led to a fragmentation of the subject.²⁹³ Ciulla suggests that a multidisciplinary approach is needed in order to understand leadership. She also pays attention to scholars who “emphasize the importance of narratives, such as case studies, mythology and biography, in understanding leadership.”²⁹⁴

One central purpose of leadership studies is to understand what good leadership is, as Ciulla points out: “The ultimate point of studying leadership is What is *good* leadership?”²⁹⁵ Good leadership can be understood in different ways since different people see different properties of the word “good.” It can both designate moral qualifications and effectiveness and skills.²⁹⁶ According to Ciulla, the implication of “good” leadership is seen from both a moral and a technical perspective. In other words, the good leader is both an ethical and effective leader.²⁹⁷ Ciulla thus suggests that “ethics lies at the heart of leadership studies” and that leadership scholars “need to get clear on the ethical elements of leadership in order to be clear on what the term *leadership* connotes.”²⁹⁸ Alejo Sison likewise underlines virtues and excellence of character as a moral capital of leaders.²⁹⁹ “Above all, leadership consists in exerting moral influence over one’s followers,” Sison proposes.³⁰⁰ A

²⁹² Ciulla, “Leadership Ethics,” 14.

²⁹³ Ciulla, “Leadership Ethics,” 8. See also Marta B. Calas and Linda Smircich, “Reading Leadership as a Form of Cultural Analysis,” in *Emerging Leadership Vistas*, ed. J. G. Hunt et al. (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1988), 201–26. Cf. Suze Wilson, *Thinking Differently about Leadership: A Critical History of Leadership Studies*, NHLS (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), 16–31, and her profound critique of today’s “mainstream leadership studies” within social science.

²⁹⁴ Ciulla, “Leadership Ethics,” 9. See also Antonio Marturano, J. Thomas Wren, and Michael Harvey, “The Making of *Leadership and the Humanities*,” *LATH* 1 (2013): 1–4 (2), who underline the need of the disciplines of the humanities for the understanding of leadership in the launch of the new journal *Leadership and the Humanities*.

²⁹⁵ Ciulla, “Leadership Ethics,” 13.

²⁹⁶ Ciulla, ““What is a leader?”,” 62.

²⁹⁷ Ciulla, “Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness,” 308. See this article for a detailed description how ethics and effectiveness are intertwined in good leadership. See also Sison, *Moral Capital of Leaders*, 36–42.

²⁹⁸ Ciulla, “Leadership Ethics,” 17. See also Ciulla, “Introduction,” in *Ethics, the heart of leadership*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla, 2nd ed. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), xv, where she points out: “Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good.” See also Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges*, xvii.

²⁹⁹ Sison, *Moral Capital of Leaders*, 31.

³⁰⁰ Sison, *Moral Capital of Leaders*, 37.

study of Ronald Riggio et al. also shows that the cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice) are a helpful way to define “good leadership.”³⁰¹

Craig Johnson, who underlines the importance of moral character for good leadership, helpfully explains the function of ideals in virtue ethics: “Proponents of virtue ethics start with the end in mind. They develop a description or portrait of the ideal person (in this case a leader) and identify the admirable qualities or tendencies that make up the character of this ethical role model.”³⁰² Johnson identifies courage, temperance, wisdom, justice, optimism, integrity, humility, reverence, and compassion as important virtues for a leader.³⁰³ Some scholars even propose that the word “leader” should be reserved for moral leaders only.³⁰⁴ But it seems hard to make such distinctions, since the “classification of a good leader is in the eye of the beholder,” as Hunt points out.³⁰⁵ In the present study the word “leader” is used to designate both moral and immoral “leaders.”³⁰⁶

The purpose of the present literary study is not to discuss whether Jesus (and the other portrayed leaders) is an ethical and effective leader or not, but to seek understanding of what characterizes this good leader and his leadership, according to the point of view of the implied author of the text. By paying attention to both moral character traits and to the influence process, the present study answers question about good leadership, from the viewpoint of Matthew and the other ancient biographies, in both an ethical and effective sense. Since the focus is to understand Jesus as leader, this study is mainly leader-oriented. This is seen in the focus of the portrayal of Jesus and his character traits. It is also a given consequence of a biographical-narrative reading, since a biography focuses on one central character. But the study also pays attention to how the leader relates to the people and their attitudes toward the leader and is thus also, to some extent, oriented towards the followers of the leader.

³⁰¹ Ronald E. Riggio et al., “Virtue-based Measurement of Ethical Leadership: The Leadership Virtues Questionnaire,” *ConPJ* 62 (2010): 235–50 (246). They propose that “ethical leadership is best represented by the makeup of the individual, the virtues he or she possesses, and the self-knowledge and self-discipline that guide the leader’s moral actions” (p. 237).

³⁰² Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges*, 79.

³⁰³ Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges*, 79.

³⁰⁴ Cf. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 18–19.

³⁰⁵ Hunt, “What Is Leadership?,” 39.

³⁰⁶ Rost, *Leadership*, 166, rightly states that “it is very important that we not confuse what leadership is with what leadership should be” (see also p. 127). This point of view is also taken by Nicholas O. Warner, “Of ‘Gods and Commodores’: Leadership in Melville’s *Moby-Dick*,” in *Leadership and the Humanities*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla; vol. 3 of *Leadership at the Crossroads*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla (Westport: Praeger Perspectives, 2008), 3–19 (4–5).

Leadership and literature

The study of leadership through literature has not been central among scholars, but interdisciplinary studies of leadership and literature are becoming more and more common.³⁰⁷ Nicholas Warner points out that even if there are few leadership studies by literary scholars, there is a great potential of approaching leadership through literature. He proposes that “literature’s great relevance to leadership lies in its capacity for vividly representing, and asking probing questions about, the interpersonal dynamics and social, emotional, and ethical dimensions of leader–follower relations.”³⁰⁸ In agreement with the discussion of the definition of leadership above, Warner gives the following statement about the nature of leadership: “In its very essence, leadership is a human relationship between leaders and followers, with all of the complexity that human relationships entail.”³⁰⁹ Among the benefits of literature for the study of leadership, the use of characterization to present the personality of a human, vital presentation of concrete events and situations, and example of the interaction between leader and followers can be mentioned.³¹⁰ Since literature deals with the full range of human experience, literary criticism has a multidisciplinary nature and is “an excellent tool for studying so multifaceted a subject as leadership,”³¹¹ as Warner points out. He continues and states: “Literature can, in effect, serve as a crossroads where different perspectives meet, mingle, and produce new directions for exploring and understanding leaders, followers, and the ways that they interact.”³¹²

The benefit of literature in leadership studies is also emphasized by Joseph Badaracco. He does not only point out that the characterization of leaders in serious literature, where the characters are presented as real people, can enlarge the understanding of leadership.³¹³ Badaracco also pays attention to the universality of leadership, speaking about “the unchanging agenda of leadership, in all times and places: developing a goal, a plan, a purpose, or an ideal and working with and through other people to make it real—in a world that is often uncertain, recalcitrant,

³⁰⁷ See e.g. James G. March and Thierry Weil, *On Leadership* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Joseph L. Badaracco, *Questions of Character: Illuminating the Heart of Leadership Through Literature* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006); Warner, “Of ‘Gods and Commodores.’” Cf. Nicholas O. Warner, “Screening Leadership Through Shakespeare: Paradoxes of Leader-Follower Relations in *Henry V* on Film,” *LQ* 18 (2007): 1–15.

³⁰⁸ Nicholas O. Warner, “Leadership in literary perspective,” in *Leadership Studies: The Dialogue of Disciplines*, ed. Michael Harvey and Ronald E. Riggio (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), 171–83 (171–72).

³⁰⁹ Warner, “Leadership in literary perspective,” 175. Cf. March and Weil, *On Leadership*, 1.

³¹⁰ Warner, “Leadership in literary perspective,” 174–75.

³¹¹ Warner, “Leadership in literary perspective,” 181.

³¹² Warner, “Leadership in literary perspective,” 182.

³¹³ Badaracco, *Questions of Character*, 4.

and sometimes perilous.”³¹⁴ It is thus not surprising that literature from different historical eras and of different genres has been used in the study of leadership. Leadership studies have not only made use of modern fiction, but for example also of ancient literature³¹⁵ and biographies.³¹⁶ At the same time, as Aurora Hermida-Ruiz rightly points out, several studies of leadership in literature seem to simplify the literature’s contribution to leadership as timeless and practical leadership lessons. This approach is at the expense of an in-depth interpretation of a “right” meaning of a text in light of its textual context and historical situation.³¹⁷ In the same way, Richard Beaton points to the flaw of many leadership studies on biblical text, which handles the bible as a “handbook” from which we can draw universal principles and strategies for leaders today. Nonetheless, if the biblical text is interpreted in its historical, cultural, and linguistic context, it can increase our understanding of good leadership.³¹⁸ The present study aims to continue this approach and can be seen as a contribution to the emerging leadership study from a literary perspective.

To seek understanding of Jesus as leader through a literary method is also compatible with the trait approach within leadership studies. The leader trait approach is one of the oldest approaches in leadership studies, which also engages scholars today.³¹⁹ Zaccaro et al. note that the concept of leader traits has its roots in antiquity and state: “These early writings from antiquity to the first part of the 20th

³¹⁴ Badaracco, *Questions of Character*, 6. Cf. Ciulla, “Ethics and Leadership Effectiveness,” 302–03, who points to the benefit of old texts for the understanding of leadership, since the nature of leadership is connected to the human condition.

³¹⁵ See e.g. Bernad Sarachek, “Greek Concepts of Leadership,” *AMJ* 11 (1968): 39–48; John H. Humphreys, “The *Anabasis* and Lessons in Leadership: Xenophon as a Prototypical Transformational Leader,” *JMR* 2 (2002): 136–46; Vivienne J. Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes: Reading the Reflections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³¹⁶ See Bernard M. Bass and Dana L. Farrow, “Quantitative Analyses of Biographies of Political Figures,” *JP* 97 (1977): 281–96; Bernard M. Bass, Bruce J. Avolio, and Laurie Goodheim, “Biography and the Assessment of Transformational Leadership at the World-Class-Level,” *JM* 13 (1987): 7–19; Jennifer O’Connor et al. “Charismatic Leaders and Destructiveness: An Historiometric Study,” *LQ* 6 (1995): 529–55 (537).

³¹⁷ Aurora Hermida-Ruiz, “The Relevance of *Don Quixote* to Leadership Studies: Nostalgia, Cynicism, and Ambivalence,” in *Leadership and the Humanities*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla, vol. 3 of *Leadership at the Crossroads*, ed. Joanne B. Ciulla (Westport: Praeger Perspectives, 2008), 20–50 (26).

³¹⁸ Richard Beaton, “Leadership, Leadership Ethics,” *DSE* 475–77 (476).

³¹⁹ Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Sternberg, “Leadership: Past, Present, and Future,” 6–7. See e.g. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It. Why People Demand It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 4–13, who identify several key characteristics of good leaders and Hunt, “What Is Leadership?,” 33, who shows that current investigations of leader traits have for example concluded that emotional maturity, integrity, cognitive ability/intelligence/social intelligence, and task-relevant knowledge are important leader characteristics. Cf. Riggio et al., “Virtue-based Measurement of Ethical Leadership,” and Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges*, 79–88, who identifies classical virtues for today’s leaders.

century attest to the enduring and compelling notions that leaders have particular qualities distinguishing them from nonleaders, and that these qualities can be identified and assessed.”³²⁰ In this context, “traits refer to stable or consistent patterns of behavior that are relatively immune to situational contingencies.”³²¹ A biographical-narrative reading of the Gospel of Matthew (and other ancient biographies), which pays attention to the moral character traits of the leader, is thus in line with a long tradition within leadership studies. Furthermore, examining ancient biographies is in one sense a return to the first “leadership studies,” since the genre, from its very beginning, is closely related to leadership.

1.3.2 Leadership terminology in ancient Greek

What is then the relationship between the modern concept of “leader” and “leadership” and the ancient Greek language? In this section I will present some terms in the Greek language that correspond to the modern concept. It will thus be clarified that “leadership” is a common concept in both the ancient and the modern world.

Leadership terms in the Greek language

The Louw-Nida Greek-English lexicon is based on semantic domains and thus helpful in the identification of Greek leadership terms. In a number of domains they outline a wide range of terms that involve “interpersonal association,” from basically positive to negative features.³²² Under the domain “guide, discipline, follow,” which is placed between “help, care for” and “control, rule,” they have one subdomain which they label “guide, lead.” They state that the meanings in this subdomain “imply a willingness on the part of others to be led ... a minimum of control on the part of the one guiding or leading.”³²³ This description corresponds well with the above definition of leadership.³²⁴ In this subdomain (“guide, lead”) Louw and Nida place the following terms: ἡγεῖσθαι (with προϊστασθαι, κατευθύνειν,

³²⁰ Stephen J. Zaccaro, Cary Kemp, and Paige Bader, “Leader Traits and Attributes,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2004), 101–24 (102).

³²¹ Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader, “Leader Traits,” 103. Cf. Sashkin, “Transformational Leadership Approaches,” 189.

³²² Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament: A Supplement to the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, SBLRBS 25 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 110–11.

³²³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988–89), 465.

³²⁴ The willingness of the followers is also recognized in the portrayal of ideal leaders in ancient biographies, which the next chapter will clarify. See p. 127.

φέρειν, and ἄγειν), ποιμαίνειν, κυβέρνησις, ὁδηγός, ἐπίτροπος, ἀρχηγός, στῦλος, πατήρ, and πρόδρομος.³²⁵

In the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Moisés Silva relates the concept of “leader” to “ruler, lord, govern.” The terms that he translates to “leader” are ἡγεμών/ἡγεῖσθαι, κεφαλὴ (fig.), ὁδηγός, προτοστάτης, στῦλος (fig. for “integral leader”), and for “lead,” ποιμαίνειν (fig.).³²⁶ Though these two dictionaries do not agree completely, it can be recognized that ἡγεῖσθαι, ποιμαίνειν, and ὁδηγός, three terms used in Matthew, are identified as leadership terms.

The placement of the semantic field of leadership in both Louw-Nida and Silva points to its association with “ruling.” As the following survey reveals, there is an overlap between “leading” and “ruling,” as well as “teaching.”³²⁷ Nonetheless, these terms are obviously used in a sense which corresponds to the modern concept of “leadership.”³²⁸ The categorization of leadership terms together with “guiding” by Louw and Nida is adequate, since there is a close relationship between leading someone in the spatial and physical sense, and leading someone in the metaphorical sense, as Ellingworth points out:

There is no doubt a semantic continuum between, on the one hand, Moses physically leading Israel out of Egypt (Ex 15.22) and rulers leading their armies into battle, and, on the other hand, the leadership of such people as Pilate, Caiaphas, or Paul, not significantly dependent on their physically leading a group on the move.³²⁹

Leadership terms in Matthew

To understand the meaning of a word one needs to pay attention to both diachronic (e.g. etymology and semantic change) and synchronic perspectives (e.g. context). The synchronic study, however, is most important since the context primarily determines the meaning.³³⁰ The root of the word may be useful for the establishment of meaning, but only if it can be shown that the author was aware of the root.³³¹ There is, however, a core meaning that often is preserved, as Silva points out: “We can hardly doubt, of course, that most vocabulary items are linked to a more or less

³²⁵ ἐπίτροπος and πρόδρομος do not occur in the NT.

³²⁶ Moisés Silva, ed. *NIDNTE* 1:70.

³²⁷ Cf. Ellingworth, “Translating the Language of Leadership,” 136, who proposes that “leader” is “the most natural reciprocal term to pair with ‘disciple.’”

³²⁸ Cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek Lexicon*, 466: “In some languages it is difficult to distinguish readily between expressions for ‘leading’ and those which refer to ‘ruling’ or ‘governing,’ but it is important to try to distinguish clearly between these two different sets of interpersonal relations.”

³²⁹ Ellingworth, “Translating the Language of Leadership,” 131.

³³⁰ See Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 36–38, and Nida and Louw, *Lexical Semantics*, 12.

³³¹ Silva, *Biblical Words*, 47–48.

stable semantic core; indeed, without it, communication would be unimaginable.”³³² In the following, the leadership terminology in Matthew is presented, with notions of how the terms are used in different contexts.

ἡγεῖσθαι/ἡγούμενος/ἡγεμών

The verb ἡγεῖσθαι is used in two very different ways. The first sense is to express “thinking” or “considering.”³³³ The second sense, however, is related to “leading.” The two cognates, ἡγούμενος (participle) and ἡγεμών (noun), are often used in the sense of “leader.”

The term ἡγούμενος (lit. “one who leads”) is used in a broad way about leaders in Greek literature in general.³³⁴ When Plato writes about political leadership in *Republic* he uses the expression “follow their leader” (ἀκολουθεῖν τε τῷ ἡγουμένῳ) (474C). Xenophon makes use of the verb ἡγεῖσθαι when he describes the leadership of Agesilaus (2.23, 10.4). In his examination of the term in Hebrews, Franz Laub states about its use in the profane and religious setting: “In zahlreichen Belegstellen aus dem Umfeld des Hebr erscheint ἡγούμενος als Bezeichnung für Männer in leitender Stellung in den verschiedensten Bereichen und auf verschiedensten Ebenen.”³³⁵ Ceslas Spicq points out that ἡγούμενος normally means “leader, guide, commander,” but that it has a broader meaning which is seen by the variety in its usage. He concludes that the term “always designates one who has authority and takes the initiative, the leader who has responsibility for a common undertaking.”³³⁶

A similar usage of ἡγούμενος for leadership in a general sense is found in LXX, NT, and the Apostolic Fathers. Here the term has a broad meaning and can refer to a lot of different leadership levels. It is used both for the top man, like Joseph in Egypt (Acts 7:10, cf. Luke 22:26, 1 Macc 14:41), the chiefs of the tribes (e.g. Deut 5:23), the king (e.g. 1 Sam 25:30, Ezek 43:7), chief officer (Jer 20:1), commander in chief (Jdt 5:5, 1 Macc 9:30, 2 Macc 14:16), and for the ones who are in charge of the community of believers (Sir 33:19; Act 15:22; Heb 13:7, 17, 24; 1 Clem 1:3, cf. 1 Clem 21:6; Her 2.2.6, 3.9.7). BDAG describes the meaning of ἡγεῖσθαι as “to be in a supervisory capacity, *lead, guide*.”³³⁷

³³² Silva, *Biblical Words*, 103.

³³³ See e.g. Plutarch, *Num.* 3.5, 6.2; Isocrates, *Evag.* 24.

³³⁴ LSJ translates ἡγεῖσθαι with “go before, lead the way” and “lead, command in war.”

³³⁵ Franz Laub, “Verkündigung und Gemeindeamt: Die Auktorität der ἡγούμενοι Hebr 13,7.17.24,” *SNTSU* 6–7 (1981): 169–190 (182–83). Cf. Friedrich Büchsel, “ἡγεῖσθαι,” *TDNT* 2:907–08, who likewise shows that the word is used about leaders in different religious bodies and proposes that the Christian usage is influenced by non-Christian sources.

³³⁶ Ceslas Spicq, “ἡγούμενος,” *TLNT* 2:167.

³³⁷ BDAG, “ἡγεῖσθαι.” Cf. Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 73–75, who points out that the term functions in a similar way as προϊστάμενος and thus denotes leaders in a general sense.

The noun ἡγεμών is commonly used in the broad sense of “leader” in Greek literature. It is used both in Xenophon’s *Agésilas* (1:3, 35)³³⁸ and Plutarch’s *Numa* (2.4, 6.3). Philo uses the term twelve times in his biography of Moses.³³⁹ The meaning of the term as “leader” is clearly seen in 2.187 where Moses is presented as a perfect ἡγεμών, since he is king, lawgiver, priest, and prophet. In LSJ the term is translated to “guide,” “leader,” “commander,” and “chief.”³⁴⁰ In the NT, however, ἡγεμών is used especially for Roman provincial governors and is thus more political loaded than ἡγούμενος.³⁴¹ BDAG translates ἡγεμών to “one who rules, esp. in a preeminent position, ruler” or “head imperial provincial administrator, governor.”³⁴²

In Matthew ἡγούμενος is used in 2:6 in reference to Jesus. The noun ἡγεμών is used for Roman governors, especially Pilate (e.g. 10:18, 27:2, 28:14). In 2:6 it also used with reference to the rulers of Judah.³⁴³

ποιμαίνειν/ποιμήν

The verb ποιμαίνειν is used in the literal sense to express the activity of a shepherd who takes care of his sheep. In addition to this usage, the term is also commonly used as a metaphor for leadership. Shepherding is thus a leadership image, but in the Greek language it is at the same time a “frozen” metaphor which has become a leadership term.

In Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature the shepherd metaphor is used about both gods and kings. The transferred usage of the shepherd motif for the king is recognized already in Sumerian inscriptions. In Mesopotamia the shepherd metaphor is characterized by the caring leadership of the king. In Egypt it is associated with the power and authority of god-kings.³⁴⁴ In the Greek literature, the metaphor is used by, for example, Homer,³⁴⁵ Xenophon,³⁴⁶ and Dio Chrysostom.³⁴⁷

³³⁸ Here Xenophon also uses the verb ἡγεμονεύειν.

³³⁹ 1.71, 1.148, 1.193, 1.198, 1.200, 1.236, 1.243, 1.329, 2.187, 2.215, 2.234, 2.273.

³⁴⁰ LSJ, “ἡγεμών.”

³⁴¹ Spicq, *TLNT* 2:168 n. 10; Ellingworth, “Translating the Language of Leadership,” 130; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 60 n. 6. Cf. Willitts, *Shepherd-King*, 107–08.

³⁴² BDAG, “ἡγεμών.”

³⁴³ Cf. James D. G. Dunn “ἡγεμών,” *NIDNTT* 1:270.

³⁴⁴ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 20–22. See also Jonathan D. Huntzinger, “The End of Exile: A Short Commentary on the Shepherd/Sheep Metaphor in Exilic and Post-exilic Prophetic and Synoptic Gospel Literature” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 69–78, and Hedrick, “Jesus as Shepherd,” 120–25, for examples in Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature.

³⁴⁵ See e.g. *Il.* 7.200, 10.72, 11.497, 13.416.

³⁴⁶ *Cyr.* 8.2.14; *Mem.* 1.2.32, 3.2.1.

³⁴⁷ *1 Regn.* 12–13, *2 Regn.* 6, *4 Regn.* 43–44. Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 781C.

Here it is often used in a military context, without emphasis on kindness.³⁴⁸ According to Plato, the rulers of the city-state are like shepherds, who care for their flock.³⁴⁹ The shepherd language is, however, not often used by Roman authors, since shepherds often were disdained by the Romans.³⁵⁰

In his biography of Moses, Philo explains why kings are called “shepherds” and describes the relationship between the care of sheep and leadership: “After the marriage, Moses took care of the herds of his father-in-law and tended (ἐποίμαινε) them, as a preparation for leadership (προδιδασκόμενος εἰς ἡγεμονίαν) (1.60–61).³⁵¹ Chae concludes that the “king as shepherd involves the role of the ‘feeder’ who secures food, protection, and justice for the people under his care.”³⁵² The shepherd’s crook is, from the earliest times, a sign for princely and royal leadership, especially as a symbol of the power of leadership.³⁵³ LSJ describes one of the metaphorical meanings of ποιμαίνειν as to “guide” and “govern.”³⁵⁴

In the OT God is described as the Shepherd of Israel who goes before the flock, guides it, leads it to pastures, protects it, and gathers it.³⁵⁵ The most developed content of the metaphor is found in the prophetic literature (e.g. Jer 23:3, Ezek 34:11–22, Isa 40:10–11, Mic 7:14) and in Ps 23. The shepherd image is also a common term for different human leaders of the people (2 Sam 7:7; Jer 2:8, 3:15, 10:21, 23:1–4). The image is used widely for political, religious, and military leaders of varying rank and authority.³⁵⁶ God entrusts humans to lead his people as shepherds of Israel. One example of the use of shepherd as a metaphor for leadership in the OT is seen in Num 27:16–17 where Moses prays to the Lord for a new leader in Israel:

May the LORD, the God of the spirits and of all flesh, appoint a man over this congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out (ἐξάξει) and lead them in (εἰσάξει), and the congregation of the LORD shall not be like sheep without a shepherd (ποιμήν).

³⁴⁸ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 22. See also Jack W. Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherd,” *ABD* 5:1187–90 (1189).

³⁴⁹ *Resp.* 440D. Cf. 345C.

³⁵⁰ Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 90–97. For an exception, see Suetonius, *Tib.* 32.2.

³⁵¹ *Mos.* 1.61. Cf. *Prob.* 31, *Agr.* 29. According to Hedrick, “Jesus as Shepherd,” 131, shepherding as a preparation for leadership is a common theme in the ancient world.

³⁵² Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 23.

³⁵³ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 23. See also Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherd,” 5:1188–89.

³⁵⁴ LSJ, “ποιμαίνω.”

³⁵⁵ Joachim Jeremias, “ποιμήν, ἀρχιποίμην, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 6:485–99 (487). Huntzinger, “End of Exile,” 81, even suggests that “the absolute use of the image of shepherd is reserved for God in the Old Testament.”

³⁵⁶ Louis Jonker, “רֹעֶה,” *NIDOTTE* 3:1138–43 (1141). See also Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 46, 55.

In this text the leadership terms “to lead out” (ἐξάγειν) and “to lead in” (εἰσάγειν) are used.³⁵⁷ According to Chae, these terms “reveal the ultimate image of the shepherd: He is the leader who leads (cf. ἄγω-) his flock.”³⁵⁸ A similar example is found in 2 Chr 18:16.³⁵⁹ The usage of the shepherd imagery for human leaders in OT finds a good type in David (e.g. Ps 77:71–72 LXX), which lays ground for a future shepherd who shall restore Israel and establish a new reign.³⁶⁰ The metaphor is, however, used for both good and bad leaders.

Even in early Judaism the shepherd metaphor is used as an expression of leadership. In rabbinic Judaism, Moses and David, as leaders and teachers of the law, are described as true shepherds.³⁶¹ In 1 Enoch David is appointed by Samuel to be the “ruler and leader of the sheep” (εἰς ἄρχοντα καὶ εἰς ἡγούμενον τῶν προβάτων) (89.46). Likewise, the Psalms of Solomon makes use of the shepherd imagery for the leadership of the coming son of David (17.40–41). In 4 Ezra 5.16–18 the shepherd metaphor is used about a religious leader and in 2 Baruch 77.13 it refers to teachers of the Law.³⁶² The shepherd imagery is also used in the Qumran writings. Here, the overseer of the community is said to be as a shepherd to his flock (CD-A 13.7–12).

In early Christian literature, besides the reference to Jesus, the shepherd metaphor is applied to congregational leaders. Both ποιμήν (Eph 4:11, cf. Ign. Phld., 2.1; Herm. Sim. 9, 31.4–6) and ποιμαίνειν (1 Pet 5:2, Acts 20:28, John 21:16) are used to refer to the congregational leaders or their function. BDAG describes its meaning as “to lead, guide, or rule.”³⁶³

From the survey above it is evident that ποιμαίνειν is used widely and commonly as a general leadership term. It is not limited to a specific leadership role, though it is in some contexts closely related to kingship and ruling, but is used about kings, teachers, prophets, and generals.

In Matthew, ποιμαίνειν is used in 2:6 and ποιμήν in 9:36 and 26:31 (cf. 25:32) in reference to Jesus. In addition, the shepherd metaphor is also evoked by the use of the term πρόβατον (“sheep”) in 10:6, 15:24, and 18:12.

³⁵⁷ The same terms are also used in 2 Sam 5:2, Ezek 34:12–13, and John 10:4 in combination with the shepherd imagery. See also Louw-Nida, 36.1 for the connection between ἡγούμενος and ἄγειν.

³⁵⁸ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 91.

³⁵⁹ “And he said, ‘I saw Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd and the LORD said, they have no leader (ἡγούμενον), let each one return to his home in peace.’” Cf. Ezek 34:5, 8.

³⁶⁰ See e.g. Mic 2, 5; Ezek 34, 37; Zech 9–11, 13.

³⁶¹ Erich Beyreuther, “Shepherd,” *NIDNTT* 3:564–69 (566). Cf. Jeremiah, *TDNT* 6:488–89.

³⁶² Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 79–80.

³⁶³ BDAG, “ποιμαίνω.” See also Beyreuther, *NIDNTT* 3:564, and Jonker, *NIDOTTE* 3:1141.

ὁδηγεῖν/ὁδηγός

The verb ὁδηγεῖν is used about guiding another person, both literally (“guiding”) and metaphorically (“leading”). Similarly, the noun ὁδηγός refers to a “guide” or a “leader.”

In Greek literature in general, the terms are mostly used in the literal sense, about finding one’s way in the spatial sense.³⁶⁴ In the biblical literature, however, the metaphorical usage is also common. Here, ὁδηγεῖν and ὁδηγός are often used in relation to knowledge.³⁶⁵ The terms are not restricted to teaching, but are also used about leading in a more general sense. This is made clear by the usage in Ps 77:72 LXX about king David. Here the term is used as a parallel to ποιμαίνειν: “And he shepherded (ἐποίμανεν) them with an innocent heart, and he led (ὠδήγησεν) them with skillful hands.” The same combination of terms is used in Ps 22:1–3 LXX.³⁶⁶ In Rev 7:17 in the NT, ὁδηγεῖν is also used as a parallel to ποιμαίνειν: “For the lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd (ποιμανεῖ) them and lead (ὁδηγήσει) them to the springs of living water.”³⁶⁷ In the LXX, the verb is also used about God’s leading of the peoples.³⁶⁸ BDAG suggests that one of the meanings of ὁδηγεῖν is “to assist in reaching a desired destination, *lead, guide*.”³⁶⁹

In Matthew, these terms are not used about Jesus. But both the verb and the noun are used by Jesus in the story. In 15:14; 23:16, 24, ὁδηγός is used as a reference to the religious leaders as “blind leaders.” The verb ὁδηγεῖν is also used in 15:14 in the saying of Jesus: “And if the blind leads (ὁδηγῇ) the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

ἀκολουθεῖν

In addition to ἡγούμενος, ποιμήν, and ὁδηγός, Matthew makes use of ἀκολουθεῖν which also can be regarded as leadership language. This term is, however, not related to the act of leading but to the act of following a leader. Louw and Nida put this verb in the same domain as the leadership terms, but in the subdomain “follow, be a disciple.” They describe the meaning of ἀκολουθεῖν (and μαθητεύειν) as “to be

³⁶⁴ Wilhelm Michaelis, “ὁδηγός, ὁδηγέω,” *TDNT* 5:97–102. Cf. LSJ, which gives the translation “lead one upon his way, guide” for ὁδηγεῖν and “guide” for ὁδηγός. See e.g. Philo, *Mos.* 1.178; Plutarch, *Alex.* 27.3.

³⁶⁵ See Ps 24:5 LXX, John 16:13, Acts 8:31, Rom 2:19. In Ps 24:5, 9, and 142:10 LXX ὁδηγεῖν is used as a parallel to διδάσκειν. According to BDAG, one of the meanings of ὁδηγεῖν is “to assist someone in acquiring information or knowledge.”

³⁶⁶ Cf. Ps 76:21 LXX.

³⁶⁷ Cf. *Acts Phil.* 103 (cf. 167), where Jesus is referred to as ὁδηγός.

³⁶⁸ Ps 24:9, 66:5, 72:24 LXX. In Wis 9:11 the term is used in reference to the guiding of Wisdom. Cf. Eccl 2:3.

³⁶⁹ BDAG, “ὁδηγέω.” See also Louw-Nida, “ὁδηγέω.”

a follower or a disciple of someone, in the sense of adhering to the teachings or instructions of a leader and in promoting the cause of such a leader.”³⁷⁰

Like several other leadership terms, ἀκολουθεῖν is used both in a spatial and a metaphorical sense. In classical Greek, the term refers to take company with someone, go behind another, and take the same opinion as another.³⁷¹ According to LSJ, the verb is used in the sense to “follow one, go after or with him” or, in the metaphorical sense, to “follow, be guided by ... obey.”³⁷² As already noted, Plato makes use of the term in *Republica* when he writes about political leadership and uses the expression “follow their leader” (ἀκολουθεῖν τε τῷ ἡγουμένῳ) (474C).³⁷³ In a discussion about leadership in warfare Demosthenes also uses the term when he states that one should “not follow (ἀκολουθεῖν) the matters, but to be before the matters, and in the same way as the army may be expected to be led (ἡγεῖσθαι) by the general, the matters should be by the counselors” (1 *Philip* 4.39).

In the LXX, ἀκολουθεῖν is used metaphorically, both in a general sense about following someone,³⁷⁴ and in a more narrow sense as being one’s disciple.³⁷⁵ The same pattern is found in the NT.³⁷⁶ With the exception of John 21:19 and Rev 14:4, the term is only used in reference to the earthly Jesus. In John 10:4 ἀκολουθεῖν is used together with the shepherd metaphor when it is stated that “the sheep follow (ἀκολουθεῖ)” their shepherd. A similar usage is seen in the Apostolic Fathers where it is sometimes clearly used about following leaders: Ignatius writes in his letter to the Philadelphians that they should “flee from division and false teaching. But where the shepherd (ὁ ποιμήν) is, there follow (ἀκολουθεῖτε) like sheep” (2:1).³⁷⁷ In the same letter (3:3), the term is also used about one who follows a schismatic.³⁷⁸ According to BDAG, common usages of the term are “to follow or accompany someone who takes the lead” or “to follow someone as a disciple.”³⁷⁹

³⁷⁰ Louw-Nida, “μαθητεύω, ἀκολουθέω.”

³⁷¹ Christian Blending, “ἀκολουθέω,” *NIDNTT* 1:480–83 (481).

³⁷² LSJ, “ἀκολουθέω.”

³⁷³ Cf. Isocrates, *Evag.* 29; Aristotle, *Pol.* 1284A10.

³⁷⁴ See e.g. Isa 45:14, Ezek 29:16.

³⁷⁵ See e.g. 1 Kgs 19:20–21 where term ἀκολουθεῖν (and the corresponding Hebrew רָאָה אַחֲרַי) is used in a passage where Elisha expresses his wish to follow Elijah and to serve him. In the rabbinic literature, the term refers to the relationship between a rabbi and his student and physical movement and travelling. See Blending, *NIDNTT* 1:481; William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1988), 1:398.

³⁷⁶ See e.g. Matt 9:9 and Rev 14:4. Cf. Gerhard Schneider, “ἀκολουθέω,” *EDNT* 1:49–52 (49).

³⁷⁷ See also Ign, *Smyrn.* 8.1.

³⁷⁸ Cf. 1 Clem. 35.5; Herm. *Vis.* 3.8.4, *Mand.* 6.2.9.

³⁷⁹ BDAG, “ἀκολουθέω.” For a different view, see Schneider, *EDNT* 1:50, who proposes that “[t]he more general meaning of join, obey, be lead by ... does not occur in the NT.”

The verb ἀκολουθεῖν is rarely used as expressing obedience or force, but refers commonly to voluntary response of people.³⁸⁰ Nida and Louw differentiate between διώκειν, which generally has a hostile intent, and ἀκολουθεῖν, which generally has a friendly intent “and even a desire to associate with or to imitate.”³⁸¹

In Matthew ἀκολουθεῖν is used no less than twenty-five times and it refers most often to the disciples and to the crowds. The use of the word in reference to the crowds shows that it is not only referring to the relationship between a rabbi and a student. The verb is used both in the literal sense of the word (e.g. 9:19) and in the metaphorical sense as a term for discipleship (e.g. 16:24). Since ἀκολουθεῖν can be used in different ways, the context in Matthew is important in order to determine its actual sense.

Summary

The survey above clearly shows that leadership terms, which correspond to the modern definition of leadership as a voluntary relationship and a social process where one individual influences followers, are used in Matthew. The two general Greek terms for “leader,” ἡγούμενος and ποιμήν, are used with reference to Jesus and the general term for “following,” ἀκολουθεῖν, is used with reference to the people around him. In addition, another general term for “leader,” ὁδηγός, is used in the gospel. The study of Jesus as *leader* in Matthew is thus not an anachronistic application of a modern concept. To the contrary, the theme of this study is clearly present in the text.

1.4 Procedure

The present study, with the purpose of bringing understanding and clarification about how Jesus is presented as leader in the Gospel of Matthew, contains seven chapters and proceeds in three main steps. These steps are presented in this section together with related research questions in order to give an overview of the study.

Chapter two – four portraits of the ideal leader

The first step of this project (chapter two) is an examination of the comparative material in order to find out common leadership ideals in ancient biographies. Two

³⁸⁰ According to LSJ, “ἀκολουθέω,” it can have the sense of “obeying,” when it is used in reference to laws. In addition, it can refer to slaves who follow their masters. BDAG, “ἀκολουθέω,” mentions some examples where it has the sense of “obeying” (not in the gospels; see e.g. Jdt 2:3 and 1 Clem 40:4), but shows that when it refers to Jesus it has the implication of “move behind someone in the same direction,” “follow or accompany someone who takes the lead,” or “to follow someone as a disciple.”

³⁸¹ Nida and Louw, *Lexical Semantics*, 92.

main questions are the focus in this chapter: Which are the main moral character traits of the leader and what are the main features of the relationship between the leader and the people? Firstly, I seek to find out which the main moral character traits of the leader are, which can be described as “the virtues of the soul,” since these biographies portray good leaders. Which traits are repeated or emphasized in the presentation of the protagonist? Secondly, I seek to describe the relationship between the leader and the people. Here I examine how the leader relates to the people. Which are the main leadership roles of the leader? How does the leader influence his followers? How is the leader behaving towards the people and which is the attitude of the people towards him?

Chapter three to six – Jesus as leader

The next step is the examination of Matthew, which is the main focus of the study (chapter three to six). Here the same two main questions are raised with regard to Matthew’s biographical story, but this text is analyzed in a more detailed way. In addition to the two questions about character traits and relationship, the examination of Matthew also pays attention to the theme of leadership throughout the story.³⁸² This theme relates both to the used leadership language and the development of the story and its plot.

These four chapters are organized according to the basic structure of ancient biographies with the division of the text in three parts: origin, career, and death and significance.³⁸³ Matthew follows this conventional three-part structure with beginning, middle, and end. The beginning of the biography concerns the origins of Jesus and includes the genealogy, the birth, and the preparation of the leader (1:1–4:11). The middle presents his public career, through his words and deeds (4:12–25:46). The end narrates the passion, death, resurrection, and lasting influence of the protagonist (26:1–28:20).³⁸⁴ For pragmatic reasons the long middle section

³⁸² For a definition of a “theme,” see Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 73 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 27: “Themes are basic ideas of narratives, and their function is to give internal shape and completeness to a sequence of episodes. In other words, themes are organizing narrative concepts.”

³⁸³ See Segovia, “The Journey(s) of the Word of God,” 32–33, and especially Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 210, who concludes after his extensive analysis of 142 ancient biographies: “Dabei wurde mit der regelmäßig zu beobachtenden Dreigliedrigkeit biographischer Erzählungen bereits eine grundlegende formale Eigenschaft deutlich.” Cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 1459A.

³⁸⁴ For the same biographical three-part structure, see Yieh, *One Teacher*, 14–15, and Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 49. Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, has almost the same three-part structure but includes 4:12–17 in the beginning part of the biography (pp. 460–61, 474). See also Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 90. The biographical three-part structure is similar to the proposal of W. J. C. Weren, “The Macrostructure of Matthew’s Gospel: A New Proposal,” *Bib* 87 (2006): 171–199 (188), who suggests that Matthew has a *corpus* (4:18–25:46) which presents the ministry of Jesus (with the five discourses). The *corpus* is preceded by an *overture* (1:1–4:11) and succeeded by a *finale* (26:17–28:20). Between the three parts of the gospel there are two “hinge

about the career of Jesus is divided to two chapters. The length of these chapters is dependent on the length of the middle part of the biography and its presentation of the career of the protagonist, which is the major part of the text.

The structure of the analysis is both sequential and thematic. The sequential structure helps to show the development of the narrative, while the benefit of the thematic structure is to clarify relevant issues in the characterization of Jesus and and at the same time avoid repetition. The moral character traits of Jesus are discussed thoroughly in the part of the story where they are highlighted and not elsewhere, even if they also are present in other parts of the story.

Chapter seven – Matthew’s Jesus and the other portraits

In the third step I summarize the portrait of Jesus as leader, according to the findings in chapter three to six, make comparisons and draw conclusions. Firstly, the development of the theme of leadership and its importance for the story is described. Secondly, the moral character traits and the features of the relationship to the people are summarized. Here I also make comparisons with the other biographical portraits and pay attention to both similarities and differences. By comparing Matthew’s presentation with other presentations of good leaders, the portrayal of Jesus as leader becomes clearer.

This chapter also contains a discussion concerning the question of whether Jesus is presented as a model for leaders and to what extent. The biographical genre, with its common purpose of presenting protagonists for imitation, gives reason to discuss the matter thoroughly. In order to answer this question, attention will be paid to both the biographical genre and the narrative content of Matthew.

texts” (4:12–17 and 26:1–16) which connects the different parts of the book. In the same way Gerhardsson, “The Christology of Matthew,” 22, speaks about 4:12–25:46 as the first part of Jesus’ ministry. Cf. also Camp, “Woe to you,” 58, who suggests that Matthew is structured according to the topoi of the biographical genre: “Matthew clearly tells the life of Jesus from ancestry to death using the framework of ancestry (1:1–17), birth and early childhood (1:18–2:11), deeds and virtues (3:1–26:75), and death (27:1–28:20).”

2. Portraits of the ideal leader in ancient biographies

In this chapter four biographical portraits of ideal leaders are analysed: Isocrates' *Evagoras*, Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, Philo's *Moses*, and Plutarch's *Numa*. These ancient biographies are studied from the viewpoint of the highlighted moral character traits of the leader—the virtues of the soul—and how the relationship between the leader and the people is presented. These two objectives obviously overlap in some cases,¹ but since some traits are not related to the relationship to other people they will be separated in the following presentation.

2.1 Isocrates' *Evagoras*

The rhetorician and author Isocrates (436–338 BCE) wrote an encomiastic biography of Evagoras, the king of Salamis in Cyprus. This work is regarded as the first encomium in prose that describes a historical person.² It is part of the three Cyprian orations, together with *To Nicocles* and *Nicocles or the Cyprians*. These three orations have been regarded as a trilogy and are in some way linked with one another.³

Evagoras clearly gives a portrait of an ideal leader. The author states that “of all the rulers (τυράννων) of all time, none will appear to have acquired this honor more nobly than Evagoras” (34).⁴ Isocrates also points out that Evagoras “managed (διώκει) the city so reverently and benevolently that visitors did not so much envy

¹ This is most clearly seen in the presentation of the leader as a man of benevolence.

² Christoph Eucken, *Isokrates: Seine Positionen in der Auseinandersetzung mit den zeitgenössischen Philosophen*, ULG 19 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), 264. See also Yun L. Too, *Isocrates I*, OCG 4 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 137, who points out that “*Evagoras* may be the earliest prose encomium of a leader.” *Evagoras* is regarded as a model for later biographies. See further 1.2.5.

³ Eucken, *Isokrates*, 269. See also Evangelos Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates: Ein Kommentar*, ULG 101 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 36–37.

⁴ Isocrates uses τύραννος in a positive or neutral sense as a synonym for βασιλεύς. See Victor Parker, “Τύραννος: The Semantics of a Political Concept from Archilochus to Aristotle,” *Hermes* 126 (1998): 145–72 (165), and Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 113.

Evagoras his office as all the others in the reign under him” (43). All the three Cyprian orations outline the ideals for a ruler.⁵ The characterization of Evagoras corresponds to the requirements of the good king in *To Nicocles* and *Nicocles or the Cyprians*, which confirms that *Evagoras* presents its protagonist as an ideal ruler.⁶ Deedra Mason points out that *Evagoras* is “at once a lesson in how to rule and how to write an encomium.”⁷

In the introduction to the biography, Isocrates discusses the purpose of the writing and explains that the reason why he tells about the deeds of Evagoras is to “make the virtues (ἀρετήν) of Evagoras unforgettable for all people” (4). At the end of *Evagoras*, the biographer tells the reader that he now has made a “portrait” of the leader: “For my part, Nicocles, I think that images of the body are fine memorials, but of much greater value are images of deeds (τῶν πράξεων) and thoughts (τῆς διανοίας), which only are to be observed in an artistic way” (73). Stephen Halliwell points out that “Isocrates’ work is equivalent to an idealized portrait in striving to give us a powerful sense of the great individual, but without being drawn into an exact realism of detail.”⁸

The purpose of *Evagoras* is not only to portray a great leader but also to present the protagonist as a model to imitate. At the end of the biography Isocrates points out that one of the advantages of portraits of the character of men in words is that it is “easy to imitate (μιμῆσθαι) ... for those who want to be good men” (75, cf. 2, 5). The author also describes that he has promoted this imitation among the young men by making use of “examples (παράδειγμασι) from their own people” (77). Isocrates was an educationalist and through his school he trained, for over fifty years, not only rhetoricians but also statesmen.⁹ His teaching had practical purposes and served to equip his disciples for the public life.¹⁰ In *Evagoras* and the portrayal of an ideal ruler, Isocrates offers his reader a model to imitate.¹¹ Hägg thus correctly states that

⁵ Hilmar Kehl, “Die Monarchie im Politischen Denken des Isokrates” (PhD diss., Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1962), 111, 114; Klaus Bringmann, *Studien zu den politischen Ideen des Isokrates*, Hypomnemata 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 103; Eucken, *Isokrates*, 213–14.

⁶ Johannes Sykutris, “Isocrates’ Evagoras,” *Hermes* 62 (1927): 24–53 (31).

⁷ Deedra K. Mason, “Studies in the ‘Evagoras’ of Isocrates” (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel, 1975), 83. Mason also proposes that *Evagoras* is written as a response to the publication of Plato’s *Republic* (p. 93).

⁸ Stephen Halliwell, “Traditional Greek Conceptions of Character,” in *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*, ed. Christopher Pelling (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 32–59 (57).

⁹ Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory: Plato and His Predecessors* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952), 101–02.

¹⁰ L. De Blois and J. A. E. Bons, “Platonic Philosophy and Isocratean Virtues in Plutarch’s Numa,” *AncSoc* 23 (1992): 159–88 (169). Cf. Isocrates, *Evag.* 80.

¹¹ See e.g. Sykutris, “Isocrates’ Evagoras,” 34, 45; Pierre Hadot, “Fürstenspiegel,” *RAC* 8:555–632 (574–76); Eucken, *Isokrates*, 265; Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 43.

the writing is “a mirror for princes” and “provides a picture of the ideal ruler for him [Nicocles] to emulate.”¹²

Evagoras has a clear arrangement and a three-part structure can be detected. After a proem (1–11) follows a description of the ancestry of Evagoras (12–18), and his birth and youth (19–22), which ends the beginning. The middle of the biography contains the recovery of the kingdom (23–40), the nature of the administration (41–50), war with Sparta (51–57), and war with Persia (57–65). The biography ends with a summary (66–69), blessings of the leader (70–72), and finally epilogue (73–81).¹³ In contrast to most of the ancient biographies, the death of the protagonist is not mentioned by author. The reason is probably that the author did not consider the character of Evagoras’ death, murdered by a eunuch in his palace, to be appropriate to mention in an encomium.¹⁴ Instead of narrating the death of Evagoras, the author ends the biography with a final praise of the protagonist.

2.1.1 The character of the leader

A worthy leader

Isocrates begins to paint his portrait of Evagoras by telling the reader about his great ancestry (12). Isocrates links the leader with Teucer, who was the founder of Salamis. Teucer, a cousin to Achilles, was the son of Telamon, who fought together with Heracles. Telamon’s father was the famous Aeacus, who was the son of Zeus (14–18). Halliwell explains that the description of Evagoras’ ancestry is “a way of suggesting an inherited potential which gives Evagoras’ character one strand of its significance: the family or clan, stretching back into mythical time, is the matrix of Evagoras’ *phusis*.”¹⁵

Isocrates emphasizes that Evagoras had good presuppositions: “For when Evagoras was a boy he had beauty, strength, and self-control, which are the most fitting qualities to that age” (22). When he had grown up, his excellence in body and mind was so great that the kings of this time feared for their thrones (23–24). The biographer then makes clear that Evagoras gained his leadership position as king of Salamis in a just and pious way, with the help of the deity, after he had fled from a conspiracy (25–27). When Evagoras was born, the Persians had taken control of the

¹² Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 30. See also e.g. Sykutris, “Isocrates’ Evagoras,” 31, 45; Duane R. Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 64; Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 36–37.

¹³ This structure, with some minor modifications, is taken from Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 111, influenced by Sykutris, “Isocrates’ Evagoras,” 24–25. See also Mason, “Studies in the ‘Evagoras,’” 25.

¹⁴ Stuart, *Epochs of Greek*, 63; Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 34.

¹⁵ Halliwell, “Traditional Greek Conceptions,” 46.

throne of Salamis (20–21). But through a brave act Evagoras conquered the city, restored his family's honor, and made himself ruler of Salamis (32).¹⁶

According to Isocrates, Evagoras shows himself to be superior to other rulers since he did not inherit his kingdom but acquired it through a brave act, without deceit and artifice, and then handed it down to his children (35–36). The author also states that “frankly I can declare that no one, whether mortal, demigod, or immortal, will be found to have obtained his reign (τὴν βασιλείαν) more nobly, more brilliant, or more piously” (39). In the end of the biography, Isocrates concludes that Evagoras “so greatly surpassed others in body and intellect (τῇ γνώμῃ), that he was worthy to rule (ἄξιός εἶναι τυραννεῖν), not only Salamis but also the whole Asia” (71).

Self-control

Even as a boy, Isocrates characterizes Evagoras as a person with self-control (σωφροσύνη) (22). The biographer does not give the reader examples of this character trait, but he states that “he was the leader (ἡγούμενος) of the pleasures (τῶν ἡδονῶν) and was not led (ἀγόμενος) by them” (45). To be able to lead the people, the leader has to be capable to lead himself. In one of the other Cyprian orations, *To Nicocles*, Isocrates explicitly presents this thought: “Govern (ἄρχε) yourself no less than over the others, and consider that you are in highest regard a king when you serve none of the pleasures (τῶν ἡδονῶν) but rule over the desires (τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν) more firmly than over the citizens” (29).¹⁷ In this matter Isocrates adheres to a widespread conviction in Greek thought. Stanley Stowers points out that “Classical Greece, at least as far as the extant written literature shows, first strongly articulated the principle that to rule others, one had to master oneself.”¹⁸

Courage

Isocrates tells the reader that when Evagoras had grown up, to his self-control was also “courage (ἀνδρεία) added, and wisdom, and justice, and also this in no usual measure, nor as it is for some others, but each of these characteristics in extraordinary degree (εἰς ὑπερβολήν)” (23). Consequently, Evagoras is presented to the reader in 22–23 as a man with all four cardinal virtues in Greek thought (wisdom, courage, self-control, and justice).¹⁹

Isocrates shows the reader that Evagoras was a courageous man when he describes how he returned from his exile to confront the present king of Salamis

¹⁶ Cf. Isocrates, *Nic.* 28.

¹⁷ Cf. Isocrates, *Nic.* 29.

¹⁸ Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 49. See also Erwin R. Goodenough, “The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship,” *YCS* 1 (1928): 55–102 (70).

¹⁹ Sykutris, “Isocrates’ Evagoras,” 27.

with just a few men. In this situation he says that Evagoras did not “become afraid (ἡθύμῃσεν)” although “all the dangers (τῶν δεινῶν) were nearby” (29). Evagoras did not think about his own security; instead he confronted the enemy immediately (30). The author continues to tell the reader that Evagoras was fighting, alone against many, until he had taken revenge on the enemy, captured the palace, and restored its honors to the family (32). Because of his courage, Evagoras is described as a superior ruler, who “handled (ποίησάμενος) the fearful (δεινούς) and terrible (φοβερούς) dangers (τοὺς κινδύνους)” (36). The courage of the leader is also seen in that he, who only possessed one city, was ready to go into war with the whole of Asia (65).

Wisdom

Another of the virtues which Evagoras had “in an extraordinary degree” was wisdom (σοφία) (23). In agreement with Plato, Isocrates held the view that good government was dependent on the leadership of a sophisticated, philosophical elite.²⁰ However, Evagoras is portrayed as a wise man, and not as a philosopher (cf. 78).²¹

According to Isocrates, Evagoras was “gifted most naturally with intelligence (γνώμην)” (41, cf. 61). Halliwell points out that “Isocrates regards Evagoras’ individual virtues as crowned by a certain greatness of mind.”²² The leader’s natural gifts, which included intelligence, are emphasized in the biography. An intellectual capacity is a main characteristic of the ideal ruler in the opinion of Isocrates.²³ It is not mentioned that Evagoras was developed by education and training. Eucken thus suggests that the reason for his intelligence is his nature.²⁴ But in the end of the biography, where Isocrates also underlines Evagoras’ good nature and origin, he encourages Nicocles to study philosophy (81).²⁵ In *To Nicocles* he also wants to convince the reader that both education and diligence are beneficial for improvements to their nature (12). It thus seems appropriate to conclude that both nature and education are important in the view of Isocrates.²⁶ Regardless of how the intellectual capacity is acquired, it is obviously an important characteristic of

²⁰ David Konstan, “Isocrates’ ‘Republic,’” in *Isocrates and Civic Education*, ed. T. Poulakos and D. Depew (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 107–24 (121).

²¹ Eucken, *Isokrates*, 265–66.

²² Halliwell, “Traditional Greek Conceptions,” 50.

²³ Kehl, “Die Monarchie,” 113. See also *Ad Nic.* 10, for another example in Isocrates’ writings.

²⁴ Eucken, *Isokrates*, 266. Cf. Isocrates, *Evag.* 24, 45, 59, 72.

²⁵ Cf. Isocrates, *Antid.* 189–91, 291–92. For Isocrates “philosophy” refers not to a specialized science, but to the general searching for knowledge through mental activities. See Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 80.

²⁶ Cf. Konstan, “Isocrates’ ‘Republic,’” 121.

Isocrates' good leader, as Halliwell points out: Isocrates gives the reader "an image of Evagoras' prudence and intelligence as a king and leader."²⁷

While Isocrates does not write about the leader's training of his mind, he emphasizes the practice of his mind. Isocrates narrates that "he spent most of his time in inquiring (ζητεῖν), in pondering (φροντίζειν), and in taking counsel (βουλευέσθαι), thinking that if he prepares his mind (φρόνησιν) well, it will be well also with his kingdom" (41, cf. 44, 65). According to Hägg, this represents "Isocrates variety of the philosopher-king."²⁸ The wisdom and intelligence of Evagoras resulted in, among other things, good judgments. He did not judge people according to the opinion of others, but based on his own knowledge (42).

When Isocrates, in the end of his biography, encourages Evagoras' son, Nicocles, to emulate his father, he underlines the importance of wisdom: "On the one hand it concerns all to greatly value prudence (φρόνησιν), but on the other hand it should mostly concern you who have authority over many and great matters" (80). Isocrates closes his biography with the following exhortation: "For if you continue the study of philosophy (τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ) and devote yourself as you do now, soon you will become the man it is proper that you should be" (81).

Justice

The third of the prominent virtues which is seen in the life of the grown-up leader is justice (δικαιοσύνη) (23). Beaton helpfully explains that "justice" can "be defined either morally, as a quality of just conduct or dealing, or judicially, in which the maintenance of the right and the assignment of reward or punishment are in view."²⁹ Both aspects, which are related to each other, are seen in Isocrates portrayal of Evagoras. According to the author, Evagoras "did everything in a pious and just (δικαίως) way" (38). He did not only gain his position in a just way (26), Isocrates also states that Evagoras governed his people with justice: "For in his whole life he never acted unjustly (ἀδικῶν) toward anyone but always honored the kind: and while he ruled all his subjects zealously (σφόδρα), he punished the wrongdoers in a legal way" (43). The justice of the leader is also seen in the sound judgments he made, based on his own knowledge of people (42). The importance of justice in the presentation of Isocrates' good leader is clearly seen in *Nicocles or the Cyprians*, where Isocrates states that "the most valued of the virtues are temperance and justice (τὴν τε σωφροσύνην καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην)" (29).

²⁷ Halliwell, "Traditional Greek Conceptions," 51.

²⁸ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 37.

²⁹ Richard Beaton, "Messiah and Justice: A Key to Matthew's Use of Isaiah 42.1–4," *JSNT* 75 (1999): 5–23 (11).

Piety

When the biographer describes Evagoras' way to the throne he emphasizes that he gained it in a pious way, according to the deity (25–26). In the view of Isocrates, no one gained his kingdom “in a more pious way (εὐσεβέστερον)” than Evagoras (39). He also governed his kingdom in a “god-favored way (θεοφιλῶς)” (43). The reader is further told that the piety (δσιότης) of the ruler was a main reason why many Greeks with good reputation came to live in Salamis during the leadership of Evagoras (51).

Isocrates often uses comparison and contrast in his works.³⁰ This is also seen in *Evagoras*, where Isocrates makes a favorable general comparison between Evagoras and the Athenian Conon, “the first among the Greeks in many virtues,” who fled to Salamis and sought Evagoras' help (52–53, 57). Isocrates further makes use of contrast to portray the ideal leader as a pious man. When he compares Evagoras with Cyrus, the Persian king, he states that while Evagoras “did everything in a pious (δσίως) and just way, some of the achievements [of Cyrus] were not made reverently (οὐκ εὐσεβῶς)” (38).

Towards the end of the biography, the author concludes that in the case of men of the past who have been worthy of immortality, Evagoras should be among them. The reason for this is that his life was more fortunate and favored by the gods than the lives of his predecessors (70).

Integrity

According to Isocrates, Evagoras “earned respect, not by the wrinkling of the face, but by the principles (κατασκευαῖς) of life: in nothing he was disposed to indiscipline or inconsistency (ἀνωμάλως), but he observed agreements by both deeds (τοῖς ἔργοις) and words (τοῖς λόγοις)” (44). Here, Isocrates makes use of the common phrase “in word and deed” (λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ)³¹ to characterize Evagoras as a man of integrity.³² This trait is clearly seen in *To Nicocles* where Isocrates admonishes the reader to “throughout life show that you value the truth (τὴν ἀλήθειαν), so that your words are

³⁰ Mason, “Studies in the ‘Evagoras,’” 28.

³¹ See Wayne H. Merritt, *In Word and Deed: Moral Integrity in Paul*, ESEC 1 (New York: Lang, 1993).

³² The ancient Greek authors did not use a term that exactly corresponds to our “integrity.” A term that is closely related is ἀληθής/ἀλήθεια. Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 473A; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1108A10–20; Isocrates, *Ad Nic.* 22; Philo, *Mos.* 1.48, 2.140. See further pp. 258–59. Johnson, *Meeting the Ethical Challenges*, 84, defines “integrity” as “wholeness or completeness” and helpfully explains: “Leaders possessing this trait are true to themselves, reflecting consistency between what they say publicly and how they think and act privately. They live out their values and keep their promises ... They are also honest in their dealings with others.” Sison, *Moral Capital of Leaders*, 31, underlines the consequences of the quality when he describes “integrity” as “a trait suggesting wholeness and stability in a person as someone on whom others could depend or rely.” These features of the “modern” trait “integrity” is clearly seen in the ancient Greek texts, and for that reason I use the term.

more trustworthy (πιστοτέρους) than the oaths of others” (22). Integrity is also underlined in *Nicocles or the Cyprians*, where Isocrates points out that “the things you condemn by words, nothing of these practice by deeds” (61).³³ Isocrates thus represents the traditional concept of character, which includes the relationship between mind and action (responsibility and consistency).³⁴

Magnanimity

When describing the hardships of Evagoras relating to the revolt against the throne of his father, Isocrates points out that while the souls of others were “humiliated (ταπεινοτέρας),” Evagoras “became so high minded (μεγαλοφροσύνης) that, although he was a private citizen for a time since it became necessary for him to flee, he thought he had to be ruler” (27). The word *μεγαλοφροσύνη* expresses, according to Alexiou, “hoches Selbstbewußtsein,” and is a characteristic of a free man.³⁵ Isocrates distinguishes it from *ὑπερηφάνια*, which expresses an arrogant attitude.³⁶ In *To Nicocles* he explains: “Regard as high minded (μεγαλόφρονας), not those who embrace more than they can master, but those who strive for the good and can manage whatever they attempt to do” (25).

Isocrates also uses a synonymous term, *μεγαλοψυχία*, in his characterization of Evagoras.³⁷ Alexiou describes *μεγαλοψυχία* in this way: “Aus dem Begriff lassen sich stark individualistische Züge und entsprechende Rangansprüche entwickeln.”³⁸ This meaning of the term is seen in Isocrates’ description of the Persian king’s recognition of the high ambition of Evagoras (59, cf. 3). But Isocrates also makes use of the term in the sense of kindness. He tells the reader that “the friends he won to himself by acts of kindness and the others he enslaved by generosity (τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ)” (45).³⁹

Benevolence

The leader is also presented as a man of benevolence to the reader. Isocrates points out that Evagoras “managed the city so reverently and benevolently (φιλανθρώπως) that visitors did not so much envy Evagoras his office as all the others in the reign under him” (43). Benevolence is one of the main characteristics of the ideal ruler in the view of Isocrates, and relates to the leader’s care for both the physical and mental

³³ See also Isocrates, *Soph.* 6–8.

³⁴ Halliwell, “Traditional Greek Conceptions,” 54.

³⁵ Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 108.

³⁶ Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 109.

³⁷ According to Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 108, *μεγαλοφροσύνη* and *μεγαλοψυχία* are used as synonyms by Isocrates.

³⁸ Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 70.

³⁹ Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 123–24, who suggests that *μεγαλοψυχία* relates to actions that benefit other persons. See e.g. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1366B.

well-being of the people.⁴⁰ Isocrates tells the reader that the benevolence of Evagoras concerned all, saying that “the friends he won to himself by acts of kindness (ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις) and the others he enslaved by generosity (τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ)” (45). In one of the other Cyprian orations, *To Nicocles*, Isocrates explains to the young leader the importance of benevolent care for the people:

But in addition to these things, one must be a lover of men (φιλάνθρωπον) and a lover of the city (φιλόπολιν); for neither horses nor dogs nor men nor any other thing can be properly ruled (ἄρχειν) except by one who delights in those whom he must care for. Care for the masses and first of all rule acceptably (κεχαρισμένως) over them (15).

2.1.2 The relationship between the leader and the people

Leadership roles

Isocrates presents Evagoras as a ruler. He does not give him the title βασιλεύς (“king”), but uses the term τύραννος (34). This word is used by Isocrates in a neutral or positive sense, as a synonym for βασιλεύς (“king”).⁴¹ At several times Isocrates also speaks about his βασιλεία (e.g. 39, 43). Isocrates points out that “everybody should agree that human kingship (τυρρανίδα) is the greatest, the most revered, and the most coveted of the divine and the human goods” (40).

For Isocrates the role of the king includes several aspects and Evagoras fulfilled all of them:

Generally he did not lack anything of the necessary attributes of kings (τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν), but chose the best things from each form of government (τῆς πολιτείας): he was for the people (δημοτικός) in his service of the multitudes, statesmanlike (πολιτικός) in the management of the whole city state, general-like (στρατηγικός) in the sound judgment of the dangers, royal (τυρραννικός)⁴² in his superiority in all these things (46).

Evagoras is described as an engaged and skilled statesman who wisely manages the affairs of the city. The author points out that Evagoras “managed (διώκει) the city so reverently and benevolently that visitors did not so much envy Evagoras his office as all the others in the reign under him” (43, cf. 69).

The protagonist is also portrayed as a skilled military leader. Isocrates underlines that Evagoras, though he was outmatched in regard to military resources, defeated his enemies by his intellect (γνώμη) (61). The biographer points out that when

⁴⁰ Kehl, “Die Monarchie,” 113.

⁴¹ See p. 75 n. 4.

⁴² There is a text variant which has μεγαλόφρων instead.

Evagoras had to make war he was so successful that he conquered almost all Cyprus (62). In contrast to the Spartans, he was also able to stand against the warfare of the Persian king (64).

Willing followers

Isocrates tells the reader that Evagoras was a leader who had willing followers. When the author narrates the story of how Evagoras conquered the throne of Salamis in a brave act, he tells that the leader called together a group of men whom he prepared for the quest (28). The author makes clear that Evagoras' men did not lose heart when they were confronted with great dangers, but accompanied him "as if they followed a god" (οἱ μὲν ὥσπερ θεῶν συνακολουθοῦντες) (29).

When Evagoras has taken the power of Salamis and his government is described, the biographer also makes clear that people willingly submit to his authority by moving to his kingdom:

The greatest sign of the character (τοῦ τρόπου) and piety of this one is: Of the Greeks there where many mostly reputable men who left their homelands and came to Cyprus to live there, thinking that the reign of Evagoras was less oppressive (κουφοτέραν) and more just (νομιμωτέραν) than the governments at home (51).

Lukas de Blois and Jeroen Bons explain that in the view of Isocrates, the good leader must win the goodwill of the people: "The king must aspire to do good and must at the same time be humane so that his subjects can feel united with him. From Isocrates' point of view this was essential: without the *eunoia* and *charis* of his subjects no ruler could be a good sovereign."⁴³ In *Evagoras*, the willingness of people to follow the leader is connected to his outstanding character and kindness toward the people. Isocrates explains that the leader "was causing fear, not by showing anger against the many, but by a nature (φύσιν) that greatly exceeded others" (45). Klaus Bringmann describes the view of Isocrates in this way: "So fordert Isokrates, der Herrscher solle sich durch ἀρετή auszeichnen, seine Herrschaft auf seine Überlegenheit gründen, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φιλανθρωπία und πραότης bewären (um nur das Wichtigste zu nennen), um die Sympathie seiner Untertanen zu gewinnen."⁴⁴

⁴³ De Blois and Bons, "Platonic Philosophy," 171. See also Jaqueline de Romilly, "Eunoia in Isocrates or the Political Importance of Creating Good Will," *JHS* 78 (1958): 92–101 (97), who states that according to Isocrates "one wins the cities to one's self by treating them well (τῷ ποιεῖν εὖ), and that is the real way of acquiring power."

⁴⁴ Bringmann, *Studien zu den politischen Ideen*, 104. Cf. Sarachek, "Greek Concepts of Leadership," 46.

Benefitting the people

The willing following of Evagoras is, as indicated above, related to the benefits the leader brings to his people. As already noted, the leader is presented as a man of benevolence, and his benefactions are repeatedly underlined. Isocrates tells the reader that “the friends he won to himself by acts of kindness (ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις) and the others he enslaved by generosity (τῇ μεγαλοψυχίᾳ)” (45). The story of the war with Sparta (52–57), where it is described how Evagoras together with Conon defeats the enemy, shows not only the wisdom and political skills of the leader, but also his beneficence.⁴⁵ Isocrates tells the reader that for the reason of “many generous benefactions (εὐεργεσίας)” Evagoras had been given Athenian citizenship (54). So Evagoras is portrayed as a benefactor of the people. According to Bruno Blumenfeld, “‘Benefactor’ (εὐεργέτης), *euergetēs* is possibly the most common epithet applied to the king—indeed, to any excellent man—during the Hellenistic era.”⁴⁶

Isocrates also concretizes how Evagoras developed and benefitted the city under his leadership. He removed its defects and increased among other things its security, trading, and navy (47–48).⁴⁷ Isocrates concludes that “it is not possible that cities can make such great progress (τηλικαύτως ἐπιδόσεις), if they are not managed (διοικῆ) by characteristics (ἥθεςιν) like those of Evagoras” (48). Evagoras “not only made his city more reputable, but led (προήγαγεν) the whole place surrounding the island into gentleness and moderation” (49).⁴⁸ Politics and ethics are closely related in the view of Isocrates, as Alexiou points out: “Zur Rolle des Ethos der politischen Führer beim Fortschritt einer Stadt.”⁴⁹ That the ruler leads the people by his character is clearly seen in *To Nicocles* where Isocrates states that “the character (ἥθος) of the whole state becomes like the character of the rulers” (31). Isocrates also says that it was because of Evagoras that the city became friendlier towards Greeks and their customs and more engaged in liberal arts and education (50, 67). The

⁴⁵ Mason, “Studies in the ‘Evagoras,’” 31.

⁴⁶ Bruno Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework*, JSNTSup 210 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 240. See also Klaus Bringmann, “The King as Benefactor: Some Remarks on Ideal Kingship in the Age of Hellenism,” in *Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World*, ed. Anthony Bulloch et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 7–24 (10). He further explains how beneficence was expressed by Hellenistic kings: “Whatever he did to support, to protect, and to improve the Greek commonwealth of self-governing cities was appreciated as benefaction (εὐεργεσία). This included, for example, the protection of Greeks from barbarian raids, the preservation or restoration of peace, freedom, and democracy ... support in cash and kind, the building of temples, theaters, and gymnasia, the granting of land, and a wide range of privileges such as ἀτέλεια and ἀσυλία (p. 9).”

⁴⁷ Cf. Isocrates, *Ad Nic.* 9.

⁴⁸ Cf. Isocrates, *Nic.* 32, 63, where Isocrates mentions that it is the task of the leader to make the city to prosper (εὐδαίμων).

⁴⁹ Alexiou, *Der Evagoras des Isokrates*, 137.

biographer even describes Evagoras' great influence on the people with transformative consequences: "of the barbarian citizens he made Hellenes, of the cowards he made warriors, of the inglorious he made famous men" (66–67). Isocrates rhetorically asks his reader who of the heroes of the past "has been responsible for such great changes (τοσούτων μεταβολῶν) by his deeds?" (66).⁵⁰

Closeness to the people

Isocrates' Evagoras is a leader who lives close to his people. The author tells about his knowledge of each of the citizens, which implied that he knew who was against him and who was for him (42). Halliwell rightly points out that "[t]he nature of Evagoras' leadership, we are told, depended on his personal and active knowledge of his subjects, allowing for first-hand rather than [sic] delegated judgements of them."⁵¹ Maria Ytterbrink likewise pays attention to Evagoras' familiarity with the people and writes that "Evagoras is depicted as a leader who used to discuss matters of the city and who was willing to take advice. He was a man who lived close to his people."⁵² Isocrates moreover tells the reader that Evagoras "was for the people in his service to the masses (δεμοτικὸς μὲν ὢν τῇ τοῦ πλήθους θεραπείᾳ)" (46).

2.2 Xenophon's *Agésilas*

In his writings, Xenophon (c. 428–354 BCE) gives several portraits of leaders. One of them is *Agésilas*, an encomiastic biography written about the Spartan king, who died c. 360 BCE.⁵³ Here Xenophon praises Agésilas, his virtues, and his achievements, perhaps influenced by Isocrates' *Evagoras*.⁵⁴ *Agésilas* has an apologetic tone and was probably written to defend Agésilas from the criticism that blamed the king for the fall of Sparta.⁵⁵ Another purpose was to promote kingly

⁵⁰ Too, *Isocrates I*, 153, translates the verse with "such great political transformations."

⁵¹ Halliwell, "Traditional Greek Conceptions," 54.

⁵² Maria Ytterbrink, "The Third Gospel for the First Time: Luke within the Context of Ancient Biography" (PhD diss., Lund University, 2004), 79.

⁵³ For the genre of *Agésilas*, see 1.2.5.

⁵⁴ According to Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography*, 50, Xenophon used *Evagoras* "as a model for his *Agésilas*." At the same time he concludes that Xenophon was more interested in the deeds of his protagonist than Isocrates. See also Michael Reichel, "Xenophon als Biograph," in *Die griechische Biographie in hellenistischer Zeit. Akten des internationalen Kongresses vom 26.–29. Juli 2006 in Würzburg*, ed. Michael Erler and Stephan Schorn, BzAl 245 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 25–43 (30). For a different view, see Stuart, *Epochs of Greek*, 81–90.

⁵⁵ Charles D. Hamilton, *Agésilas and the Failure of Spartan Hegemony* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 10. Cf. Reichel, "Xenophon als Biograph," 41.

leadership ideals.⁵⁶ Vivienne Gray points out that Agesilaus is a man who has “the requirements of the ideal leader.”⁵⁷ Hägg likewise notes that the book is “an encomium of a king and a lesson in leadership.”⁵⁸

That Agesilaus is presented as an ideal leader by the author is seen by several statements. In the beginning of the biography he declares that Agesilaus was complete in virtue:

Even if I know that no writing giving worthy praise of the virtue (ἀρετῆς) and glory of Agesilaus can be written, nevertheless I must make an attempt. For it should not be fair that a good man, who has become perfect (τελέως), for this reason should obtain lesser praise (1.1, cf. 10.1).

Xenophon also makes clear that Agesilaus was recognized as a leader, not only by the citizens of Sparta, but also by others: “From all of the nations came ambassadors for the sake of friendship, and many revolted to him because they desired the freedom, so that Agesilaus was leader (ἡγεμὼν ἣν ὁ Ἀγησίλαος) not only for Greeks but also for many barbarians” (1.35). When summarizing Agesilaus’ life, the biographer declares to the reader that “he died, after reaching the longest lifetime of human life, blameless regarding those whom he led (ὧν ἡγεῖτο) and those whom he made war upon” (10.4, cf. 1.4). Throughout the biography Xenophon praises the character and virtues of the ideal leader.⁵⁹

For the author Agesilaus is a great model to imitate. After Xenophon has described the virtues of Agesilaus, he also presents him as a good example to emulate:

If measure and rule are good inventions for men for a correct production, I think that the virtue (ἀρετῇ) of Agesilaus may be a model (παράδειγμα) for those who want to practice virtue (ἀνδραγαθίαν). For who that imitates (μιμούμενος) a god-fearing, just, sober, or a self-controlled man will be unholy, unjust, violent, or immoderate? (10.2)

The Greek word for “model”, παράδειγμα, is used to describe the pattern model which the painter uses to make his painting and the architect uses in the building process.⁶⁰ Gray speaks about Xenophon’s literature, including *Agesilaus*, as “mirror

⁵⁶ William E. Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian: The Problem of the Individual and the Society of the Polis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 77, describes the work as “words of praise which also illuminate those qualities of royal character on which he so often meditated.” See also Paul Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 56, 417, and Reichel, “Xenophon als Biograph,” 40–41.

⁵⁷ Vivienne J. Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes: Reading the Reflections* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30.

⁵⁸ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 44.

⁵⁹ 3.1, 8.4–5, 9.3–6, 10.1.

⁶⁰ LSJ, “παράδειγμα.”

of princes” literature, which have the purpose of creating images to imitate or avoid.⁶¹ Bodil Due, who points out that Agesilaus is one of Xenophon’s ideal leaders, concludes that in the view of the author he is “evidently qualified to be termed a model-leader.”⁶²

The structure of the biography is clearly marked in the text and includes proem (1.1), genealogy (1.2–5), deeds (1.6–3.1a), virtues (3.1b–9.7), epilogue (10.1–4), and a postscript with a recapitulation of the virtues (11.1–16).⁶³ *Agesilaus*’ structure hence resembles the three-part structure, though the middle part is divided into two sub parts which gives the biography a special structure. The first part describes the origins of the protagonist (1.1–5), the middle part contains two sections which outline the deeds (1.6–3.1a) and the virtues (3.1b–9.7), and the end part closes the biography with epilogue and summary (10.1–11.16). The biography thus combines a chronological and thematic approach.⁶⁴

2.2.1 The character of the leader

A worthy leader

Xenophon follows the common custom in biographical writing and begins to present the lineage of the leader. He tells the reader about the birth of Agesilaus and emphasizes his noble ancestry as a descendent of Heracles. His ancestors were not simple men and not only kings and leaders. According to Xenophon, the ancestors of Agesilaus were “the first among the leaders (ἡγεμόνων ἡγεμονεύουσιν)” (1.3). William Higgins explains that “Xenophon wishes to make clear that his friend was not a man out of nowhere but that he was an individual who was part of a past and a past whose special lustre, though deserving of praise, was not an excuse for complacency but a model for action.”⁶⁵

The author does not tell about Agesilaus’ preparation and way to his leadership position as king of Sparta, but he states that Agesilaus was deemed “worthy of the kingship (ἄξιος τῆς βασιλείας)” of Sparta, because of his ancestry and virtue (ἀρετή) (1.5). In the view of Xenophon, the “moral excellence” of Agesilaus was an important reason why he was given the position of leadership and before his accession he had proved his ability to lead.⁶⁶ Consequently, Xenophon enumerates

⁶¹ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 51. See also p. 30. Cf. Hadot “Fürstenspiegel,” 8:577; Mickey G. Craig, “Politics or Philosophy: An Interpretation and Analysis of Xenophon’s *Agesilaos*” (PhD diss., The Claremont Graduate School, 1986), 101.

⁶² Bodil Due, *Cyropaedia: Xenophon’s Aims and Methods* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1989), 192.

⁶³ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 42–43.

⁶⁴ See Reichel, “Xenophon als Biograph,” 31.

⁶⁵ Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 77.

⁶⁶ Cartledge, *Agesilaos*, 112.

the virtues of the leader systematically (3.1b–9.7). Due rightly points out that “to Xenophon the perfect leader is, besides being a strong military leader, first and foremost a virtuous and ethical man, who always looks to justice and who controls himself before others.”⁶⁷

Piety and integrity

The first virtue listed in *Agesilaus* is the leader’s “reverence for the divine” (θεῖα ... ἐσέβητο) (3.2). Xenophon relates piety with integrity. Agesilaus’ piety made him trustworthy, even in the eyes of his enemies (1.9–13, 3.2–5). The trustworthiness of the leader is clarified to the reader by contrasting him with Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap. The latter did not act according to his words, which the former did (1.10). Xenophon tells that Agesilaus exposed himself “firstly to be a man who holds his oaths and thereafter one who did not deceive in his agreements” (1.12).⁶⁸ In the view of the author, piety and integrity are connected, since it is only the gods who know when one breaks an oath.⁶⁹ Xenophon thus portrays the leader as a man of integrity.⁷⁰ John Humphreys et al. conclude that “Agesilaus was consistently exhibiting principled integrity, which led others to perceive him as an authentic leader.”⁷¹

In the end of *Agesilaus*, the biographer also emphasizes the piety of the leader and states that “he was always god-fearing (δεισιδαίμων)” (11.8).⁷² The piety of Agesilaus is further seen by his thankfulness to the gods when he was successful (11.2). He also revered the gods and the temples in the land of the enemy (11.1). Even when wounded after a battle he fulfilled his duties toward the gods (2.13–15). Hägg thus rightly points out that Agesilaus is “first and foremost, a pious man who keeps his oaths, sacrifices at the appropriate moments, and generally respects the gods.”⁷³

Justice

The second virtue Xenophon underlines in his portrait of Agesilaus is justice (δικαιοσύνη) (4.1). The author tells about Agesilaus’ justice concerning money and

⁶⁷ Due, *Cyropaedia*, 19. See also Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 104. Cf. Xenophon, *Hell.* 2.4.40–42, *Cyr.* 7.5.83.

⁶⁸ See also 1.17, 11.5.

⁶⁹ Norman B. Sandridge, *Loving Humanity, Learning, and Being Honored: The Foundation of Leadership in Xenophon’s Education of Cyrus*, HS 55 (Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2012), 73.

⁷⁰ See also Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.10, 19–20; 1.3.1, where Xenophon likewise relates integrity to piety in his portrayal of Socrates. Cf. 1.2.17.

⁷¹ John H. Humphreys et al. “Towards the Augmenting Role of Authenticity: Xenophon as Leadership Theorist,” *MOH* 6 (2011): 183–207 (194).

⁷² See also 2.13, 15, 17.

⁷³ Hägg, *Art of Biography*, 45.

states that he was never accused of deception against anyone. The leader is instead portrayed as a very generous man, which prevents him from being unjust (4.1–6, 8.1, 8). Xenophon also mentions that Agesilaus treated people in the same way, rebuked bad behavior, and praised good actions of all people:

He even treated his opponents in the city as a father treats children. For while he rebuked the failures, he honored them if they did something good, and stood by them if a disaster happened, regarding no citizen an enemy, willing to praise everybody, thinking that keeping everyone was a gain, reckoning also the death of one with little worth as a loss (7.3).⁷⁴

The biographer also points out that Agesilaus “delighted to see the greedy poor, but the just ones (τοὺς δὲ δίκαιους) becoming rich, wishing to establish righteousness (τὴν δικαιοσύνην) to be more profitable than injustice (τῆς ἀδικίας)” (11.3).

Agesilaus is further portrayed as man who obeys the laws. Xenophon points out that “though he was the most powerful man in the city, he showed himself as the greatest servant of the laws. For who would be willing to disobey when seeing the king obeying?” (7.2).⁷⁵ Neal Wood points out that, in the view of Xenophon, “[o]bedience to the law ... is the supreme civic virtue.”⁷⁶

Self-control

Several times Xenophon stresses that Agesilaus exhibited self-control and temperance. For example, he practiced modesty concerning food, drink, and sleep. Regarding his sleep, Xenophon remarks that it was not his master, but his servant (5.1–2). He was also a man of self-mastery (ἐγκράτεια) and self-restraint (σωφροσύνη) in his sexual desires (5.4–7).⁷⁷ This gives Xenophon a reason to admire him and he writes: “I consider myself to know that many more men are able to rule (κρατεῖν) over the enemies than over such desires” (5.6).

Agesilaus is further portrayed as a sober man who could be satisfied with a simple lifestyle concerning food, drink, and sleep (9.3, 11.11). Xenophon contrasts the simple lifestyle of Agesilaus with the extravagant lifestyle of the Persian king. In contrast to this king, who displayed enormous wealth, Agesilaus made his home simple and did not need luxury possessions (8.6). Higgins does not exaggerate when he states that “his entire character is the manifestation of a contentment with the simple and an aversion from the excessive and extravagant.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Cf. 1.21, 2.13, 11.4. But see also 6.5.

⁷⁵ See also 6.4.

⁷⁶ Neal Wood, “Xenophon’s Theory of Leadership,” *C&M* (1964): 33–66 (61).

⁷⁷ According to Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 63, ἐγκράτεια refers to control over physical distractions, while σωφροσύνη concerns mastery over emotional distractions.

⁷⁸ Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 78 (cf. p. 79).

Agésilas also labored more willingly than the rest of the people, when it came to hard circumstances and difficult tasks, since he thought that it would be encouraging for his men (5.3). According to Xenophon “he thought that it is proper for the ruler to be superior to common men in endurance (καρτερία) and not in weakness (μαλακία)” (5.2).⁷⁹

The biographer tells further that when the people wanted to set up a statue of Agésilas he did not permit it. Instead he continually strived to make his soul memorable (11.7). Agésilas also showed himself to be a leader who could resist the temptation of supreme power (2.16). For the reason that Agésilas resists temptations concerning an extravagant lifestyle and power, in contrast to the Persian king, he manifests a royalty with limits.⁸⁰ Due points out that “Agésilas’ character is admirable precisely because he does not yield, although he is tempted.”⁸¹

Another aspect of the self-control of Agésilas is his humility. Xenophon relates the humility of Agésilas to his behavior when he was successful. At those instances he “he did not look down (ὑπερεφρόνει) on humans,” but gave thanks to the gods (11.2). Though Agésilas had magnanimity (μεγαλόφρων) he was not insolent (11.11, cf. 8.3). Even when he looked down to the boastful he was “more humble (ταπεινότερος) than common men” (11.11). Xenophon relates this humility to his simple and self-controlled lifestyle and generosity towards others (11.11).

When Xenophon presents Agésilas as a model to imitate he states that “he boasted not over the reigning of others, but over the ruling (ἄρχειν) over himself, not over leading the citizens against the enemies, but over leading (ἡγεῖσθαι) them to all virtue (πᾶσαν ἀρετήν)” (10.2). The greatness of the leader is thus related to his mastery over himself.⁸² Self-control is, for Xenophon, a trait which distinguishes leaders from followers (cf. 5.2).⁸³

Courage

Xenophon further portrays Agésilas as a man of courage (ἀνδρεῖος). His courage is seen by his willingness to fight against the strongest enemies and in the way that he placed himself in the front of the battle. He did not flee from a dangerous battle, but confronted the enemy, which everybody could see from the scars on his body (6.1–

⁷⁹ See Cyr. 1.6.25; Anab. 4.4.12, 3.4.46–49, for the same idea. According to Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 63, Xenophon holds the view that “extra toil is required for the leader and that the leader must win the respect of the followers by competing with them in the same kinds of (menial) labor that they might routinely perform.”

⁸⁰ Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 79–80.

⁸¹ Due, *Cyropaedia*, 198.

⁸² Cf. Craig, “Politics or Philosophy,” 163.

⁸³ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 10–11. Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 2.1.1–7. But see also 1.5.4, where Xenophon expresses his conviction that self-control is a fundamental aspect of a virtuous life: “Is it not necessary for every man to regard self-control (τὴν ἐγκράτειαν) to be the foundation (κρηπίδα) of virtue and to equip the soul firstly with it?”

3).⁸⁴ At the same time, Xenophon states that the courage of the leader was more related to prudence than overcoming dangers (11.9). Nonetheless, he underlines the courage of Agesilaus in the battle with the Thebans where he did not choose the safest strategy, but made a frontal attack, which resulted in his being severely wounded (2.12). In addition, Agesilaus' courage is displayed to the reader in his offensive warfare against Asia (1.8).⁸⁵ The author also portrays Agesilaus as a motivating leader who "created courage (θάρρος) and confidence (ῥώμην) in his friends" (6.8; cf. 1.12, 2.8). Charles Hamilton does not overstate when he states: "Xenophon clearly believed Agesilaus was a man of courage and vision."⁸⁶

Wisdom

"What kinds of deeds of this man do not display his wisdom (σοφίαν)?" (6.4), writes Xenophon, portraying the protagonist also as a wise man. According to the author, Agesilaus' wisdom was seen not so much in his words as in his deeds (11.9). The examples of his wisdom which Xenophon gives are related to how he gained the obedience of his people and how he handled and overcame his enemies (6.5–6). Agesilaus is moreover presented as foremost "in intelligence (γνώμη) when counsel for action is needed" (10.1). Xenophon also highlights the foresight (πρόνοια) of Agesilaus.⁸⁷ The example the author gives of this quality is Agesilaus' strategy to gain the loyalty of Persian satraps (8.5). Although Xenophon characterizes him as a wise man, Agesilaus is not portrayed as a philosopher-king.⁸⁸

Patriotism

Another of the virtues of Agesilaus is patriotism (φιλόπολις). Xenophon declares that a detailed description of this quality should be long and thus briefly points out:

We all know that Agesilaus, when thinking something would serve the fatherland, never gave up toiling, never fled dangers, never spared properties, never made excuses for body or age but regarded it to be the duty of a good king to do as much good as possible for the subjects. (7.1)

The patriotism of Agesilaus is seen by his obedience to the law, his treatment of political opponents, and his reluctance to fight against Greeks (7.2–7). According to Xenophon, Agesilaus instantly came home to help his fatherland when he got a request, even if he exercised leadership over a multitude of cities (1.36, cf. 2.1).

⁸⁴ Hamilton, *Agesilaus and the Failure*, 59, underlines the fact that the general in antiquity risked his life when he led his people in the battle.

⁸⁵ See also 10.1.

⁸⁶ Hamilton, *Agesilaus and the Failure*, 11. See also Due, *Cyropaedia*, 196.

⁸⁷ Cf. Cicero, *Inv.* 2.160, who relates foresight to wisdom.

⁸⁸ The integration of a king and a wise man can be seen in another of his works on leadership, namely *Hiero*. See Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes*, 177.

Graciousness

When Xenophon lists the virtues of the leader he also mentions εὐχάρις as one of them (8.1). Duane Stuart, who points out that it is hard to translate the Greek term εὐχάρις into English, describes it as “personal graciousness and charm.”⁸⁹ Agesilaus is clearly described for the reader as a man of the people: “With pleasure he took part in simplistic talk, but eagerly sympathized with all the needs of his friends. For the reason of his hopefulness, cheerfulness, and merriness he caused that many came over not only for the sake of business, but also for spending the day in a pleasant way” (8.2). Accordingly, Xenophon portrays Agesilaus as both humorous and morally serious with his friends.⁹⁰ Here he also tells the reader about the leader’s willingness to serve his friends, and that he was not boastful or arrogant (8.1–2). The ideal leader that Xenophon presents, according to Gray, has “a more democratic *charisma*, in which the ruler comes down to mingle with ordinary people, not as a contrivance, but as the result of his natural love of mingling.”⁹¹

2.2.2 The relationship between the leader and the people

Leadership roles

Xenophon presents Agesilaus as a king (βασιλεύς) (e.g. 10.4). The leader did not only possess honor and power, “but in addition a kingdom (βασιλείας), which was not plotted against, but beloved” (8.1). According to the author, the unity and prosperity the leader provided for the people he governed showed his “praiseworthiness as king (ἀξιεπαίνου βασιλέως)” (1.37).

When Xenophon writes about the deeds of Agesilaus it is, however, mainly about his achievements as general. According to the biographer, Agesilaus was a very successful general. In fact, Xenophon states that his victories were as many as his campaigns (6.3). He is portrayed both as a brave (e.g. 6.1–3) and strategic general, always knowing how to handle, anticipate, and surprise the enemy (1.9, 6.5–7). Xenophon gives examples of the skillful “generalship (στρατηγικόν)” of Agesilaus when he displays the deception of the enemy and rewards his troops materially (1.17–19). Agesilaus also served his fatherland as an ambassador (πρεσβευτής) (2.25). But Xenophon points out that “as an ambassador he accomplished deeds worthy of a great general (μεγάλου στρατηγοῦ)” (2.26).

⁸⁹ Stuart, *Epochs of Greek*, 72.

⁹⁰ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 339.

⁹¹ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 375.

Willing followers

When Xenophon describes Agesilaus as a wise leader he states that he won both the obedience and love of the people:

He treated his fatherland in such way that he became entirely obeyed (ὥστε μάλιστα πειθόμενος) ... and by being devoted for his comrades he acquired dedicated friends (ἀπροφασίστους τοὺς φίλους). The soldiers he made to be obedient (πειθομένους) and friendly to him (φιλοῦντας αὐτόν) at the same time. (6.4)

Xenophon continues to tell the reader the great benefit of the obedience of the troops in warfare, resulting in faithfulness and discipline (6.4). According to Xenophon, even the Asiatic Greeks “voluntarily (ἐβελούσιοι) joined and assisted him” back to Greece. They did not only follow a ruler, but also a father and a friend (1.38). When describing the leadership theory of Xenophon,⁹² Gray points out that “willing obedience” is a main characteristic.⁹³ It means that the leader wins the obedience of free men because of superior knowledge and care for the success of the people.⁹⁴ In the thought world of Xenophon this paradox, which includes both liberty (willingness) and enslavement (obedience), means that “men who offer willing obedience are free men and not slaves.”⁹⁵ The willing obedience of the leader is clearly seen in *Agesilaus*. When Xenophon tells about Agesilaus’ care for the older war prisoners he states:

In this way not only those who heard about this, but also the captives themselves, became well-disposed (εὐμενεῖς) to him. In the cities he won over to his side he released them from the obedience of services slaves owe to lords and required the obedience that free men owe to rulers (ὅσα ἐλεύθεροι ἄρχουσι πείθονται). (1.22)

In his interpretation of *Agesilaus*, Mickey Craig states that three things mainly characterize Agesilaus, namely law-abidingness, the benefitting of his subjects, and the ability to create trust in his rule.⁹⁶ Xenophon shows the importance of a trustful relationship between the ruler and his subject by telling the reader that the first

⁹² For the appropriateness of speaking about Xenophon’s “leadership theory,” see Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 7. She points out that “[l]eadership is his main interest throughout his works” (p. 1). See also Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 6, who explains that “when we speak of his ‘theory,’ what scholars generally mean (and what I mean) is that Xenophon talks about leadership across several different fields (e.g. domestic, military, political) and he seeks features common to each.” Cf. Wood, “Xenophon’s Theory of Leadership,” *C&M* (1964): 33–66.

⁹³ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 44, 179–80. See also Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 3. Cf. Romilly, “Eunoia in Isocrates,” 94. For examples of willing obedience in other writings by Xenophon, see e.g. *Oec.* 4.18–19, *Ana.* 1.9.28–30, and *Cyr.* 1.1.3.

⁹⁴ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 24. Cf. Wood, “Xenophon’s Theory,” 52.

⁹⁵ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 28.

⁹⁶ Craig, “Politics or Philosophy,” 73.

action of Agesilaus revealed that he was a man who was true to his words (1.12).⁹⁷ The benefits the leader brings to the people, which is outlined below, also plays an important role in the attitudes of the people. In Xenophon's leadership theory, by loving men the leader is able to win the goodwill of the people and to become honored.⁹⁸

Benefitting the people

According to Agesilaus himself, the good leader is the one who gives benefits to his followers. Xenophon tells that he "regarded it to be the duty of a good king to do as much good as possible for the subjects" (7.1, cf. 4.6). Throughout the biography, the reader also discovers that Agesilaus benefitted his people in many different ways. When Wood describes Xenophon's leadership theory it is thus not without reason he states that "[a]ll that the leader does must be a demonstration to his subordinates that he constantly thinks of their welfare and works for their benefit."⁹⁹

Xenophon mentions that under the leadership of Agesilaus the cities in the former Athenian empire prospered: "he worked out, by his own presence, that the cities could live in a lasting unity (ὁμονόως πολιτευομένης) and prosperity (εὐδαίμονας) without flight and killing" (1.37, cf. 7.3). Gray notices that Agesilaus is described, according to the leadership theory of Xenophon, as a leader who gives success and prosperity to his followers. A good leader gives increase to the group, materially or morally. The success of the followers is given by the leader through an increase in numbers, skills, and qualities of the group.¹⁰⁰ Xenophon uses the Greek word εὐδαίμων when he refers to the success and prosperity of the group. This word expresses success of a group in both a morally and material way, and the happiness of the individual.¹⁰¹ One important factor for Agesilaus to reach the prosperity of his people was living in submission to the laws (7.3).

According to Xenophon, Agesilaus was not responsible for the defeat at Leuctra (371 BCE). To the contrary, he writes that: "until this time both he himself and the city was successful (ἡτύχει) together; and of all the losses that happened after this none could be said to be acquired during the leadership of Agesilaus (ὥς Ἀγησιλάου ἡγουμένου ἐπράχθη)" (2.23).

⁹⁷ Craig, "Politics or Philosophy," 76.

⁹⁸ Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 32–33. Sandridge points out that love for honor (φιλότιμος) is another central characteristic of Xenophon's leadership theory and is a closely related to benevolence (see pp. 21–44). In 10.4 Xenophon presents Agesilaus as "most loving of being honored (φιλοτιμώτατος)."

⁹⁹ Wood, "Xenophon's Theory," 53.

¹⁰⁰ Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes*, 12–14. See e.g. *Memorabilia* 3.2.4 where Xenophon writes that Socrates reflected "on what constitutes a good leader (ἀγαθοῦ ἡγεμόνος)" and that "he stripped away all other virtues, and left just the ability to make those he lead happy (τὸ εὐδαιμοναῶς ποιεῖν ὧν ἂν ἡγῆται)." See also *Cyr.* 8.2.14.

¹⁰¹ Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes*, 11 n. 14. Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1095A19.

The author further informs the reader that Agesilaus was not only just in matters of money, but also generous. In the thoughts of the leader it is required of the generous man to assist others with his own resources (11.8).¹⁰² This did not mean that Agesilaus made friends just by giving away a lot of money. Xenophon also gives example of how the leader won friendship by small gestures.¹⁰³ The leader benefitted the people because of his willingness to give to and assist his people. Cartledge concludes that in Xenophon's *Agesilaus* "an essential ingredient of these cardinal virtues [justice and goodness] was helping one's friends to the greatest possible extent."¹⁰⁴ According to the biographer, Agesilaus held the opinion that the most noble ruler is the one who makes friendship, gains the affection of the people, and "surpasses others in benefitting (εὐεργετῶν) the fatherland and the comrades" (9.7).

Xenophon also presents Agesilaus as a benevolent leader. The clemency of Agesilaus is seen in his treatment of his prisoners. He showed mercy towards children and old people and took care of them. In the conquered cities he released his prisoners from slavery as servants and "cities impregnable to force, he took authority over by his clemency (τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ)" (1.22). Sandridge points out that φιλανθρωπία is a central characteristic of Xenophon's leadership theory and explains that for the author it is "a fondness for humans that involves feelings of pity, sympathy, affection, and care."¹⁰⁵ At several occasions, both in the beginning and in the end of the biography, Xenophon underlines the kindness of Agesilaus. When he tells the reader about his military victories, he mentions that Agesilaus "cared not only for the conquering of the opponents by force, but also to bring them over to his side by kindness (πράοτητι)" (1.20, cf. 11.10).¹⁰⁶

At the same time Xenophon characterizes the leader as hard towards his enemies, and thus makes a contrast to how he handles his friends (9.7; 11.10, 12). This behavior is explained in that the leader needs to be hard toward his enemies in war, but when the victory is ensured it is possible to show clemency.¹⁰⁷ Agesilaus moreover distinguished consciously between errors of private men and of other leaders: "The failures of common men (τῶν ἰδιωτῶν) he endured compassionately (πράως), but the failures of rulers (τῶν ἀρχόντων) he treated seriously, judging the former to have little negative (κακῶς) impact, but the latter to have much more negative impact" (11.6).

¹⁰² See also 1.17–19, 4.1–6.

¹⁰³ Gray, *Xenophon's Mirror of Princes*, 91.

¹⁰⁴ Cartledge, *Agesilaos*, 143. Cf. Craig, "Politics or Philosophy," 125, who states that "he is essentially a benefactor."

¹⁰⁵ Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 44.

¹⁰⁶ Sandridge, *Loving Humanity*, 66, points out that Xenophon here uses φιλανθρωπία and πραότης as almost synonymous terms.

¹⁰⁷ Due, *Cyropaedia*, 197. Cf. Craig, "Politics or Philosophy," 132.

Closeness to the people

That Agesilaus is portrayed as a man of the people with graciousness and charm has already been noted. Xenophon further tells that Agesilaus was familiar with all conditions of the people: “He made it a habit to take company with all kinds of men” (11.4). Agesilaus’ leadership style can be described as an open, trustful, mutual relationship with the people, comparable with the relationship between a parent and a child.¹⁰⁸ Xenophon explicitly characterizes Agesilaus as a man who was accessible to all the people and contrasts him with the Persian king who was not often seen by the people (9.1–2). Due proposes that this behaviour—to be accessible to all—is a feature of Xenophon’s leadership concept.¹⁰⁹

The biographer also underlines that Agesilaus was appreciated by the people around him: “By his family he was called ‘fond of his family,’ by his intimates ‘unhesitating,’ by his servants ‘unforgetful,’ by the oppressed ‘helper,’ by his fellows in danger ‘a savior second to the gods’” (11.13). Here, Xenophon tells about “the intimates” (οἱ χρώμενοι) of Agesilaus. This term, which literally means “those who use (him),” describes the people in the inner circle of Agesilaus. They are also described as “comrades” (ἑταῖρος) (e.g. 6.4). Apparently, Agesilaus had a “group of intimate associates” around him.¹¹⁰

In many ways Xenophon underlines the friendship between Agesilaus and his subjects. For example, he describes this relationship as comparable to the relationship between father and children (1.38, 7.3). Due comments that this bond “is the closest thinkable bond.”¹¹¹ The designation of the leader as “father” expresses his concern for all his people, just as a good father cares for all the members of his house.¹¹²

The relationship between leader and followers is for Xenophon similar to that between private friends.¹¹³ This friendship relationship is gained mainly through the benefits the leader gives to the followers (see e.g. 1.17–19).¹¹⁴ According to Xenophon’s leadership theory, both leader and followers benefit each other mutually. This friendship relationship is expressed by leadership terms.¹¹⁵ In *Agesilaus* Xenophon also expresses this thought: “Agesilaus went home, choosing, instead of being the greatest in Asia, to rule (ἄρχειν) and to be ruled (ἄρχεσθαι) at

¹⁰⁸ Higgins, *Xenophon the Athenian*, 78.

¹⁰⁹ Due, *Cyropaedia*, 204.

¹¹⁰ Cartledge, *Agesilaos*, 151.

¹¹¹ Due, *Cyropaedia*, 17 n. 35.

¹¹² Due, *Cyropaedia*, 212.

¹¹³ See e.g. *Cyr.* 1.6.24.

¹¹⁴ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 294. See also Wood, “Xenophon’s Theory,” 52–53.

¹¹⁵ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 298, 300–01.

home according to the laws” (2.16; see also 6.4). Gray points out that Xenophon “presents the dynamics of friendships as a partnership for mutual *eudaimonia*.”¹¹⁶

A model for the people

After Xenophon has presented Agesilaus as an example of a virtuous life to the reader, he continues to say that he led his people to live in the same way as himself: “For he really prided himself, not so much by ruling over others as by ruling over himself, less on leading (ἡγεῖσθαι) the citizens against their enemies than leading them to all virtue” (10.2). Craig rightly comments that “we see that while Agesilaos, as ruler, must defeat the enemies of his city, he would much rather inculcate virtue in his citizens in peace-time and urge them to rule themselves as he ruled himself.”¹¹⁷ It is not explicitly mentioned how he influenced the people, but in this context it is most natural to understand the statement in the way that he modeled the virtues for the people.

When Xenophon underlines Agesilaus’ obedience to the laws, he remarks: “For who would be willing to disobey when seeing the king obeying?” (7.2). The importance of modelling is thus underlined.¹¹⁸ In the view of Xenophon, the ideal leader transforms his followers by his mere presence.¹¹⁹ That Agesilaus was a model for his people is also seen in the fact that the leader took part in the hardships of his people and was willing to work hardest of them all. He thought that his people should be encouraged in this way (5.2–3, cf. 9.5). According to Xenophon, Agesilaus had the view that the greatest leader is not the one who is the richest or has most subjects, but the one “who is a better leader of better followers (ὁπότερος αὐτός τε ἀμείνων εἴη καὶ ἀμεινόνων ἡγοῖτο)” (8.4).

2.3 Philo’s *Moses*

In *On the Life of Moses*, Philo (c. 30/25 BCE to 45 CE) makes Moses known to a wider audience. The primary purpose of the writing is probably to present Moses and the faith he represents to a non-Jewish world, in a rational and convincing

¹¹⁶ Gray, *Xenophon’s Mirror of Princes*, 328. See also p. 298.

¹¹⁷ Craig, “Politics or Philosophy,” 170. Cf. Julien Smith, *Christ the Ideal King: Cultural Context, Rhetorical Strategy, and the Power of Divine Monarchy in Ephesians*, WUNT 313 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 34: “Xenophon’s ideal ruler is not simply of unsurpassed virtue; he is also able to inculcate virtue in his subjects.”

¹¹⁸ See Cyr. 8.1.21 and 8.6.13 for other examples in Xenophon’s literature of the leader as a model for his followers.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 28. Cf. *Oec.* 21.9–19.

way.¹²⁰ The literary genre Philo uses is ancient biography (cf. 1.1).¹²¹ Philo, who was a Jew in the Diaspora, integrates in his writings Greek philosophy with Jewish tradition.¹²²

In this biography Moses is presented not only as a great leader of the nation of Israel, but as an ideal leader. Louis Feldman proposes that the purpose of the first book is to “present Moses as the perfect representation of the ideal of the kingly character.”¹²³ He also speaks about Philo’s Moses as “the superlative leader.”¹²⁴ Sarah Pearce describes the book as Philo’s “portrait of Moses as ideal leader.”¹²⁵ In the same way Ray Barraclough states that “[t]here is no question in Philo’s mind but that Moses was the human ruler surpassing all others.”¹²⁶ The author gives a portrait of Moses that fits very well to the ideals of the time.¹²⁷ The virtues that characterize Moses are compatible with the Hellenistic royal ideology.¹²⁸

Philo writes himself that God called Moses to rule the nation, to liberate the people from Egypt, and “to be the leader (ἡγεμόνα) taking the people from here to a settlement far from home” (1.71, cf. 1.149). The Greek word ἡγεμών is used twelve

¹²⁰ Louis H. Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism*, CJAS 15 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 12–13. See Finn Damgaard, *Recasting Moses: The Memory of Moses in Biographical and Autobiographical Narratives in Ancient Judaism and 4th-Century Christianity*, ECCA 13 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2013), 49 n. 137, for a discussion of the intended readership. Damgaard himself proposes that the primary addresses are the Jews in the Alexandrian diaspora. See also pp. 85–86. Cf. Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 47, who suggests that the book could be addressed both to gentiles or to “uniformed Jews on the threshold of apostasy” (see also p. 52).

¹²¹ See e.g. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 128; Brian McGing, “Philo’s Adaptation of the Bible in His *Life of Moses*,” in *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, ed. Brian McGing and Judith Mossman (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 117–40 (117–19); Damgaard, *Recasting Moses*, 52–53. Some scholars also describes the writing as an encomium. See e.g. Philip L. Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 69–74; Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 18.

¹²² Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 128, describes the book as a “mixture of Greek βίος and a Jewish background.”

¹²³ Louis H. Feldman, “Philo’s View of Moses’ Birth and Upbringing,” *CBQ* 62 (2002): 258–81 (258).

¹²⁴ Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 118.

¹²⁵ Sarah J. K. Pearce, “King Moses: Notes on Philo’s Portrait of Moses as an Ideal Leader in the *Life of Moses*,” *MUSJ* 57 (2004): 37–74 (39).

¹²⁶ Ray Barraclough, “Philo’s Politics: Roman Rule and Hellenistic Judaism,” *ANRW* 21.1:417–553 (487). See also Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 107: “The fundamental theme of Philo’s *Life of Moses*’ [sic] is that Moses was the ‘most excellent king,’ the ‘most perfect ruler.’” Cf. pp. 109 and 129.

¹²⁷ See Barraclough, “Philo’s Politics,” 506. He points out that Philo’s ideal “is an amalgam of Pythagorean, Stoic and Platonic ideas” (p. 550). Hywel Clifford, “Moses as Philosopher-Sage in Philo,” in *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Traditions*, ed. Axel Graupner and Michael Wolter (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 151–68 (165), likewise notes that Philo presents “an ideal Moses who represents everything that intellectual Greeks and Romans, as well as cultured Jews, could ever wish for.”

¹²⁸ Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 107–08; Barraclough, “Philo’s Politics,” 506.

times to describe Moses in the book.¹²⁹ The word is used by the author to denote a “leader” in a broad sense.¹³⁰ Philo makes clear to the reader that the Hebrews were not a small people. On the contrary, the reader is told that the men of military age alone numbered six hundred thousand. Thereafter the author underlines that “of all these men Moses was appointed leader (ἡγεμών)” (1.148). So Philo finds out that Moses had a great people to lead and was confronted with lots of challenges. Nonetheless, Moses accomplished his leadership in an exemplary way and thus showed himself to be an ideal leader. In the introduction of the second book, Philo tells the reader that he has now in the first book told about the education and the reign (ἀρχή) of Moses, “which he governed, not only blameless (ἀνεπιλήπτως), but highly commendably (σφόδρα ἐπαινετῶς) (2.1).

According to Philo, the perfect leader needs to master four roles: “Since, therefore, I have stated that for the perfect leader (τῷ τελειοτάτῳ ἡγεμόνι) four things need to be present, namely kingship, competent legislation, priesthood, and prophecy” (2.187). Feldman rightly points out that “Moses was actually never a king, nor for that matter a high priest, but Philo is presenting him as, in effect, the ideal leader.”¹³¹

Though Philo underlines the perfection of Moses (e.g. 2.187), and even tells the reader that Moses “was named (ὠνομάσθη) god (θεός) and king of the whole nation” and thus entered into an unseen reality where God is (1.158), he nonetheless presents Moses as a leader to be imitated.¹³² In the next sentence he states:

Having brought (προαγαγών) himself and his life to the middle, like a well fashioned painting, he established himself as a beautiful and godlike art, a model (παράδειγμα) for those who wish to imitate it (μιμεῖσθαι). Happy are all who have imprinted, or have eagerly imprinted, the image (τὸν τύπον) in their own souls” (1.158–59).

Philo here uses the same words as Xenophon (*Ages.* 10.2), παράδειγμα and μιμεῖσθαι, when he presents his leader as a model. In addition to these, he makes use of the term τύπος, which is commonly used in the context of imitation.¹³³ Burton Mack suggests an allegorical understanding of the imitation of Moses which implies to follow Moses on the cosmic way in a Sinai-event.¹³⁴ But if the biographical genre

¹²⁹ 1.71, 1.148, 1.193, 1.198, 1.200, 1.236, 1.243, 1.329, 2.187, 2.215, 2.234, 2.273.

¹³⁰ Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal*, 243. Cf. Pearce, “King Moses,” 58.

¹³¹ Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal*, 283.

¹³² Contra Michael L. Satlow, “Philo on Human Perfection,” *JTS* 59 (2008): 500–519 (519), who proposes that Moses is so perfect, from his birth, that it is not possible to imitate him. See however p. 506 where he, nonetheless, points out that there are aspects where Moses offers a model to imitate.

¹³³ Cf. Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 173.

¹³⁴ Burton L. Mack, “Imitatio Mosis: Patterns of Cosmology and Soteriology in the Hellenistic Synagogue,” *SPhilo* 1 (1972): 27–55 (40). The motif of imitation is then “a form of ritual

of this writing is taken into account it is more natural to understand this text primarily as an exhortation to imitate the character of Moses, the ideal leader.¹³⁵ Furthermore, the way Philo describes the virtues of Moses resembles a “mirror for kings” (cf. 1.153–54).¹³⁶ Consequently, Barraclough rightly concludes that “Moses was thus the example all rulers were to emulate.”¹³⁷ This understanding is also in agreement with Philo’s statement about Moses in *On the Virtues* where he declares that “he should be a standard and a law for all coming leaders (ἡγεμόσι) who pay attention to Moses as the first original model (ἀρχέτυπον παράδειγμα)” (70).

In a systematic way Philo presents Moses as king, in the first book, and as lawgiver, priest, and prophet in the second book. The first book describes the career of Moses chronologically, while the second book is structured topologically according to the three different leadership roles.¹³⁸ The common three-part structure can also be recognized in the biography. After a proem (1.1–4) comes the first part which narrates the development and preparation of the leader (1.5–84). Then comes the middle part, which describes Moses’ career as king, lawgiver, high priest, and prophet (1.85–2.287). The biography then ends with the description of the death of the leader (2.288–92).¹³⁹

2.3.1 The character of the leader

A well-prepared and worthy leader

Philo begins his work with a genealogy of the protagonist and underlines the quality of his parents who “were among the most excellent persons of their time (τῶν ... ἀρίστων)” (1.7). The biographer also tells about the comprehensive royal education that Moses received and his commitment and success as a student (1.20–24). Feldman rightly concludes that “Moses is depicted by Philo as having exceptional physical and intellectual development as a child.”¹⁴⁰ The education of the leader did not end in Egypt. The time in Midian was also a developing period for Moses where he dedicated himself to gaining virtues. This was not only a practical behavior. On the contrary, Philo stresses that Moses strived to have a right reason, which is the source to all virtues. Thus Moses also devoted himself to the study of philosophy,

participation in the myth which accounts for the complex dimensions which the story of Israel has assumed.”

¹³⁵ Cf. Damgaard, *Recasting Moses*, 52–53.

¹³⁶ Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 109; Hadot “Fürstenspiegel,” 8:592; Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 284.

¹³⁷ Barraclough, “Philo’s Politics,” 490. See also Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 103.

¹³⁸ For a detailed structure, see McGing, “Philo’s adaptation,” 134–37.

¹³⁹ Anton Priessnig, “Die literarische Form der Patriarchenbiographien des Philon von Alexandrien,” *MGWJ* 73 (1929): 143–55 (150–52). Cf. Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 176–77.

¹⁴⁰ Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 55.

which he managed very well. He continually contemplated virtues and memorized the doctrines of philosophy, which made him able to integrate his action with his thinking (1.48).

According to Philo, Moses was not only properly educated theoretically for his leadership. He was also well trained practically for his coming mission. The period when Moses shepherded the sheep of his father-in-law was a leadership lesson for him. Philo writes that when he took care of the sheep he was “prepared and instructed for leadership (προδιδασκόμενος εἰς ἡγεμονίαν); for the care of a shepherd is a training in kingship (προγυμνασία βασιλείας) for one who is going to be in charge over humans, the most manageable of herds” (1.60). According to Rosa Maria Piccione, this passage (1.60–62) is an expression of the concept of παιδεία, a slow and systematic process of education and preparation.¹⁴¹

Philo thus describes the activity of Moses as a shepherd as a “leadership lesson” for the future leader of a people.¹⁴² He also develops this thought saying that “the care (ἐπιμέλεια) and supervision (προστασία) of tame animals is a royal training for the obedience of subjects; therefore the kings are called ‘shepherds of the people’ (ποιμένες λαῶν)” (1.61).¹⁴³ To be a shepherd is not only a good preparation, according to Philo. In fact, it is necessary for a “perfect king” to have skills in shepherding, because before great things can be accomplished the small ones have to be done (1.62). Philo also highlights the success of Moses as shepherd. Through his provision and good leadership he made his herd become healthy and increase in numbers (1.63–64).

In Midian Moses also receives his call to lead the people of God (1.71). God does not call him to be an assistant, but to be the leader. Even if God promises to support Moses, it is he who must take the role of leadership.¹⁴⁴ Philo underlines that in contrast to many other rulers the leadership position that Moses held was not taken by him through force. Instead it was given to him by God, “for the sake of virtue (ἀρετῆς), goodness (καλοκάγαθίας), and kindness for everyone (τῆς πρὸς ἅπαντας εὐνοίας), which he tirelessly continued to show” (1.148). Throughout the biography Philo portrays Moses as a man with a good character, a man of virtue. Moses is in fact described by Philo as a man who has every virtue, because they belong together in a unity.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Rosa Maria Piccione, “De Vita Mosis I 60–62: Philon und die griechische παιδεία,” in *Philo und das Neue Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen. 1. Internationales Symposium zum Corpus Judaico-Hellenisticum I.–4. Mai 2003, Eisenach/Jena*, ed. Roland Deines and Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, WUNT 172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 345–57 (347).

¹⁴² See also Philo, *Joseph* 2.

¹⁴³ Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.32, 3.2.1 and Cyr. 8.2.14.

¹⁴⁴ Louis H. Feldman, “Moses in Midian, According to Philo,” *Shofar* 21 (2003): 1–20 (12).

¹⁴⁵ *Moses* 2.7, 10, 66. See also Clifford, “Moses as Philosopher-Sage,” 157.

Self-control

When Philo outlines virtues that every ruler should gain and practice (1.153–54), he first mentions self-control (ἐγκράτεια), endurance (καρτερία), and temperance (σωφροσύνη). Self-control is stressed by Philo in numerous instances. Early in his life, Moses shows himself to be a man of temperance and self-control (1.25). Though he was brought up in a royal place with an abundance of temptations to live a life of lust, Moses tamed and reined in his passions (1.25–26). The young Moses showed himself to have an ascetical ideal.¹⁴⁶ But also later in his life he showed himself to be in control over his feelings. The biographer presents him as “the most gentle (πραότατος) and civilized (ἡμερώτατος) man” (2.279). According to the author, Moses reaches the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, which implies that his passions (the diseased emotions) were eliminated.¹⁴⁷ For Philo, *apatheia* is the highest ethical ideal and an ethical level above ordinary man. Nonetheless, Moses exemplifies this ideal.¹⁴⁸ Philo held the view that the ruler has to rule the self if he wants to be able to rule the people.¹⁴⁹

The biographer underlines the simplicity of Moses, who did not acquire richness for himself or adopt an extravagant lifestyle in matters of food and clothes (1.152–53).¹⁵⁰ Moses, who lived for his soul and not for his body, was content with little (ὀλιγόδεια) (1.29). According to Philo, the person who exercises self-control and endurance will also display other virtues in his life, such as justice, courage, and wisdom (2.185).

Justice

In his portrait of Moses, Philo emphasizes that Moses was a man devoted to justice. He states, for example, that he loved what is good and hated what is evil (1.47). Because of its injustices (ἀδίκημα) Moses rejected the lordship of Egypt and was thus rewarded by God to be the leader of a mightier and more populous nation (1.149). Seeing the unrighteous treatment of the Hebrews in Egypt, Moses reacts forcefully—and righteously according to the author—and kills one of the worst overseers (1.40–44, cf. 1.50). When Moses arrives in Midian he confronts shepherds and helps the daughters of Jethro to give water to their sheep (1.54–56), an action

¹⁴⁶ Feldman, “Philo’s View of Moses’ Birth and Upbringing,” 277.

¹⁴⁷ Milo van Veldhuizen, “Moses: A Model of Hellenistic Philanthropia,” *RefR* 38 (1985): 215–24 (217); David C. Aune, “Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity,” in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, ed. W. E. Helleman (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 125–58 (125–26). According to Aune, Philo’s thought is “a blending of Platonic psychology with Stoic moral theory” (p. 126).

¹⁴⁸ David Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory,” *ANRW* 21.1:372–416 (400).

¹⁴⁹ See Philo, *Sacr.* 49. Cf. Goodenough, “Hellenistic Kingship,” 70; Van Veldhuizen, “A Model of Hellenistic Philanthropia,” 217; Pearce, “King Moses,” 53–54.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Philo, *Joseph* 258. According to Barraclough, “Philo’s Politics,” 490, the statement in *Mos* 1.152–53 is an implicit criticism of the Roman leadership.

which also reveals Moses' pursuit of justice.¹⁵¹ The concern for justice is moreover seen in Moses' rebuke of the tribes who want to settle east of Jordan, before the country has been conquered (1.324–28).¹⁵²

When Philo outlines important virtues for every ruler he also mentions justice (δικαιοσύνη). In addition, he identifies “lawful punishment of wrongdoers” and “praise and honor for those who walk straight (κατορθούντων), also according to the law” (1.154). The justice of Moses is especially seen in his office as lawgiver. As legislator Moses showed especially four virtues, namely benevolence (φιλόανθρωπος), love of justice (φιλοδίκαιος), love of goodness (φιλάγαθος), and hatred of evilness (μισοπόνερος) (2.9). Moses' pursuit of justice and his ambition to benefit his subjects were thus expressed by the law that he gave to the people. The justice of the lawgiver is exemplified in honoring equality (ἰσότης) and in treating everyone according to his due (2.9). It is also seen in Moses' intention to treat other nations with fairness.¹⁵³

Piety

Throughout his portrayal of Moses, Philo underlines his piety. The time in Midian was a time of instruction for the leader. The biographer tells that Moses alone with God was “educated” (ἐπαιδεύετο) like “teacher (διδασκάλω) and student (γνώριμος)” (1.80). For Philo piety is the most important virtue,¹⁵⁴ and to learn piety is thus the finest and most beneficial lesson (1.146). He further describes Moses as “partner” (κοινωνός) with God and, as a prophet, “friend” (φίλος) of God (1.155–56).

The piety of Moses is shown, for example, by his faith that God would answer his prayers immediately and see to the needs of the people (1.184–185). When Philo narrates the incident with the bitter water he concludes that the people was provided a great drink “by the piety of the ruler who led them (παρὰ τῆς εὐσεβείας τοῦ προεστῶτος ἄρχοντος)” (1.187). This virtue is also seen in the warfare against Balak, which was not initiated in order to get dominion or acquire possessions, but “for the sake of piety and holiness (ὕπὲρ εὐσεβείας καὶ ὁσιότητος)” (1.307). Feldman points out that “Moses possessed, to a special degree, the queen of the virtues, piety; and it was through piety that he gained the offices of king, legislator, prophet, and high priest.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ See Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), 184, and Feldman, “Moses in Midian,” 6, who comments that this event shows “Moses' tremendous concern for justice.”

¹⁵² See also 1.328, 2.185, and 2.279 for Moses as a man of justice, and 1.302–03 and 2:221 where he punishes evilness and impurity for the sake of righteousness.

¹⁵³ Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal*, 185.

¹⁵⁴ See Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 125–26. Cf. Philo, *Abr.* 60.

¹⁵⁵ Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal*, 258.

When the author describes Moses' office as priest he makes clear that "the highest and most important of the necessary attributes of a high priest is piety (τὴν εὐσεβειαν)," and he continues to tell that Moses "practiced it extensively" (2.66). Philo speaks about a mutual loving relationship between God and Moses, declaring that "with a few other men he came to love God (φιλόθεός) and to be loved by him (θεοφιλής)" (2.67). Towards the end of the biography Philo describes Moses as "the most pious man (δσιώτατον) ever" (2.192).

Wisdom

In Philo's portrait, Moses is not only presented as a "wise" man (σοφός) (2.67), but also as "all-wise" (πάνσοφος) (2.204). The great wisdom of Moses was not an inherited quality, but was developed during his time in Midian. The biographer writes that Moses devoted himself to the study of philosophy, which he managed very well. He continually contemplated virtues and memorized the doctrines of philosophy, which made him able to integrate his action with his thinking (1.48).¹⁵⁶

For Philo, wisdom and philosophy are integrated.¹⁵⁷ When he writes about the education of Moses, philosophy is not one discipline among others, but a "system of thought in ancient Egyptian religion."¹⁵⁸ Philo emphasizes that Moses was a philosopher. The leader is portrayed as one who both pursues (2.211) and teaches philosophy (2.215). According to Hywel Clifford, Philo portrays Moses as a philosopher-sage.¹⁵⁹ But a more appropriate designation is perhaps philosopher-king, since the author refers to this combination with regard to Moses (2.2). The mixture of these two roles recalls the influential ideal of Plato (*Resp.* 5.473D) and indicates that the author in the previous book has shown that Moses reaches this ideal.¹⁶⁰

Philo exemplifies the wisdom of Moses in the prevention of his people making war with the neighboring peoples. In this action Moses demonstrates one of the best qualities, thoughtfulness (φρόνησις). The author explains that it is a proof of understanding (σύνεσις) to keep people from suffering (1.249). The prudence of Moses is also seen in his self-controlled life as a young man (1.25). Understanding is further included in Philo's list of virtues that every ruler should gain and practice (1.153–54).

¹⁵⁶ Damgaard, *Recasting Moses*, 57–58, proposes that Moses is described as a man who gains wisdom by nature, teaching, and practice. In a symbolic way he thus represents the three ways to gain wisdom, which Philo has recognized in the three patriarchs (Abraham was taught, Isaac was self-taught by nature, and Jacob was a man of practice).

¹⁵⁷ Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 161.

¹⁵⁸ Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 152.

¹⁵⁹ Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 167.

¹⁶⁰ Feldman, "Philo's View of Moses' Birth and Upbringing," 270.

In Philo's portrayal of Moses his other virtues are clearly connected to philosophy and wisdom. Clifford states that "Philo makes virtue the hallmark of all true philosophy and wisdom."¹⁶¹ At the same time, Philo explains that the reason Moses succeeded in living a life of virtue through his reason was his continual study of philosophy and his natural gifts.¹⁶² Consequently, wisdom and other virtues are mutually connected to each other. To be a truly wise man, one has to show himself to be a man of virtue. To be able to be a man of virtue one has to study philosophy and be a wise man.

For Philo, who portrays Moses as a lawgiver, the Jewish law was the "primary source of ancient wisdom, and also of practical philosophy."¹⁶³ Those who study the Mosaic Law are therefore philosophers and sages.¹⁶⁴ Philo describes the sacred writings which Moses has left behind him as "marvelous monuments of his wisdom (θαυμάσια μνημεῖα τῆς αὐτοῦ σοφίας)" (1.4).

Integrity

Philo repeatedly presents the leader as a man of integrity, whose speech and deeds were corresponding to his thoughts. When the author tells about Moses' time in Arabia, he points out that Moses consciously devoted himself to live an integrated life:

he trained himself for the good life, in both a theoretical and practical way (τόν τε θεωρητικόν καὶ πρακτικόν), and he worked hard and studied continuously philosophical doctrines, which he easily evaluated in his soul and entrusted to his memory so it should not be forgotten, and immediately made his own deeds (πράξεις), all praiseworthy, to harmonize (ἐφαρμόττων) with them, for he aimed not what seems but the truth (οὐ τὸ δοκεῖν ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀληθείας) (1.48).

The actions of Moses were not only corresponding to his philosophical thinking. They were also in harmony with his words. At two times the phrase "in word and deed" (λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ) is used to underline the coherence between his speech and actions (1.151 and 2.150, cf. 2.66).¹⁶⁵ The biographer points out that Moses

showed the philosophical doctrines in everyday deeds (τῶν καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν ἔργων), saying what he thought, performing actions in agreement (ἀκόλουθα) with what have been said to harmony (ἀρμονίαν) of word and life, so that word was like

¹⁶¹ Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 164.

¹⁶² Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 153–54.

¹⁶³ Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 163. See e.g. *Mos.* 2.36.

¹⁶⁴ Clifford, "Moses as Philosopher-Sage," 164.

¹⁶⁵ According to Merritt, *In Word and Deed*, 93, Philo is one of the ancient Greek authors who uses this phrase most frequently. Merritt suggests that "the phrase fills an integral role in Philo's understanding of the moral life."

life and life like word just as people who play in unison on a musical instrument (1.29).

When Philo describes the beauty of the mind he points out that it is “adorned with an eminent ornament of truth (ἀληθείας), and agreement (ὁμολογίας) of deeds with words and words with deeds and even intentions (βουλευμάτων) with both” (2.140, cf. 2.212).¹⁶⁶ He thus underlines the coherence of the thoughts, words, and deeds of Moses.¹⁶⁷ Through this triad, Moses showed himself to be a man of truth and integrity.

When Philo describes the attributes of the high priest he sees a symbolic meaning in Moses’ ordering, which points to the integrity of man (2.127–30). He states that reason has two forms, the inward thought and the outward speaking (2.129). The author concludes his reasoning saying that there is no benefit in good words if they are not followed by actions, and points out that Moses “did not justify a separation between word and actions” (2.130).

Benevolence

The biographer also presents Moses as a man of benevolence (φιλόανθρωπος) (2.9, 2.163, cf. 2.242). This common virtue of Hellenistic kingship expresses generally the king’s care for his people.¹⁶⁸ David Winston describes it as a “quality of active beneficence.”¹⁶⁹ Philo clearly relates it to compassion. Moses shows himself to be a leader with clemency, when he is merciful towards his enemies and not takes revenge of them (1.249, cf. 1.125). Here Philo tells the reader that Moses, “the leader” (τοῦ προεστῶτος), showed one of the best qualities, namely “kindness” (χρηστότητα) (cf. 1.244).¹⁷⁰ In another passage, he describes the leader with “a merciful (ἴλεω) look and a gentle (πραοτέρᾳ) voice” (1.331). Pearce notices that “Moses leads with his intelligence and, above all, his philanthropy; like a good Hellenistic king, Moses is the benefactor who puts the protection of his subjects first.”¹⁷¹

At several instances Philo portrays Moses as a leader with empathy for his people. When the people complain about the hardships of the journey in the desert and insults their leader, Moses forgives them, understanding their difficulties in handling the lack of food (1.193–97). Toward the people who could not fulfil the

¹⁶⁶ See also Philo, *Post.* 1.85–86 and *Mut.* 1.237.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Merritt, *In Word and Deed*, 96. Merritt points out that this stress on coherence between not only words and deeds, but also thoughts/intentions, is consistent with earlier Greek literature (pp. 96–97).

¹⁶⁸ Van Veldhuizen, “A Model of Hellenistic Philanthropy,” 215–17.

¹⁶⁹ Winston, “Philo’s Ethical Theory,” 394.

¹⁷⁰ In the view of Philo, *χρηστότης* and *φιλόανθρωπος* are closely related. See Pearce, “King Moses,” 68.

¹⁷¹ Pearce, “King Moses,” 61.

Paschal sacrifices since they mourned the loss of their relatives, he had “feelings of sympathy (συμπαθές)” (2.228). Feldman rightly points out that Moses is portrayed as “a leader who sympathizes with and feels for his people.”¹⁷²

2.3.2 The relationship between the leader and the people

Leadership roles

A number of leadership roles can be seen in Philo’s portrayal of Moses. The author expresses explicitly a conviction that the perfect leader needs to fulfil four roles:

Since, therefore, I have stated that for the perfect leader (τῷ τελειοτάτῳ ἡγεμόνι) four things need to be present, namely kingship (βασιλείαν), competent legislation (νομοθετικὴν ἔξιν), priesthood (ιερωσύνην), and prophecy (προφητείαν), so that through his legislation he can command things which need to be done and forbid things which should not be done, and through his priesthood administer not only human matters but also divine, and through his prophecy declare everything which reason not can comprehend (2.187).

Moses’ office as king is the role which Philo gives most space, since it is an all-encompassing role. In fact, the offices of lawgiver, priest, and prophet can be described as adjuncts of his office as king (cf. 1.334).¹⁷³ Meek points out that the offices of kingship and legislation is more or less interchangeable: “The king must legislate; the legislator is naturally the king.”¹⁷⁴ When Philo has finished his first book, he concludes that Moses ruled, “not only blameless (ἀνεπιλήπτως), but highly commendably (σφόδρα ἐπαινετῶς)” (2.1).

Philo likewise underlines Moses’ excellence as legislator: “He was the most excellent (ἄριστος) of all lawgivers (νομοθετῶν) in all countries, of all who have lived among Greeks and barbarians, and the laws are the best (κάλλιστοι) and truly divine, omitting nothing which is necessary” (2.12). Philo makes a contrast between other leaders, who first created an ideal state (e.g. Plato’s *Republic*) and then provided it with laws, and Moses, who did the opposite and thus is presented as one who actually promulgates the laws (2.49–50).¹⁷⁵

When Philo discusses the clemency of the legislator he describes a teaching function of the lawgiver, namely “to explain (ἀναδιδασκούσης) the purposes for the common good” (2.9). The biographer also portrays Moses as a good teacher when he instructed his brother in the office of high priest. He points out that Moses “instructed (ἀνεδίδασκεν) him as a good master (ὁφηγηγῆς) instructs an apt pupil”

¹⁷² Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 124.

¹⁷³ Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 107; Damgaard, *Recasting Moses*, 68.

¹⁷⁴ Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 113.

¹⁷⁵ Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 272.

(2.153). The teaching role of Moses is, moreover, underlined in a context where a man is brought in front of the leader who teaches the people, surrounded by the priests:

For it was a custom, whenever it was practicable, and especially on the seventh day, as I earlier have made clear, to engage in the study of wisdom (φιλοσοφεῖν), whilst the leader instructed (ὕφηγουμένου) and taught (διδάσκοντος) all things which should be done and said and the people developed their conduct (εἰς καλοκάγαθίαν) and improved both character (τά τε ἦθη) and life (2.215).

Philo explicitly presents Moses as a philosopher-king (2.2). The author emphasizes that Moses was a philosopher, one who both pursued (2.211–12) and taught philosophy (2.215). The biographer also informs the reader that Moses authored sacred writings, which are “marvelous monuments of his wisdom” (1.4).

For Philo, the ideal leader must pay attention to divine matters, otherwise it will not go well for either the leader or the followers.¹⁷⁶ The leader needs to get providence from God. As an ideal leader, Moses held the office of a priest and thus received benefits from God to himself and to the people through prayer (2.5). He is also portrayed, especially in the story about the golden calf, as a mediator who made successful intercession for his people when they had sinned (2.166).

In order to deal with things that are unknown to humans, Moses also had a gift of prophecy. Philo explains that the benefit of the prophetic gift is “to find out by the providence of God everything which cannot be comprehended by reasoning (λογισμῶ); for what the mind fails to attain, prophecy can reach” (2.6). When Philo describes Moses’ office as prophet he distinguishes between different prophetic functions according to the degree of activity of the prophet himself (2.188–90). He shows the reader that Moses not only passively mediated utterances from God, but also worked in partnership with God by asking questions and listen to answers (2.190, 2.246), and gave prophetic oracles by divine inspiration (2.46). The last function includes prophesying about future events (2.190, cf. 2.253).

According to Feldman, Philo also emphasizes Moses’ qualities as a general and military leader. These skills are seen in the battle against Amalek where Moses, as a good general in antiquity, sends out scouts to get information about his enemies and appoints Joshua to be the general in charge (1.216).¹⁷⁷ But it should be noted that Philo does not present Moses as a “general” (στρατηγός). On the contrary,

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 291, who states: “Moses was not a high priest, but it was axiomatic in antiquity for the king to supervise divine as well as human matters, as we see, for example, in the case of the Roman kings, notably Romulus and Numa Pompilius.”

¹⁷⁷ Louis H. Feldman, “Moses the General and the Battle against Midian in Philo,” *JSQ* 14 (2007): 1–17 (2–3). See also Louis H. Feldman, “Philo’s version of the Biblical Episode of the Spies,” *HUCA* 73 (2002): 29–48 (33–35, 48), and Pearce, “King Moses,” 60–61.

Moses appoints Joshua (1.216) and Pinehas (1.306) to execute the command in the warfare of the nation.

Willing followers

In his portrayal of Moses, Philo tells about the people's willing obedience to their leader. When Philo describes how Moses led the people to their new homeland, he firstly makes clear that "he received the authority willingly from his subjects (παρ' ἐκόντων ἔλαβε τὴν ἀρχήν)" (1.163).¹⁷⁸

The willing obedience is also seen in the episode when two of the tribes want to settle in the east of Jordan before the land is conquered (1.319–33). Moses criticizes their behavior and directs them to take part of the battle in the west of Jordan together with the rest of the people. The people listen to this admonition as a son listens to his father and respond to Moses that "we judge it to be a virtuous act to obey you (πειθαρχεῖν), who are a great leader (τοιῷδε ἡγεμόνι)" (1.329). The two tribes thus change their plan and take part of the battle for the rest of the country. Barraclough comments that "[w]hen he exhorted his people they listened, recognizing in the force of his words not those of a ruler lording it over his subjects, but his concern for justice and equality amongst them."¹⁷⁹

When Philo discusses why Moses did not lead the people the shortest way through the desert, he declares that one reason was to prove the obedience and loyalty of the followers when their needs were not supplied in abundance (1.164). In this way Philo gives credits to Moses as a leader who is training the people who were used to act in slavish manner (cf. 2.50).¹⁸⁰

Benefitting the people

The leadership of Moses was, in the words of Barraclough, "marked by justice, philanthropy, benefactions and goodness."¹⁸¹ That Moses was a leader who to a high degree benefitted the people is shown to the reader in many ways. According to Philo, one of the reasons why God entrusted Moses with the leadership of the Hebrews was his "kindness for everyone (τῆς πρὸς ἅπαντας εὐνοίας), which he tirelessly continued to show" (1.148). Moses is contrasted with other leaders who gather economic benefits for themselves and for their families (1.150–54). On the contrary, Philo tells that Moses benefitted the people: "For he had set before him one necessary objective, to benefit (ὀνῆσαι) his subjects, and he did everything, in

¹⁷⁸ In another of his works, *On Rewards and Punishments*, Philo also states that Moses did not gain the obedience of his people by military force, but "by the voluntary intention (ἐκουσίῳ γνώμῃ) of those being ruled" by the work of God (54). Cf. Philo, *Joseph* 269, where he in the end of the story about Joseph tells the reader that "none of his subjects obeyed him more by force than by free choice."

¹⁷⁹ Barraclough, "Philo's Politics," 490.

¹⁸⁰ Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal*, 114.

¹⁸¹ Barraclough, "Philo's Politics," 505.

word and deed, for the benefit of them (ὕπὲρ τῆς τούτων ὠφελείας), neglecting no opportunity of making his efforts for their common prosperity (εἰς κοινὴν κατόρθωσιν)” (1.151). Moses’ benevolence to the people in Egypt (1.40) stands in sharp contrast to the Egyptian king’s harsh treatment of the people.¹⁸²

It is further described, through the mouth of the people, that Moses promised the people “happiness” (εὐδαίμων) (1.193). Philo also gives examples of how Moses benefitted the people so they could live a good life. When he tells about wandering in the wilderness and the eating of quails he makes clear that God provided food in abundance for them and made life luxurious with delicate meat (1.209). Feldman notices that the narrative “illustrates Moses’ excellent ability as a ruler to satisfy the basic needs of his people.”¹⁸³

Philo describes Moses as a “father” of the people and not as one who “boasted in the authority of his rule (καταλαζονευόμενον ἀρχῆς ἐξουσία)” (1.328). As a “father” Moses seriously cared for all members of his people, striving after justice (δικαιοσύνη) and equality (ισότης) among his subjects (1.328).¹⁸⁴ Philo underlines Moses’ ability to unite the diverse people he led. For example, after crossing the Red Sea the leader persuaded all people to sing a song together in one mind (ὁμογνωμονεῖν) (2.257).¹⁸⁵ Another example Philo gives is the story about the spies, where Moses carefully selects one spies from each tribe in order to uphold the unity of the people (1.221, 1.231).

At the end of the biography the author tells about the death of Moses and how the people openly showed their sorrow and mourned their leader for a month. This was done for the sake of “his benevolence (εὐνοίας) and care (κηδεμονίας) for each one” (2.291, cf. 1.328).¹⁸⁶

A model for the people

After Philo has presented Moses as a perfect model for the reader (1.158–59), he discusses the role of the leader as a model for his people and his influence on the lifestyle of the people. If the leader is a bad example, the people will behave badly, but if the leader is a good example, the people will also behave in a good way (1.160–61). Philo then continues to tell the reader that Moses was “a living law

¹⁸² Pearce, “King Moses,” 56.

¹⁸³ Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 127.

¹⁸⁴ For the relationship between the leader as “father” and “benefactor,” see Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 95, who points out: “The king is thus benevolent to his people because he is their father.” Cf. Philo, *Spec.* 4.184. Goodenough also underlines the king’s role to create equality (ισότης) in the thinking of Philo (p. 87). See also T. R. Stevenson “The Ideal Benefactor and the Father Analogy in Greek and Roman Thought,” *CIQ* 42 (1992): 421–36.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Feldman, *Philo’s Portrayal*, 121: “Philo thus emphasizes Moses’ extraordinary ability to unite the motley crew that he led.”

¹⁸⁶ See also 1.328 for Moses’ benevolence.

(νόμος ἔμψυχός)” (1.162). Later in the biography he explains the meaning of this expression:

It is proper for a king to command what should be done and forbid what should not be done. But a command of what should be done and a prohibition of what should not be done is the peculiarity of a law. Consequently is the king a living law (νόμον ἔμψυχον) and the law a just king (2.4).¹⁸⁷

When Philo states that Moses is “a living law” he connects himself with a Pythagorean ideal.¹⁸⁸ In the Pythagorean view, the king not only makes laws in an ideal way, he is also himself law. The ruler personifies the cosmic order so that the state can reflect it.¹⁸⁹ The ideal ruler is a man whose life is a complete identification of the law.¹⁹⁰ Subsequently, it can also be said that this ruler is an incarnation of the law.¹⁹¹ Samuel Sandmel describes the idea as a man “whose deeds are worth emulating because they represent the highest norms that a man can reach.”¹⁹² To be “a living law” the ideal leader has, necessarily, to possess all virtues. This is also the case with Moses (2.8). Consequently, Moses was an ideal example for his people to follow. As “a living law” Moses was a perfect model who influenced his people to good behavior. Goodenough helpfully explains this influence process and how Moses had impact on the people by his whole life:

Like all the νόμοι ἔμψυχοι ... Moses was the model, the leader: he set the eternal verities before men in his utterances and commands, but his life was greater than any of his utterances. His followers might well obey his injunctions but much more copy his spirit, imitate his life, for his life was the true life.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (ap. Stobaeus. 4.7.61): “The most just man would be king, and the most observant of the law would be most just. For without justice no one would be king, and without law no justice. For justice is in the law, and the law is the origin (αἴτιος) of justice, and the king is a living law (νόμος ἔμψυχος), or a legitimate ruler (νόμιμος ἄρχων). Therefore he is the most just and the most observant of the law.”

¹⁸⁸ Glenn F. Chesnut, “The Ruler and the Logos in Neopythagorean, Middle Platonic, and Late Stoic Political Philosophy,” *ANRW* 16.2:1310–32; Barraclough, “Philo’s Politics,” 488; Van Veldhuizen, “A Model of Hellenistic Philanthropy,” 218.

¹⁸⁹ Chesnut, “The Ruler and the Logos,” *ANRW* 16.2:1312.

¹⁹⁰ Goodenough, “Hellenistic Kingship,” 62.

¹⁹¹ G. J. D. Aalders, “ΝΟΜΟΣ ΕΜΨΥΧΟΣ,” in *Politeia und Res publica. Beiträge zum Verständnis von Politik, Recht und Staat in der Antike: Dem Andenken Rudolf Starks gewidmet*, ed. Peter Steinmetz (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1969), 315–29 (316).

¹⁹² Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, 57.

¹⁹³ Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 197.

2.4 Plutarch's *Numa*

In *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch (c. 45–120 CE) has given a multitude of portraits of different Greek and Roman leaders (23 pairs of lives are preserved) in the genre of ancient biography.¹⁹⁴ To only choose one of his biographies is thus not an easy task. However, when Plutarch presents Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, he seems to give a portrait of an ideal ruler. Aalders, who points out that kingship was the preferable constitution according to Plutarch, notes that “only one king appears in his biographies who completely lived up to his ideal of the kingship, and that is the rather shadowy figure of Numa.”¹⁹⁵ De Blois and Bons suggest that Plutarch “based this *Vita* on Hellenistic and Roman legends and took the opportunity to present his version of an ideal ruler, unhindered by historical fact.”¹⁹⁶ In a same way Bernard Boulet concludes that “Numa is Plutarch’s view of the good ruler.”¹⁹⁷

When Plutarch tells the reader, in the beginning of the narrative, about the successor of Romulus, he mentions that the people disputed about the man “who should present himself as the leader (τὸν ἡγεμόνα)” (2.4). At the end of the biography (22.6–7) the author gives a final positive characterization of Numa as leader when he makes use of contrast as a literary strategy and tells the reader about the good fame of Numa as distinct from his successors.¹⁹⁸ Plutarch also underlines the quality of the leadership of Numa and Lycurgus, whom Numa is paired with,

¹⁹⁴ See Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 10–12, for a discussion of the genre of the biographical writings of Plutarch. He concludes that Plutarch's *Lives* cannot be classified as encomia, even if there are some similarities. Since they include both praise and blame, they are more oriented towards history. In the same way Barbara Scardigli, “Introduction,” in *Essays on Plutarch's Lives*, ed. Barbara Scardigli (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1–46 (17), states that Plutarch's *Lives* “approximate more closely to the work of a historian,” but at the same time she concludes that his biographical writings combine different genres (e.g. encomium).

¹⁹⁵ G. J. D. Aalders, *Plutarch's Political Thought* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1982), 34. Aalders also points out that Plutarch “labels only Numa as the ideal king” (p. 43). Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 206, proposes that the harmony of the state during Numa's leadership “suggested to Plutarch that Numa himself should be considered a perfect ruler.” Hans Dieter Betz, “Plutarch's Life of Numa: Some Observations on Greco-Roman ‘Messianism,’” in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 44–61 (47), likewise speaks about “Numa's ideal kingship.”

¹⁹⁶ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 159. See also p. 160. Cf. Emilo Gabba, “The *Collegia* of Numa: Problems of Method and Political Ideas,” *JRS* 74 (1984): 81–86 (86).

¹⁹⁷ Bernard Boulet, “Is Numa the Genuine Philosopher King?,” in *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works*, vol. 2, ed. Lukas de Blois et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 255. Cf. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives*, 90 n. 68, who states that Numa 20.7–12 “provides a picture of the ideal leadership.” Nikolaidis, “Morality, Characterization, and Individuality,” 357, notices that Numa “emerge almost impeccable” in Plutarch's presentation, but still recognizes that the author gives some critical remarks to the leadership of Numa in the following *synkrisis* between him and Lycurgus (cf. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 2.4–5, 4.6).

¹⁹⁸ Beck, “Interne ‘synkrisis’ bei Plutarch,” 468–69.

saying “they were mastering (χειρούμενοι) stubborn and implacable multitudes, and brought great innovations in forms of government” (4.8).

In *Numa* Plutarch pays attention to “the signs of the soul”¹⁹⁹ of king Numa and gives a portrait of him. The presentation that Plutarch gives of the Roman king is marked by a Hellenistic influence. De Blois points out that “Plutarch certainly viewed Roman history through Greek glasses.”²⁰⁰ He was mainly a Platonist, but he was also greatly influenced by the popular philosophy which he was familiar with through the grammatical and rhetorical education of his time.²⁰¹ For example, he was also influenced by Isocrates and Xenophon.²⁰²

For the author, Numa’s life ages ago provides guidelines for future leaders. The general conviction of Plutarch was that the examples of virtues of his heroes were useful for the reader himself.²⁰³ In *Aemilius Paullus* he writes that one reason why he wrote *Lives* was to use history as a mirror and to conform his own life to the virtues of the protagonist (1.1). Pérez Jiménez, who points out the central motif of imitation in Plutarch’s biographies, shows that the portraits function as education and inspiration for future leaders.²⁰⁴

In a recent publication, Susan Jacobs argues, that Plutarch’s *Lives* should not be considered as “moral biography,” providing merely ethical guidance to the reader by the virtues and vices of the protagonists.²⁰⁵ On the contrary, these biographical writings should be seen as lessons in leadership, where the readers could learn and benefit through the description of good and bad statesmanship. Jacobs describes the *Lives* of Plutarch as “pragmatic biography,” which, according to her definition, “combines the focus of biography on the character of one man and the events in his life from birth to death with the lessons in leadership included in pragmatic history.”²⁰⁶ Plutarch provides the reader with both a portrayal of the character of the leader as well as with practical examples on how to conduct political and military

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 1.3.

²⁰⁰ L. De Blois, “The Perception of Politics in Plutarch’s Roman ‘Lives,’” *ANRW* 33.6:4568–4615 (4570). See also Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 37.

²⁰¹ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 164.

²⁰² De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 168, 184–85, 187; Scardigli, “Introduction,” 5.

²⁰³ See e.g. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, 103, Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 14, and Aurelio Pérez Jiménez, “Exemplum: The Paradigmatic Education of the Ruler in the Lives of Plutarch,” in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)*, ed. P. A. Stadter and L. van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 105–14 (105), who states: “According to Plutarch’s reasoning, the contemplation of virtue implies a call to imitation.” He further points out that “imitation is a commonplace in Plutarch’s biography” (p. 107). See also De Blois, “The Perception of Politics,” *ANRW* 33.6:4604, 4614, for *Numa* as model.

²⁰⁴ Pérez Jiménez, “Exemplum,” 109–111.

²⁰⁵ Susan G. Jacobs, *Plutarch’s Pragmatic Biographies: Lessons for Statesmen and Generals in the Parallel Lives*, CSCT 43 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1–5.

²⁰⁶ Jacobs, *Plutarch’s Pragmatic Biographies*, 5–6.

leadership.²⁰⁷ Jacobs proposes that the Lives were written for emerging political leaders who were philosophically trained but needed instructions for their roles as statesmen and generals.²⁰⁸ Though it is reasonable to regard the biographies of Plutarch as primarily intended for leaders, it is unlikely that their audience is restricted to this group of people. Plutarch probably also had a wider audience in view.²⁰⁹

The common biographical three-part structure can be noticed in *Numa*. In 1.1–7.3 the origin and setting of the protagonist and his way to the throne are described. Thereafter follows the longer middle part, 7.4–20.8, which outlines his religious and political leadership. The end part of the biography, 21.1–22.6, deals with his death, burial, and impact.

2.4.1 The character of the leader

A worthy leader

In the beginning of the biography, Plutarch describes the origin of Numa and points out that his father, Pompon, was “a man of good repute (ἀνδρὸς εὐδοκίμου)” (3.4). The biographer also tells the reader that Numa, by nature, had good presuppositions and took care of them in the best way: “By nature (φύσει) his character (τὸ ἦθος) was well tempered for every virtue (ἀρετήν), and he also subdued (ἐξημέρωσε) it himself even more by discipline (παιδείας), sufferings (κακοπαθείας), and the study of wisdom (φιλοσοφίας)” (3.5). Plutarch held the view, influenced by Plato, that by nature a person had capabilities that only would be developed and matured in a good way through education and reason.²¹⁰

Plutarch writes that when a successor of Romulus should be chosen, the people of Rome shared the opinion that the next king should come from the Sabines. The man they nominated was Numa Pompilius, a man who was “known by all for his

²⁰⁷ Jacobs, *Plutarch's Pragmatic Biographies*, 5 n. 22, speaks about “the joint objectives of revealing moral character and providing pragmatic lessons.”

²⁰⁸ Jacobs, *Plutarch's Pragmatic Biographies*, 6–7. Cf. Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 41, 47, who also proposes that Plutarch's biographies were intended for a minority of readers who were familiar with philosophy and who prepared themselves for political leadership, and Hugh Liebert, *Plutarch's Politics: Between City and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 33–34.

²⁰⁹ See further pp. 306–07, 315–16 for a discussion of the purposes of ancient biographies.

²¹⁰ Duff, *Plutarch's Lives*, 206–08. Sven-Tage Teodorsson, “The Education of Rulers in Theory (*Mor.*) and Practice (*Vitae*),” in *The Unity of Plutarch's Work: “Moralia” Themes in the “Lives,” Features of the “Lives” in the “Moralia,”* ed. Anastasios G. Nikolaidis, *MillSt* 19 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 339–50 (347), however, points out that education (παιδεία) is not generally underlined in Plutarch's *Lives*.

virtues (ἀρετήν)” (3.3).²¹¹ Plutarch also states about Numa that “it is good to acquire the kingdom by righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) ... for it was virtue which reckoned him honorable so that he was deemed worthy of a kingdom (ὥστε βασιλείας ἀξιωθῆναι) (Comp. Lyc. Num. 1.2). According to Plutarch, the right to rule is not to be found in a noble birth, but in a noble character.²¹² Aalders thus rightly underlines the moral qualifications of Numa as the reason Plutarch presents him as an ideal leader: “He knows too well that the quality of a government is dependent on the moral qualities of the ruler and he labels only Numa as the ideal king.”²¹³

Self-control

The biographer makes clear that the ruler was a man who could rule himself (3.5).²¹⁴ Plutarch uses the Greek word ἐξημεροῦν and thus expresses that Numa had tamed his passions and had control over himself. The self-control of the leader is shown in that he put away violence and greed. Plutarch exemplifies that “he drove out all luxuriousness and extravagance from his house” and did not spend his time on “pleasant living and making money” (3.6).²¹⁵ Courage is not an emphasized character trait of Numa, but the reader is told that he believed that “true bravery (ἀνδρείαν) consisted in the imprisonment of one’s desires (τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν) by reason” (3.5). Plutarch’s view is not that the passions should be eliminated (as the Stoic ideal of ἀπάθεια), but moderated or tamed by reason and discipline.²¹⁶

Like other rulers Numa accepted to be the leader of the kingdom only after making first a *recusatio imperii* (refusal of government).²¹⁷ When Numa’s father and Marcius try to persuade him to become king they characterize him as a man who “neither requires wealth, for the sake of self-sufficiency, nor strives after the glory from authority and power, having the superior glory from virtue” (6.2).

²¹¹ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 31, points out that, in the writings of Plutarch, “virtue” (ἀρετή) can refer to one particular virtue (e.g. courage) or in a general sense “to the quality of the hero as a political leader.” When it is used in the general sense (cf. 3.3) it can be described as “grand and magnificent, above the masses; but restraint and ordinariness in one’s style of life, which are themselves virtues, are able to make the whole *aretē* of the ‘politicus’ persuasive and thus secure the good will of the people” (p. 69).

²¹² Maria Schettino, “Trajan’s Rescript De Bonis Relegatorum and Plutarch’s Ideal Ruler,” in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)*, ed. P. A. Stadter and L. van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 201–12 (202). Cf. Jacobs, *Plutarch’s Pragmatic Biographies*, 107.

²¹³ Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 43. See also De Blois, “The Perception of Politics,” *ANRW* 33.6:4614, and Schettino, “Trajan’s Rescript,” 203.

²¹⁴ Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 780B.

²¹⁵ Cf. Plutarch, *Lyc.* 8.3–5.

²¹⁶ See Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 108, and Richard A. Wright, “Plutarch on Moral Progress,” in *Passions and Moral Progress in Greco-Roman Thought*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald (London: Routledge, 2008), 136–50 (140–41).

²¹⁷ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 163.

Piety

Numa is foremost portrayed as a pious man.²¹⁸ Plutarch writes that “he devoted his time ... to the service of the gods (θεραπείαν θεῶν), and contemplation (θεωρίαν) through reason of their nature and power” (3.6). According to the author, it was said that Numa had an intimate relationship with the goddess Egeria, which also explains his wisdom and blessedness (4.2). The reason for the goddess’s love was the character and virtue of Numa (4.4). In the view of Plutarch, piety (εὐσέβεια) is to have right beliefs about the gods and to attend them and adore them in a proper way.²¹⁹ He considered the practice of priestly duties to be of primary importance for the well-being of the state.²²⁰

The piety of Numa is reinforced in Plutarch’s portrait of him, since the final argument to persuade Numa to become king of Rome is a description of the king’s work as a service to God and a possibility to influence the people towards piety (5.2). Kingship is presented as a great divine gift and a service to the gods, since it is the best way to express virtue.²²¹ When Numa is installed as king of Rome, after the confirmation of the gods, he is welcomed as “the most pious of men (εὐσεβέστατον) and the dearest to the gods (θεοφιλέστατον)” (7.3).

The godliness of Numa is also clarified to the reader through the deeds of the leader. Numa’s second initiative as king was to install a new priest (7.4, cf. 12.3). Plutarch also writes that Numa spent a lot of his time performing sacrifices and teaching the priests he had installed:

After Numa had regulated the priestly services, he built, near the temple of Vesta, the so-called Regia, a sort of royal dwelling place. Here he spent the most of his time, performing sacred rites, or teaching the priests, or devoting himself to the reflection of divine things” (14.1).

Mark Silk notices that “Plutarch’s Numa is a man who wants nothing more than to linger in sacred groves, perform holy rites, and contemplate the divine.”²²²

Numa did not only fully devote himself to the worship of the gods, but also taught his people to worship the gods with full attention and not to be distracted with other things during worship (14.2). The leadership of Numa thus resulted in a religious change among the people, who were “trained in divine matters (παιδαγωγίας πρὸς τὸ θεῖον)” (15.1). Surprisingly, Plutarch mentions that Numa humbled and subdued the people by “superstition” (δεισιδαιμονία) (8.3). This behavior of the leader is to

²¹⁸ Cf. G. H. Polman, “Chronological Biography and *Akmē* in Plutarch,” *CP* 69 (1974): 169–77 (175): “His most characteristic virtue is εὐσέβεια.”

²¹⁹ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 87.

²²⁰ Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 47.

²²¹ Schettino, “Trajan’s Rescript,” 203.

²²² Mark Silk, “Numa Pompilius and the Idea of Civil Religion in the West,” *JAAR* 72 (2004): 863–896 (867).

be understood as necessary because of the conditions of the people in Rome in that time and thus justified.²²³

Peacefulness and gentleness

Closely related to his piety, Numa is also portrayed as a man of peace. This trait is clearly seen when Numa is offered the leadership position in Rome. Plutarch mentions that it was not easy to persuade “a man who had lived in quietness (ἡσυχία) and peace (εἰρήνη), to accept the rule of a city which had come into being and grown by warfare” (5.2). When Plutarch lets Numa describe himself he speaks about his “quiet lifestyle,” and “habitual love for peace and peaceful actions (σύντροφος εἰρήνης ἔρως καὶ πραγμάτων ἀπολέμων)” (5.4).

Numa is also characterized by his father and Marcius as a looked-for “gentle leader (ἡγεμόνα πρᾶον)” who will lead the people to “good order and peace (εὐνομία καὶ εἰρήνη)” (6.3). Gentleness or mildness (πρᾶος) is an essential virtue in Plutarch’s view, especially for a ruler (cf. 20.3).²²⁴ Plutarch also mentions that when Numa had acquired the leadership position in Rome he strived to make the people more soft and just (8.1). One of his initiatives was to establish a priestly order, the Fetiales, “who were peace guarders (εἰρηνοφύλακες)” (12.3). The importance of peace for Numa is also seen in his initiative to build a temple to Terminus, a god he regarded as a guardian of peace (16.1). In addition, Numa led the people into a peaceful life by getting them involved in agriculture (16.3–4).

In the end of the biography, Plutarch writes that during the reign of Numa, a time period of 43 years, there was no war in Rome. This was seen by the fact that the temple called “Gates of war,” which used to be opened in times of war, was closed every day during the reign of Numa (20.1–2, 5). Plutarch points out that not only the Roman people “became pacified and charmed by the righteousness and gentleness (πράοτητι) of the king,” but also a change of temper was seen in the people around who also longed for a new government providing “good order (εὐνομίας) and peace (εἰρήνης)” (20.3). Plutarch’s portrait of Numa is a portrait of a peaceful and gentle king.²²⁵

Wisdom

In chapter 20, Numa is presented, like Philo’s Moses, as a philosopher-king. With an explicit reference to Plato (20.6) Plutarch states that “the mind of a philosopher

²²³ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 88; Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 131.

²²⁴ See Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 125, and Guiseppe Zecchini, “Plutarch as Political Theorist and Trajan: Some Reflections,” in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)*, ed. P. A. Stadter and L. van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 191–200 (193). Cf. Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 46.

²²⁵ Cf. Vinzenz Buchheit, “Plutarch, Cicero und Livius über die Humanisierung Roms durch König Numa,” *SO* 66 (1991): 71–96 (79): “Es sei abschließend angefügt, daß Plutarch auch durch den Aspekt des Friedens den König Numa als einen Herrscher zeichnet.”

should concur with kingly power and in this way establish virtue in mastery and superiority over vice” (20.7).²²⁶ This statement is given toward the end of the narrative and thus has an important place in the story. It can be said to express the author’s “final assessment of Numa and his kingship.”²²⁷ According to Plato, the ideal state should be reached when the people do not focus on making war, profits, or expanding the state, but have a right spiritual direction. During the reign of Numa Plutarch saw this ideal reached and therefore presented him as the ideal philosopher-king.²²⁸ Explicit statements that Numa is fulfilling the ideals of Plato are given also in 8.1 and 11.2. According to De Blois, Numa “was the only successful philosopher-king in Roman history” in the eyes of the author.²²⁹

In Plutarch’s presentation of Numa there is no doubt that this leader is both king (e.g. 1.1, 8.9, 20.3) and philosopher (e.g. 3.5, 16.1, 20.7). Concerning the wisdom of Numa, the biographer tells the reader that “the good and just flowed into all from the wisdom (σοφίας) of Numa, as from a fountain” (20.4). Numa is also said to have authored books on philosophy (22.2). According to Wardman, Plutarch presents Numa as “an incarnation of political wisdom...of course, exceptional.”²³⁰ In the view of Plutarch the collaboration between king and philosopher is important in order to educate the people and benefit the whole community. The task of the philosopher is to lead the ruler towards virtue, and the task of the ruler is to educate his people to develop virtue. When the people have a leader who is a philosopher-king they will be guided toward a life of virtue.²³¹

It is also probable that the author presents Numa as a Pythagorean philosopher (see e.g. 1.3, 8.4).²³² Even if Pythagoras lived some generations after Numa, an objection that Plutarch is aware of, the author puts together Numa with this philosopher because they had something in common (22.4).²³³ Emilio Gabba notices that “the whole of the *Life* is dominated by Pythagorean ideas.”²³⁴ The

²²⁶ Cf. Plutarch, Mor. 776B–79C.

²²⁷ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 180.

²²⁸ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 186; Boulet, “Is Numa the Genuine Philosopher King?,” 245. Boulet, however, points out that Plutarch’s presentation of Numa as philosopher-king slightly differs from the ideal of Plato (pp. 252–54). Even Hugh Liebert, “Plutarch’s Critique of Plato’s Best Regime,” *HPT* 15 (2009): 251–71 (265), notes a sublime critic of Plato’s *Republic*.

²²⁹ De Blois, “The Perception of Politics,” *ANRW* 33.6:4577.

²³⁰ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 203.

²³¹ Gert Roskam, “Α Παιδεία for the Ruler: Plutarch’s Dream of Collaboration between Philosopher and Ruler,” in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)*, ed. P. A. Stadter and L. van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 175–89 (177). Cf. Plutarch, *Max. princ.*, where he emphasizes the importance of philosophy for a ruler.

²³² Boulet, “Is Numa the Genuine Philosopher King?,” 248.

²³³ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 161.

²³⁴ Gabba, “The *Collegia* of Numa,” 82.

philosophy of Numa concerns both the gods and the nature, which are closely related.²³⁵

Justice

Another moral character trait of Numa is justice. In the beginning of his comparison of Numa and Lycurgus, Plutarch states, with a reference to Numa, that “it is good to acquire the kingdom by righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.2). Also in the biography the leader is said to be “a friend of justice (δίκης ἑταῖρον)” (6.3, cf. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 2.2). Numa is furthermore characterized as a person with “great righteousness (τοσαύτην δικαιοσύνην)” (6.2). This righteousness is pointed out by the author as a reason for the transformation of the people (20.3, Cf. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.8).

Justice is among the most important virtues in Plutarch’s view of leadership.²³⁶ Maria Schettino points out that for Plutarch “[t]he art of kingship as an expression of virtue is first of all a work of justice: the ideal king is a *basileus dikaios*.”²³⁷ As the good leader, Numa is reaching the ideal and is presented as a just and righteous king.

Benevolence

Plutarch further characterizes Numa as a man of benevolence (φιλανθρώπος) (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.4). This is also one of the most important virtues for a leader in the view of the author.²³⁸ For Plutarch φιλανθρώπος covers a broad range of meanings, is inseparable with the needs of a civilized man, and can be expressed by affability, courtesy, kindness, clemency, etc.²³⁹ Here in the context of *Numa* it refers primarily to the leader’s kindness and mercifulness. This is made clear by the example Plutarch gives when he mentions that Numa released slaves at a festival called Saturnalia to enjoy the feast with their masters (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.5).

2.4.2 The relationship between the leader and the people

Leadership roles

Numa is presented as king (βασιλεύς) already in the first verse of the biography. Plutarch puts him together with him with Zaleucus, Minos, Zoroaster, and Lycurgus,

²³⁵ Liebert, “Plutarch’s Critique,” 263 n. 54.

²³⁶ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 106, 124–25; Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 45; Zecchini, “Plutarch as Political Theorist,” 193.

²³⁷ Schettino, “Trajan’s Rescript,” 203.

²³⁸ Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 46.

²³⁹ Hubert Martin Jr., “The Concept of Philanthropy in Plutarch’s Lives,” *AJP* 82 (1961): 164–75 (173–74).

“who led kingdoms and established constitutions (βασιλείας κυβερνῶσι καὶ πολιτείας διακοσμοῦσιν)” (4.7). The role of the king is thus closely related to the role of the lawgiver. According to Plutarch, the laws of Numa derived from the gods (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.1). In this way the author also presents Numa as a great lawgiver. Even if Numa is presented as an important lawgiver, Plutarch emphasizes more the personality and quality of the leader than the greatness of the laws or institutions.²⁴⁰

In contrast to the other biographical portraits, the kingly role of Numa does not include military leadership. When Numa first rejects the office of kingship in Rome he remarks that his hatred against war and great concern for the gods makes him unsuitable as leader of the city of Rome, “which desires a general (στρατηλάτου) rather than a king (βασιλέως)” (5.5). But Numa finally accepted the office, persuaded to make use of his office “to serve the gods (θεραπεῖται θεῶν)” and lead the people into life in piety (6.2). Throughout the biography, Numa’s role as religious leader is strongly emphasized. According to Plutarch, Numa was the one who initiated the institution of the high priest (ἀρχιερεύς) in Rome, the so called “Pontifices” (Ποντίφικας), and was himself the first to hold this office (9.1). Numa is presented as “the first (ὁ δὲ μέγιστος)” among of the Pontifices, the pontifex maximus (9.4). As the high priest he was “assigned for the office as interpreter (ἐξηγητοῦ) and prophet (προφήτου), or rather hierophant (ιεροφάντου)” (9.4). This role also included teaching the people how to worship the gods in an appropriate way (9.4). Philip Stadter points out that Numa thus was “responsible for the proper conduct of every aspect of Roman public and private religion.”²⁴¹

At several instances the leader is portrayed as a teacher. When Numa tells the people about the consequences of choosing him to be king, he mentions that he should be “teaching (διδάσκοντος) them to hate force and war” (5.5). Plutarch also depicts Numa twice as teaching (διδάσκειν) the priests (12.1, 14.1), who are thus presented as disciples of Numa.²⁴² He is also presented as an educator, through his training (παιδαγωγία), of the people as a whole (15.1). The one who had trained and disciplined himself (3.5), can be able to train and discipline the people. Plutarch also presents Numa as a philosopher (20.7, cf. 3.5, 16.1). The reader is even told that Numa wrote several books in religious and philosophical subjects (22.2, 4). Hugh Liebert describes the blended leadership roles of Numa as “a philosopher who practices political theology.”²⁴³ The reason why Plutarch discusses the link between

²⁴⁰ Aalders, *Plutarch's Political Thought*, 45.

²⁴¹ Philip A. Stadter, “Paidagogia pros to theion: Plutarch’s Numa,” in *Ancient Journeys: A Festschrift in Honor of Eugene Numa Lane*, ed. Cathy Callaway (Stoa Consortium, 2001), <http://www.stoa.org/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Stoa:text:2001.01.0002>.

²⁴² Liebert, “Plutarch’s Critique,” 266.

²⁴³ Liebert, *Plutarch's Politics*, 163.

Numa and Pythagoras is likely because the latter was understood to be a political philosopher.²⁴⁴

Willing followers

In a number of ways the biographer depicts Numa as a leader with a people of willing followers. Plutarch shows that the people of Rome desired to appoint Numa as their leader. It is told when Numa finally accepts the leadership position, that “the senate and the people (ὁ δῆμος) met him on the way, filled with a wonderful love (ἔρωτι θαυμαστῷ) to the man” (7.1). Plutarch continues to tell that the people held a vote and *all* the votes were giving support for Numa (7.1, cf. 3.3). Jason Banta points out that “Numa is made king by the acclamation of all the people, both senatorial and plebeian.”²⁴⁵

The author also writes that Numa’s first initiative as king was to release three hundred men who had been the bodyguards of Romulus. The reason for this was that Numa could not “mistrust those who trusted him, nor rule over those who mistrusted him” (7.4).²⁴⁶ Plutarch tells that the first achievements of Numa as king secured “the goodwill and favor of the people (εὐνοία καὶ χάριτι τοῦ δήμου)” (8.1, cf. 8.3).²⁴⁷ Wardman explains that in the view of Plutarch, “[t]he ruled respect and cherish the virtue of the ‘politicus’ and have good will (*eunoia*) towards him, as he has good will towards them.”²⁴⁸ The leader can thus only be successful if he is possible to earn the goodwill (εὐνοία) of the people.²⁴⁹ He will win the favor of the people with his moral qualities.²⁵⁰ In the end of the parallel biography about Lycurgus, the author clarifies his view that a good leader has obedient followers:

For they will not listen with submission (ἀκούειν ὑπομένουσι) to those who are not competent to rule, but obedience is a lesson to be learnt by the ruler. For the good leader (ὁ καλῶς ἄγων) makes a good following, and just as the result of the art of horsemanship is the making of a gentle and submissive horse, so it is the skill of kingship to create obedience (εὐπειθειαν) among men (30.4).²⁵¹

²⁴⁴ Liebert, *Plutarch’s Politics*, 177–78.

²⁴⁵ Jason L. Banta, “Imperium cum Finibus: Plutarch’s Archaic Rome” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2006), 117.

²⁴⁶ Cf. *Phoc.* 2.4–5.

²⁴⁷ De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 175, remarks that the use of these words makes an influence from Isocrates probable.

²⁴⁸ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 52.

²⁴⁹ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 63.

²⁵⁰ Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 69; Aalders, *Plutarch’s Political Thought*, 45.

²⁵¹ See also 5.1 where Plutarch states that Lycurgus had “a nature fit for leadership (φύσιν ἡγεμονικὴν) and a power of being attractive (ἀγωγὸν οὖσαν) to people.”

The people in the story of *Numa* are also characterized as submissive towards their leader and accepted all his stories and teaching, even if it was incredible (15.1, 15.6). Plutarch further underlines the people's willingness to follow their leader when he points out that no one revolted or conspired against the kingship of Numa (20.5). That the people were willing followers to Numa is furthermore seen when Plutarch tells the reader that force is not needed to get the people to walk in a virtuous way if the leader is a clear example of a life of virtue. To the contrary, "willingly (ἐκουσίως) they will adjust their ways in soundness" (20.8). Numa was, consequently, such a great moral example for the people of Rome that they voluntarily followed his lifestyle. Plutarch ends his analysis of Lyscurgus and Numa with a very favorable evaluation of the latter's efforts, which he considers both great and divine. The greatness of Numa is seen in that "he, who was a stranger who was sent after, made all persuaded (πειθοῖ μεταβαλεῖν), and conquered the city which was not yet going along with him, not with weapons or any force ... but by wisdom and righteousness he brought harmony to all" (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.8).

Benefitting the people

"In the *Lives*, the ultimate basis for evaluating a man's effectiveness as a statesman is the benefit or injury to his state under his leadership," writes Jacobs, who emphasizes that in the view of Plutarch the protagonist should not only be valued according to his virtues as a "good man."²⁵² As seen above, Numa is presented as a good leader who created well-being for the whole community in Rome. According to Plutarch, the greatest effort of a good leader is to lead his followers into a virtuous life (20.8). Boulet rightly observes that "Rome would flourish in virtue and in happiness during Numa's reign."²⁵³

Plutarch emphasizes that Numa created unity and harmony among the people. In a conscious way he mixed the people into groups according to their arts and trades, in order to erase division among the people (e.g. Sabines and Romans) (17.1–3). According to the author, "his division created a harmonious mixture of them all together" (17.3).²⁵⁴ When Plutarch, in the end of the biography, describes the transformative leadership of Numa through his virtuous example, he states that the result is that the people will conform to a "life of friendship and concord (ὁμονοία)" (20.8). Here, Plutarch uses the word ὁμόνοια, which is a common concept in both classic and Hellenistic Greek thought (cf. *Lyc.* 31.1–2).²⁵⁵ Banta notes that "Rome,

²⁵² Jacobs, *Plutarch's Pragmatic Biographies*, 19. Cf. Plutarch, *Lyc.* 29.2, where Plutarch writes about the prosperity (εὐδαιμονία) of the state in the same way as Isocrates and Xenophon.

²⁵³ Boulet, "Is Numa the Genuine Philosopher King?," 253.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Plutarch, *Lyc.* 8.1–2, *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.8. Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 62, points out that in Plutarch's view, harmony is generally generated by creating mixture in the state.

²⁵⁵ G. J. D. Aalders, *Political Thought in Hellenistic Times* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1975), 29. See further Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric and Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, HUT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr

under Numa's benign influence, becomes a center of domestic concord and civil tranquility which radiates these qualities out to surrounding communities creating a 'utopian' environment."²⁵⁶

Wardman points out that the main task of the ruler, according to Plutarch, is to eliminate envy in the state and instead create harmony.²⁵⁷ In Plutarch's *Lives*, "[t]he good life, politically speaking, is not as such concerned with conquest and expansion but with order and civic harmony."²⁵⁸ For the benefit of both leader and followers, the ruler has to uphold his office.²⁵⁹ The harmonious condition of Rome during the long reign of Numa thus confirms the good leadership of the ruler.²⁶⁰ The reason for the harmony within the city was the harmony of the soul of the leader (3.4–5). This idea is in line with the thought of Plato that a state is a macrocosm of the soul of an individual.²⁶¹

Numa did not only create harmony and unity among his people during his leadership. It is also stated in the biography that he gave peace to the people. When Numa accepts the office of kingship he takes the leadership over a people which was "much accustomed and eager for war" (5.5). But during Numa's whole reign of forty-three years Rome was not involved in wars and the people lived in peace (20.1–5). Banta thus rightly speaks about "the transformation of the character of the Roman people from martial encampment to a more political and agrarian society."²⁶²

A model for the people

Early in the narrative, when Plutarch describes the function of the king as the leader of the people, he underlines the moral influence of the king. Numa is encouraged to accept the office of the king, which will result in that "men are changed (μετακοσμουμένων) and civilized to piety, easily and quickly, by the ruler" (6.2–3). In the end of the biographical narrative, when the change of the Roman people had been narrated, Plutarch clarifies that the change is a consequence of the modelling leadership of Numa. The author here explains that the displaying of a virtuous life is the greatest task of the leader:

Siebeck, 1991), 60–64, for examples. She suggests that *δμόνοια* is "[o]ne of the universally recognized political values in Greco-Roman antiquity" (p. 63). It is not only related to the city-state, but also to smaller social contexts (p. 64).

²⁵⁶ Banta, "Plutarch's Archaic Rome," 135.

²⁵⁷ Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 79.

²⁵⁸ Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 50. See also p. 58.

²⁵⁹ Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 52. Wardman concludes that the purpose of the political virtue of the leader "is not to exert power for its own sake but to create or maintain the right conditions in which the community will prosper" (p. 57). See also Aalders, *Plutarch's Political Thought*, 36.

²⁶⁰ Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives*, 206. Cf. Jacobs, *Plutarch's Pragmatic Biographies*, 18.

²⁶¹ Duff, *Plutarch's Lives*, 90–91.

²⁶² Banta, "Plutarch's Archaic Rome," 128.

For probably there is no need of force or treats against the many, but when they themselves see virtue in the clear model (εὐδὴλῳ παραδείγματι) and the manifested lifestyle of the ruler, willingly they will adjust their ways (συμμετασχηματίζονται) in soundness, to a blessed and blameless life in friendship and concord with righteousness and moderation, which is the greatest outcome of all government, and the most kingly of all is the one who is able to produce this life and disposition in the subjects. It thus appears that Numa understood this more than all others (20.8).²⁶³

For Plutarch Numa was an excellent model of a virtuous life for his people. The obvious proof of this is that he did not have to use force against his people (cf. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.8). On the contrary, the people conformed to the way of life they saw in their leader and followed in his footsteps. Like Philo, the ideal leader for Plutarch, the philosopher-king, has a moral quality that is founded on an inner law, and thus the leader is himself a living law, a *nomos empsychos*.²⁶⁴ Consequently the leader is good model for the people. Julien Smith notes that Plutarch, in similarity with Xenophon, presents Numa as a leader who transforms followers by a vision of himself and states: “The king’s ability to inculcate virtue goes beyond setting an example for his subjects to follow. The very appearance of the king implants a noble desire within his people; his presence is a crucial element in the inculcation of virtue.”²⁶⁵

2.5 Summary and implications

Before the portrait of Jesus in Matthew is examined in the following chapters, the four portraits of ideal leaders analyzed in this chapter should be summarized. It is now possible to draw some conclusions about how the moral character of the leader is portrayed in these ancient biographies and how the relationship between the leader and the people is presented.

The character of the leader

It is emphasized in all four portraits that the leaders were *worthy* of the leadership position because of their virtues and good character. In this matter the four

²⁶³ Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 800B.

²⁶⁴ De Blois, “The Perception of Politics,” *ANRW* 33.6:4614.

²⁶⁵ Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 76. See also p. 87. Cf. De Blois and Bons, “Platonic Philosophy,” 176, who note that the leader’s ability to transform his people’s mentality is more optimistic in Numa than Plato’s view and thus more resembles the view of Isocrates and Xenophon. Jacobs, *Plutarch’s Pragmatic Biographies*, 18, influenced by Michael B. Trapp, nonetheless points out: “For Stoics and Platonists, a man educated in philosophy was expected to mold the character of the people in his community through his own example of virtuous conduct, prudent advice and continuous efforts on behalf of the common good.”

biographies conform to the leadership ideals stated by Diotogenes: “for it is necessary that he [the king] is far superior to the rest in virtue (*ἀρετῇ*) and for this reason be judged worthy to rule (*ἄξιον κρίνεσθαι τῷ ἄρχεν*), and not for the sake of wealth, power, or military strength.”²⁶⁶ The same thought, that the leader’s right to rule is dependent on his superiority in virtue, was also taught by stoic philosophers.²⁶⁷

From the analyses above it is striking that all four leaders are portrayed with the virtues of self-control, wisdom, justice, and piety. The self-control of the leader is strongly emphasized in most of the portraits and thus it is declared that the ruler also could rule over himself. The leader is able to resist different temptations and shows himself to be the master over the pleasures and the passions. All of the four leaders are characterized as wise men and two of the leaders, Moses and Numa, are even presented as philosopher-kings. Different aspects, such as intelligence, foresight, and philosophy are underlined, but all four leaders are portrayed with great minds. The implications of justice differ from leader to leader, but it is often showed by the leader through fair treatment, and in rewarding good behavior and punishing bad behavior. In all four portraits the piety of the ideal leader is underlined. The piety also takes different expressions, but is most often shown through the leader’s engagement in divine matters and the deity’s pleasure in the leader.

In three of the portraits, *Evagoras*, *Agésilas*, and *Moses*, the integrity and trustworthiness of the leader is described. These leaders display a correspondence between words and deeds which make them true and trustworthy. In the case of Moses there is also a clear agreement between thoughts/intentions and words/deeds. Benevolence is another common virtue of the good leaders. It is also a highlighted trait in three of the portraits (*Evagoras*, *Moses*, and *Numa*).²⁶⁸ This character trait covers several aspects but is most often related to compassion and clemency, and associated with mercifulness and kindness towards enemies, slaves, or needy people. Courage is a prominent character trait of *Evagoras* and *Agésilas* and it is most clearly seen in brave acts in warfare. Even if this virtue is also mentioned in the other two portraits, it is not an important character trait there.

Some idiosyncratic features can also be noticed in the four portraits. Isocrates underlines the magnanimity of *Evagoras*, Xenophon the patriotism and graciousness of *Agésilas*, and Plutarch the peacefulness and gentleness of *Numa*.

²⁶⁶ Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (ap. Stobaeus 4.7.62). Diotogenes lived in Italy in the first or the second century CE. See Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 234–35 and n. 197.

²⁶⁷ Goodenough, “Hellenistic Kingship,” 58.

²⁶⁸ The trait is present in *Agésilas*, but it is not emphasized since it is not one of the main virtues Xenophon lists in the narrative structure.

The relationship between the leader and the people

The leadership roles of the protagonists are varied in the biographies. All four portraits, however, present the leaders as kings. In two of the portraits, *Numa* and *Moses*, the leader is furthermore presented as a lawgiver. These two leaders also have a didactic function and are presented as educating the people. The religious roles of these leaders are further underlined. Numa is described as a high priest, and Moses as priest and prophet. The two other leaders, Evagoras and Agesilaus, are presented as skillful generals.

A common feature of the leadership in the four portraits is that the people willingly followed their leader. This feature is most clearly seen in *Agesilaus*, *Moses*, and *Numa*, but it is also present in *Evagoras*. In the case of Agesilaus, Moses, and Numa, the reader is even told, in an explicit way, that the people willingly obeyed their leaders. The reason why the people willingly followed the leader is explained, in most of the portraits, by the virtuous life of the leader. The idea of willing followers is common in ancient Greek literature. For Plato and Aristotle, the willingness of followers is what separates the king, who has willing followers, and the tyrant, who rules over unwilling subjects.²⁶⁹

In all four portraits it is underlined that the leaders benefitted the people. They were leaders who cared for the common wellbeing of the people and benefitted their people in different ways. As noted above, all the leaders are presented as men of benevolence. In *Evagoras* and *Agesilaus* the ideal leader is presented as one who produces prosperity and development for the people. In most of the portraits the reader is told that the leader created unity among the people. The characterization of the leader as a benefactor follows the usual depiction of the Hellenistic king.²⁷⁰

Two of the leaders, Evagoras and Agesilaus, are portrayed as living close to the people. In the case of Evagoras, the closeness to the people implies personal knowledge of the people and their attitudes towards the leader. Xenophon underlines Agesilaus' charm and his friendly fellowship with men. He is accessible to the people, takes company with them, and knows their conditions. His relationship to his people is even described as friendship.

Three of the leaders, Agesilaus, Numa, and Moses, are presented as models for their people. The reader is told that these leaders influenced their people to a virtuous life by giving them a clear example to emulate. Philo even describes Moses as "a living law," a personification of the law the people should follow.

²⁶⁹ Goodenough, "Hellenistic Kingship," 90.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Aalders, *Political Thought in Hellenistic Times*, 21: "As a rule the Hellenistic king was described as a noble-minded and well-gifted person, toiling uninterruptedly for the common welfare and for the well-being of his subjects, as their benefactor, even their saviour, as a man also of great mildness and humanity (whose gifts and indulgencies are termed therefore φιλόανθρωπα), and as a dispenser of justice." See e.g. Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (ap. Stobaeus. 4.7.61).

Implications

The analysis of the four portraits of ideal leaders in ancient biographies has clarified several common leadership ideals. As seen above, some ideals are common characteristics of presentations of leaders in Greek literature generally. The conclusions in this study, however, relate to the presentation of good leaders in ancient biographies. These conclusions, nonetheless, are significant for the study of the Gospel of Matthew, since it belongs to the same genre.

The investigation has revealed that several traits of the moral character of the leader and some features of the relationship between the leader and the people are seen in all or most of the biographies. *It is thus reasonable to conclude that common patterns of leadership ideals are seen in the ancient biographies that give presentations of good leaders.* These ideals are clearly relevant for the study of Matthew and provide expectations of leadership characteristics to be found also in this biography.

At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that the analysis above also has clarified that the four biographies have their differences. Most of the biographies highlight a virtue that is not to be found in the other portraits. In addition, the leadership roles vary, the leaders benefit their people in different ways, and the same features in the relationship between the leader and the people are not seen in all four biographies. *The portraits do not present the leaders as stereotypes, though some stereotypical tendencies are seen in the presence of some conventional ideals in all the writings, but give idiosyncratic portraits of the good leader.*²⁷¹ It can thus be expected to find out that the presentation of Jesus as leader in Matthew has its peculiarities and does not always conform to the common patterns.

²⁷¹ Cf. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 148.

3. The introduction of a new leader (Matt 1:1–4:11)

The previous chapter has noted common leadership ideals and idiosyncratic features in ancient biographies of good leaders regarding the presentation of the leader's character and his relationship to the people. In the following chapters, Matthew is analyzed in order to clarify the main moral character traits of Jesus and what his relationship to the people looks like. In addition to this, attention will be paid to the theme of leadership in the story of Matthew, how it develops, and how it affects the plot of the story.

Like other biographies, the beginning of Matthew opens with the origins of the person.¹ In agreement with the genre conventions the gospel begins with information about the name, background, and the ancestry of the subject. This section thus tells the reader who the protagonist is and where he comes from.² The function of this part of the biography is to narrate the protagonist's way from his origins to his public career and to give the reader a first insight in the character of the person.³ Alicia Myers explains that "the way in which a character is introduced plays a significant role in the rest of their characterization, since it reveals their point of origin and the most prevalent influences during their malleable years."⁴ In narratives in general, the first part is crucial for a correct understanding of the whole story.⁵ The identity of Jesus, his person and role, is thus established early in the story, in order to help the reader to understand the following stages.⁶

¹ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 244, points out that the theme of "Herkunft" was central in the beginning of the biography. See also Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 293. Cf. Donald Senior, *Matthew*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 35, who describes Matt 1:2–4:11 as "the origins of Jesus and his message."

² Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 246–48; Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus? A Symbolic Reading*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2005), 35.

³ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 277.

⁴ Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 60.

⁵ See e.g. Richard A. Edwards, "Uncertain Faith: Matthew's Portrait of the Disciples," in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 47–61 (49–50); Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 25. Cf. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 360: "Nearly all the evangelist's distinctive themes are found in chapters 1 and 2: the infancy narratives form a theological prologue to the gospel as a whole."

⁶ See Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 76, and Chouinard, "Literary Study," 203–04.

In the significant beginning part of Matthew's story, a leadership theme is clearly present. Jesus is not only explicitly presented as "leader" (2:6). He is also contrasted with the present king and born into a conflict with the present leadership. The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is only foreshadowed, but David Bauer rightly concludes: "Here, then, at the beginning of the Gospel (1.1–4.16) the lines are clearly drawn and the configuration of the contrast between Jesus and his adversaries is established."⁷ Moreover, the preparation of the new leader is also narrated in the beginning and some character traits are shown in order to underline his good character and clarify that he is an appropriate leader.

3.1 A new leader on the scene (1:1–2:23)

In the first two chapters the author is mainly telling the reader who Jesus is through a description of his ancestors and the circumstances of his birth. The author shows that a new leader arrives in Israel when Jesus is born, and narrates how a conflict with the present leadership arises. Some information about the relationship between the new leader and the people is also given to the reader.

3.1.1 Jesus Messiah—the ideal king

Jesus the King

The first sentence of Matthew, "The book of origin of Jesus the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham (βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ)" (1:1), has been vigorously debated by scholars and regarded either as a headline for the first section of the biography or for the book as a whole.⁸ It has also been suggested that the verse refers to both.⁹ It seems natural to understand it primarily as a reference to the first part of the biography, since ancient biographies use to

⁷ Bauer, *Structure of Matthew's Gospel*, 67.

⁸ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:5, argues that it refers to 1:1–17, Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 70–71, to chapter 1, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 33–34, to chapter 1 and 2. Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 11, and Bauer, *Structure of Matthew's Gospel*, 73–75, argue that it refers to 1:1–4:16. Dormeyer, "Mt 1,1 als Überschrift," 1363, Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:150–153, and Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 3 vols., Hermeneia, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001–2007), 1:69–70, suggest that 1:1 is the heading for the whole Gospel.

⁹ Aune, "Genre Theory," 171–72, proposes that Matthew 1:1 is a *double entendre* which refers both to the entire text and to the introduction.

begin with a section on the origin of the protagonist.¹⁰ In Matthew, the first sentence presents the protagonist as the long-awaited King.

The introductory statement in 1:1 informs the reader that Jesus is “the Messiah” (Χριστός). This title is underlined since it is also repeated in 1:16, the climax of the genealogy. The word “Messiah” does not function as a surname in Matthew, but is a central description of Jesus.¹¹ The messianic expectations in early Judaism were never uniform. Some described the Messiah as a supernatural character, others as an eschatological priest or prophet, but the most central was an understanding of the Messiah as “King Messiah.”¹² This is also the meaning of the concept in Matthew’s story.¹³ That “Messiah” designates the ideal future king is confirmed by the expression “son of David,” the great king in the history of Israel, who is explicitly described as “the king” (ὁ βασιλεύς) in the genealogy (1:6).

The concept of Messiah in the OT is rooted in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7) and the leadership of King David (see e.g. 2 Sam 5:2). Here the Messiah is an ideal king who will rule and lead Israel in the future.¹⁴ The prophets (e.g. Isa 9:6–7, Jer 33:14–25, Mic 4:3–4) and Psalms (e.g. 2:7–8) develop the concept through the idea about a future king that will rule Israel and the world. Choi points out that “the skepticism towards the kings and their failure led to the hopefulness of the future king who would fulfill the criteria of the true ideal leader.”¹⁵ In early Judaism and

¹⁰ See Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 461, who translates βίβλος γενέσεως with “Buch der Herkunft” and regards it as a reference to the beginning part of the biography. He suggests that the expression is rather to be understood from Philo’s use of it in the beginning of his biography of Abraham (1.11), than from Gen 5:1 where it refers to humans generally in plural. Here the expression τὴν βίβλιον γενέσεως τοῦ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀνθρώπου is used about an individual (Enoch).

¹¹ Donald Senior, “Directions in Matthean Studies,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 5–21 (15–16), refers to “a strong consensus of virtually all modern interpreters of Matthew: the conviction that Jesus is the Messiah is the conceptual foundation of Matthew’s Gospel and explains much of the Gospel’s characteristic content.” See also Versepunt, *Rejection of the Humble*, 35, and Luz, *Matthew*, 2:132. Cf. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 46, who proposes that in this verse Χριστός is both a personal name and a title.

¹² John J. Collins, “Pre-Christian Jewish Messianism: An Overview,” in *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1–20 (20). Cf. Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 92, who propose that the expectation of a royal, Davidic, Messiah was important among the literate strata of society who studied the scriptures.

¹³ See e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:157; Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 36–37; Scot McKnight, “Gospel of Matthew,” *DJGFE* 526–41 (533). Cf. Mark 15:32 and Luke 23:2.

¹⁴ See e.g. Hadot, “Fürstenspiegel,” 8:567: “Das Bild des Messias ist das des idealen Königs.” Cf. Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 90. For the close relationship between the Davidic king and the Messiah in the OT, see Daniel I. Block, “My Servant David: Ancient Israel’s Vision of the Messiah,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17–56 (36–49).

¹⁵ Choi, *Messianic Kingship of Jesus*, 62.

in apocalyptic literature the concept of Messiah is intensified, and now associated with a righteous kingdom of heaven that immanently breaks into the evil kingdoms of the earth.¹⁶

The kingship of Jesus is also seen in the genealogy (1:2–16). Like other royal king lists, the author gives a selective genealogy, which mainly shows the line of succession.¹⁷ In the first part (1:2–6) the reader is reminded of God’s selection and guidance that led to the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. The second part (1:7–11) points both to the glory of the reign of David and to the decline of Israel, which results in the third period (1:12–15), the Babylonian exile when Israel did not have a king. In this way the author shows the need of the Messiah (1:16) and his place in the story of Israel.¹⁸

That Jesus is presented as a royal Messiah is confirmed in the second chapter where the newborn Jesus is referred to as “king of the Jews” (2:2).¹⁹ Later in the story Jesus presents himself as a king to Jerusalem (21:1–11) and refers to himself as “the king” (25:34, 40), and it is thus confirmed to the reader that this is a leadership role that correctly describes him.²⁰ Donald Verseput rightly points out that “[i]t is immediately clear upon reading the First Gospel that the kingly theme is important to the Matthean christology.”²¹

Jesus the Savior

The reader receives important information about Jesus in 1:21 and 1:23, through the explanation of his names. Burridge points out that “[n]ames were important in ancient biography ... as a clue to the future identity or activity of the subject.”²²

The first and the primary name of the protagonist is “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς). The reader is told that God instructs Joseph to give him that name “for he will save (σώσει) his people (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ) from their sins” (1:21). The term σώζειν is commonly used in Hellenistic literature with reference to the activity of the king.²³ Blumenfeld explains:

Beginning in Hellenistic times, the ability to save subjects’ lives (σώζειν, σωτηρία) is a key feature of political power, especially as wielded by the king. The title σωτήρ

¹⁶ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 888–89.

¹⁷ Witherington, *Matthew*, 49.

¹⁸ Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 186.

¹⁹ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 48, remarks that the worship of the Magi shows that the author “urges the reader to accept this title ... as correctly applying to Jesus.”

²⁰ See further pp. 248–50.

²¹ Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 304. Cf. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 61: “More important than his portrayals of Jesus as teacher and prophet, Matthew hails Jesus as the true king of Israel.”

²² Burridge, *Four Gospels*, 70.

²³ See e.g. Dio Chrysostom, 3 *Regn.* 5–6, and Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (ap. Stobaeus. 4.7.61).

(*sōtēr*), savior, is given to numerous Hellenistic kings, and theoretical reflections often make salvation the first duty of the political leader.²⁴

The term *σῶζειν* is, however, also frequently used in the LXX, especially as a reference to the activity of God.²⁵ The language used by the author thus communicates both to the gentile world and to the Jewish world, which related the saving activity to God's Messiah.²⁶

It needs to be pointed out, however, that the description of Jesus' saving activity is different from other kings, since he is told to save the people "from their sins" (1:21). This verse, together with 9:13 and 20:28, provide the reader with the main mission of the protagonist. In the passion story it is explained to the reader that the salvation from sins is related to the death of Jesus (26:28). The statement in 1:21 thus indicates an important function the main character will have in the story.²⁷ Jesus, who later begins to proclaim a *heavenly* kingdom (4:17, 23),²⁸ will bring forgiveness of sins to the people (26:28) and thus "save" them "from their sins" (1:21).

That the new leader will bring benefits in the spiritual realm for the people is confirmed by the second name of the protagonist, "Immanuel," which means "God with us" (1:23). Witherington points out that this name is "a reference to a throne name for a king rather than a personal name."²⁹ It points to Matthew's understanding of Jesus Messiah as the Son of God.³⁰ Together with 28:20, this verse functions as

²⁴ Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 238. See also Aalders, *Political Thought in Hellenistic Times*, 21.

²⁵ The term *σῶζειν* is sometimes used in the LXX in the context of the activity of a king. See 1 Sam 9:16, 10:1; Isa 33:22; Zech 9:9. Cf. Jer 23:5–6, Ezek 34:22–23. The term is, however, primarily an activity of God. Robert L. Hubbard Jr., "עשׂ," *NIDOTTE* 2:556–62 (556), points out that the Hebrew equivalent is "almost exclusively a theological term with Yahweh as its subject and his people as its object."

²⁶ Talbert, *Matthew*, 69. Talbert suggests that the presentation of Jesus as "savior" confirms that he is presented as an ideal king (p. 68).

²⁷ Mark A. Powell, "The Plot and Subplots of Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 38 (1992): 187–204 (195). See also Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 278, 298. For a different view, see Donaldson, "Vindicated Son," 113, who proposes that Jesus' mission should be understood from the notion of the exile in the genealogy (1:11–12, 17), the main consequence of the sins of Israel. Influenced by A. J. Greimas' ideas about "narrative grammar," he suggests that the lack or need in the narrative "has to do with Israel and its need of a leader (Messiah, Shepherd) to deliver the nation from the consequences of its sin."

²⁸ See Robert Foster, "Why on Earth Use 'Kingdom of Heaven'?": Matthew's Terminology Revisited," *NTS* 48 (2002): 487–99 (490), who points out that "heaven" is used in Matthew to underline the heavenly character of the kingdom in contrast to earthly kingdoms. See also Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 311, 315, 321.

²⁹ Witherington, *Matthew*, 47.

³⁰ See e.g. Joshua E. Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son*, WUNT II/402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 224.

an inclusio of the whole story. The message of the inclusio, and of the story as a whole (cf. 18:19–20), is that in the person of Jesus Messiah, the Son of God, God has drawn near to dwell with his people and in this way inaugurated the eschatological age of salvation.³¹ The name “Immanuel” thus confirms that the coming salvation of “Jesus” is the work of God.³² The very names of the leader thus implies that he will benefit the people in a crucial way.

Though Jesus is not presented as a “political” leader in the common sense, his kingship has definitively political implications.³³ The presentation of Jesus as Savior is controversial in the Roman Imperial context, since Augustus was presented as Savior and his birthday described as Good News for the world.³⁴ The contrast between Jesus and king Herod in chapter two also suggests that Jesus is presented as the legitimate king of Israel, while the latter is an illegitimate king.³⁵

It has been debated whether “his people (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ)” (1:21) means the nation of Israel or the “community” (ἐκκλησία) of Jesus (16:18). Bauer helpfully clarifies that it relates to both, at different levels. It refers primarily, on the level of divine purpose, to the nation of Israel (cf. 2:6), which is the main addressee of the wholeness and salvation from Jesus. In this way God shows his faithfulness to his promises in the covenant with the people of Israel. But the story makes clear, and it is indicated already in chapter 2, that the nation as a whole does not receive Jesus and submit to his kingship. Thus it is, on the level of actualization, the community who is the people of Jesus. The salvation is only realized by those who submit to the kingship of Jesus.³⁶ Matthias Konradt points out that “*Jesus’* people (ὁ λαὸς αὐτοῦ) and *his* Church (μου ἡ ἐκκλησία) are not identical.”³⁷ He explains that the later usage of the shepherd metaphor with reference to the disciples (26:31), who constitute Jesus’ community, does not imply “a transfer of Jesus’ ‘pastoral office’ from Israel to the community ... both usages of the metaphor can be

³¹ Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 79.

³² Cf. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 46: “God is active in Jesus to save.”

³³ See David Bauer, “The Kingship of Jesus in the Matthean Infancy Narrative: A Literary Analysis,” *CBQ* 57 (1995): 306–23 (314–15), and Pennington, *Heaven and Earth*, 329.

³⁴ Richard Vinson, “King of the Jews: Kingship and Anti-Kingship Rhetoric in Matthew’s Birth, Baptism, and Transfiguration Narratives,” *RevExp* 104 (2007): 243–68 (254–57); Talbert, *Matthew*, 39.

³⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, “The Liberation of Illegitimacy: Women and Rulers in Matthew 1–2,” *BTB* (1991): 145–50. Blomberg proposes that “a stronger case can be made than is usually recognized for seeing an ongoing concern for salvation in the socio-political as well as the spiritual realm persisting throughout his gospel” (p. 149).

³⁶ Bauer, “Kingship of Jesus,” 310–11. See also Vinson, “King of the Jews,” 255. Cf. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 342, who distinguishes between “the ‘objective’ realization of salvation for Israel (and other nations) and the ‘subjective’ acceptance of salvation (by the disciples).”

³⁷ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 344.

unproblematically integrated into a comprehensive conception.”³⁸ Jesus is thus presented as the leader of both the people of Israel and his community, which is open to all nations.³⁹

3.1.2 A leader’s birth

In 2:1 the reader is informed that the birth of Jesus has occurred. This event is one of the “kernel events” in the narrative, an event of major importance.⁴⁰ A kernel event, in contrast to a satellite event, is so important to the narrative that it can not be removed without the logic of the story being destroyed. According to Powell, “kernel events are those in which choices are made that determine the subsequent development of the narrative.”⁴¹ In the context of this important event the theme of leadership is highlighted in a number of ways. Here, the author presents Jesus as a true *leader*, introduces the conflict with the present leadership, and compares him with the greatest leader of the Jews. The issue of kingship and leadership is clearly in focus in the second chapter of Matthew.⁴²

“a leader who will shepherd”

In the previous chapter it was noted that most of the protagonists are presented as *leaders* early in the biographies, through the usage of common leadership terminology. Xenophon makes clear that “Agesilaus was leader (ἡγεμὼν ἣν ὁ Ἀγησίλαος) not only for Greeks but also for many barbarians (1.35). Philo narrates how Moses, by being a shepherd, was “prepared and instructed for leadership (ἡγεμονίαν)” (1.60). He points out the similarities between shepherding and kingship and explains why “kings are called ‘shepherds of the people’ (ποιμένες λαῶν)” (1.61). Philo also makes clear that God called Moses to liberate the people from Egypt, and “to be the leader (ἡγεμόνα) taking the people from here to a settlement far from home” (1.71). When Plutarch tells the reader, in the beginning of the biography, about the successor of Romulus, he mentions that the people disputed

³⁸ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 337.

³⁹ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 274, notices that Jesus is also presented as king for the magi in chapter 2. He explains that the salvation of Israel and the Gentiles is closely related and concludes that “the Gentiles turn to Jesus as the Messiah of Israel.”

⁴⁰ Frank Matera, “The plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 233–253 (244). See also Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 44. For a different view see Warren Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks: The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 463–81 (473–74), who considers 1:18–25 to be a kernel event, where God initiates his action through the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, and 2:1 to be a satellite event. But the birth of Jesus is more essential to the plot since it introduces the conflict between Jesus and the present leadership and foreshadows Jerusalem’s rejection of the Messiah.

⁴¹ Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 36.

⁴² See Bauer, “Kingship of Jesus,” 307; Weaver, “Power and Powerless,” 182.

about the man “who should present himself as the leader (τὸν ἡγεμόνα)” (2:4). Likewise, Jesus is also presented as *leader* early in Matthew.

In his distress over the news about a newborn “king” (2:2), Herod gathers “all the chief priests and scribes of the people” (2:4), the religious, social, and intellectual leadership of Israel.⁴³ With the primary purpose of locating the birthplace of the newborn king, Jesus is characterized through the mouth of the religious leaders.⁴⁴ In this way the reader receives a clarification about who the βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (2:2) is. Through a quotation from the OT, probably a composition of Micah 5:2 and 2 Sam 5:2,⁴⁵ Jesus is now introduced in the story as a leader by the usage of common leadership terms:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers (τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν) of Judah; for from you will come a *leader* (ἡγούμενος) who will *shepherd* (ποιμανεῖ) my people Israel.⁴⁶

The NRSV translates both ἡγεμών and ἡγούμενος as “ruler”, and in this way misses the difference between the two words. The former is used in NT especially for the title of Roman provincial governors, while the latter is a more general term for anybody who holds a position of leadership, and therefore less politically loaded.⁴⁷ This is also the case in Matthew where ἡγεμών often is used for Roman governors (e.g. 10:18, 27:2, 28:14), especially Pilate, but ἡγούμενος is reserved for Jesus only.

The shepherd language is commonly used in ancient literature as a reference to leadership generally, both good and bad.⁴⁸ In the biblical writings, however, shepherding is often used as an expression of good leadership when it is related to

⁴³ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading*, JSNTSup 204 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 77.

⁴⁴ Even if the religious leaders are characterized in a negative way throughout the story, the information they give in 2:5–6 is reliable, since the reference to Bethlehem is in agreement with the narrator’s information in 2:1. Moreover, the information is quotations from Scripture and thus trustworthy. In the story of Matthew the religious leaders’ problem is not that they do not know what is written in the Scriptures, but that they do not live according to it (cf. 23:2–3) and understand what it means. According to Powell, “Religious Leaders,” 199, their knowledge of the Scripture is “only academic.” See also Keith H. Reeves, *The Resurrection Narrative in Matthew: A Literary-Critical Examination* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 48–49. Cf. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 107, Donaldson, “Vindicated Son,” 113, and Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 189.

⁴⁵ In 2 Sam 5:2 we have the very same combination of leadership terms as in Matt 2:6: “you shall shepherd (ποιμανεῖς) my people Israel and you shall be the leader (ἡγούμενον) of Israel.”

⁴⁶ Several scholars translate ἡγούμενος as “leader.” See e.g. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 33; Luz, *Matthew*, 1:102; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 60. Cf. Matthias Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, NTD 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 39.

⁴⁷ See p. 67.

⁴⁸ See pp. 67–69.

God or Messiah.⁴⁹ The shepherd imagery in the OT is closely connected to the hope of restoration and the eschatological shepherd. After considering Mic 2–5, Ezek 34–37 and Zech 9–14, Chae states that “the OT develops a specific notion of shepherd-leadership in the manner of YHWH’s redemptive and restorative activities in Israel’s history.”⁵⁰ The eschatological shepherd of God will be a compassionate shepherd who gathers the flock, restores the community, seeks the lost, binds up the wounded, gives strength to the weak and heals the sick (Ezek 34–37). But he will also be detested, sold, outcast, smitten, and mourned (Zech 9–14). The future shepherd in the OT will also lead the restored flock to walk in a renewed obedience to the laws and decrees of God.⁵¹ According to Louw and Nida the verb ποιμαίνειν is here used in the sense of leading, “with the implication of providing for – ‘to guide and to help’, to guide and take care of.”⁵² They thus translate the last part of 2:6 in this way: “from you will come a leader who will guide and help my people Israel.”⁵³

Since ποιμαίνειν comes after the relative pronoun ὅστις in the sentence, it could be read as a clarification to ἡγούμενος. The relative pronoun in this case is a qualitative, which focuses on the nature or the essence of the person or thing, in this case ἡγούμενος.⁵⁴ In other words, ὅστις ποιμαίνει is a clarification of *how* the leader, ἡγούμενος, will lead.⁵⁵ The usage of the term thus probably implies that the leadership of Jesus will be caring, compassionate, providing, and restoring.⁵⁶ Such connotations of the leadership term will be confirmed to the reader in 9:36.

In addition to the reference to Jesus, the shepherd imagery is also used as a term for congregational leaders in the NT and the apostolic fathers.⁵⁷ Phillipe Rolland thus designates the introduced Jesus in 2:6 as the “Pastor of Israel.”⁵⁸ Cabrido points out that the shepherd metaphor is reserved for Jesus in Matthew’s story and not used

⁴⁹ Cf. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 35.

⁵⁰ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 90. Cf. Huntzinger, “End of Exile,” 14, who proposes that “the metaphor of shepherd/sheep in the prophetic (exilic/post-exilic) and synoptic literature speaks of the relationship and activity of God to his people at the same time it recalls the condition of dislocation and disfranchisement as experienced by the people during the captivity.” Italics his. Huntzinger thus proposes that it is not a “dead” metaphor (p. 53).

⁵¹ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 91–92.

⁵² Louw and Nida, “ποιμαίνω.”

⁵³ Louw and Nida, 36.1.

⁵⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 344.

⁵⁵ See Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 187.

⁵⁶ See e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:30; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992) 64; Bauer, “Kingship of Jesus,” 311–12.

⁵⁷ See p. 69.

⁵⁸ Phillipe Rolland, “From the Genesis to the End of the World: The Plan of Matthew’s Gospel,” *BTB* 2 (1972): 155–176 (171).

in reference to other leaders or the disciples.⁵⁹ It should be noted, however, that even if the disciples are not called “shepherds” in the story, they are presented as leaders who fulfill a shepherding role (cf. 10:6, 18:12–14).

Among the synoptics, Matthew shows most interest in the shepherd image.⁶⁰ Here the imagery is used in its metaphorical and theological sense and never or seldom in its secular or literal sense.⁶¹ It is used in both the beginning (2:6), the middle (9:36), and the end (26:31), which signals that the whole narrative should be viewed through the angel of Jesus as Shepherd.⁶²

Besides the explicit references in the fulfillment quotations (Mic 5:1 and 2 Sam 5:2 for Mat 2:6), Ezek 34, with its polemic against the present leadership, contains the semantic field which the implied reader needs to appreciate the shepherd metaphor in its fullness.⁶³ In Ezek 34:23 it is made clear that the future Davidic leader, “my servant David,” will be the unique shepherd of God and it is told that he will “shepherd” (ποιμανεῖν) the people. The last expression is similar to Matt 2:6. John Heil points out that “the metaphor of shepherd and sheep for the leaders and their people embraces the entire Gospel of Matthew.”⁶⁴

The statement that Jesus “will shepherd” his “people Israel” thus gives the expectation that the future leader *truly* will lead the people, in opposition to the current leadership in Jerusalem. Ancient biographies often give a foreshadowing *synkrisis* in the beginning of the biography, to help the reader to understand the character of the protagonist.⁶⁵ As noted in the previous chapter, the biographers often make use of contrast to underline qualities of the good leader. In Matthew, the first character who is contrasted with Jesus is King Herod. Herod desires to maintain his status and authority and nothing stops him from promoting himself. He is also characterized as a hypocrite who lies about his intention to worship the new king (2:8). His desire to sustain his power over the people leads to acts of deception (2:8)

⁵⁹ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 441.

⁶⁰ Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 1.

⁶¹ Willits, *Shepherd-King*, 113. Matt 12:9–14 is an uncertain case.

⁶² Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 3. Cf. Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 271, and Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 698.

⁶³ See especially Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” but also e.g. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 87–88, and W. Baxter, “Healing and the ‘Son of David’: Matthew’s Warrant,” *NovT* 48 (2006): 36–50. Some scholars underline an influence from Zechariah. See Clay A. Ham, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd: Matthew’s Reading of Zechariah’s Messianic Hope*, NTMon 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), and John Nolland, “The King as Shepherd: The Role of Deutero-Zechariah in Matthew,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels. Volume 2: The Gospel of Matthew*, LNTS 310, ed. T. R. Hatina (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 133–46.

⁶⁴ Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 698. See also Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, NSBT 20 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 184.

⁶⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 229. He states: “In antiken Biographien war die Voraus-Synkrisis ein häufig und vielfältig verwendetes Darstellungsmittel.” For examples, see pp. 230–32.

and horrible violence (2:16). On the other hand, Jesus is presented as the one who is going to redeem the people from their sins (1:21) and to “shepherd” them (2:6).⁶⁶ When the true leader has been introduced in the beginning of the story,⁶⁷ the reader looks forward to seeing in which distinctive way he will lead the people of God.⁶⁸

The words from the religious leadership in 2:6 thus clearly present Jesus, the newborn child, as a true leader of Israel. The way the author makes this presentation is deeply ironic, since the statement is given by the present untrue leadership.⁶⁹ *The placement of the leadership theme early in the biographical narrative also signals its importance in the story.* Konradt thus rightly speaks of 2:6 as “the programmatic introduction of Jesus’ task to shepherd God’s people Israel.”⁷⁰

Conflict with the present leadership

An essential component of a story is the plot.⁷¹ In Matthew’s story, conflict is the central element of the plot. The whole narrative shows that Jesus is being opposed by Satan and the demons, civil authorities (such as Herod), and especially the religious leaders of Israel.⁷² At the human level, the plot is above all a conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders.⁷³ This conflict plays an important role for the characterization of Jesus, as Camp explains: “The conflicts emphasize Jesus’ positive qualities by contrast with the leaders.”⁷⁴ He points out that the conflict

⁶⁶ For the contrast between Jesus and Herod see e.g. Bauer, “Kingship of Jesus,” 307–08; Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 39–40; Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 182.

⁶⁷ For the description of characters as “true” and “untrue,” see Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 56–57. See also further 5.3.

⁶⁸ Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 700.

⁶⁹ Cf. Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, CSJH (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 29: “The passage is sharply ironic and critical of Israel’s governance, since some of the leaders of the people (chief priests and scribes) tell another leader of the people (Herod) that Scripture promises that God will send a leader for the people.” See also Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 78, and Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 39. Similar ironic characterizations of Jesus, through the mouths of opponents, are also seen later in the story (e.g. 22:16, 27:41–43). See also pp. 258–59.

⁷⁰ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 39.

⁷¹ Donaldson, “Vindicated Son,” 111, explains that plot “can be understood as comprising a unified sequence of events whose accumulated causal effects produce a completed process of change in the circumstances surrounding the main character.”

⁷² Cf. Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” 252–253; Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 3; Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 113.

⁷³ Jack Kingsbury, “The Plot of Matthew’s Story,” *Int* 66 (1992): 347–356 (355). Cf. F. P. Viljoen, “Power and Authority in Matthew’s Gospel,” *AcT* 31 (2011): 329–45 (331): “Matthew’s plot centers on the question of who is in command.” Powell, “Plot and Subplots,” 199–200, proposes that the main plot is between God’s plan and Satan’s challenge. The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is one of the subplots. See also Powell, “Religious Leaders,” 202–10, for a detailed description of this conflict.

⁷⁴ Camp, “Woe to you,” 187. Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 30, and Donaldson, “Vindicated Son,” 110.

between Jesus and the leadership of Israel concerns three topics, which overlap: Law/Scripture, the identity and authority of Jesus, and the character of the leaders.⁷⁵ It should also be noted that the influence over the people is an important aspect of the conflict.⁷⁶ Conflict concerning power and influence is a common characteristic of ancient biographies.⁷⁷ In Matthew the conflict between the protagonist and other leaders is introduced early in the story, already with the birth of Jesus.

The introduction of a new, true, leader in 2:6 indicates a confrontation with the present leaders of Israel. Willits points out that “the illegitimate and failed leadership of Israel is at the centre of this passage,” which is seen by the matrix of characters in the scene and the larger framework of Matt 1–2.⁷⁸ The conflict between Jesus and Herod has already been noted. But Herod is not the only other leader on this scene. When he heard about the newborn king “he was frightened (*ἐταράχθη*), and all Jerusalem with him; and gathering all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born” (2:3–4). The statement that Herod and all Jerusalem were “frightened” when they heard about the newborn king implies that the political and religious leaders regarded this king to be a threat against their own authority.⁷⁹

The religious leaders⁸⁰ function as a single character in the story, because they all are “leaders” (cf. 15:14; 23:16, 24) who occupy positions of authority in Israel, share the same point of view, have character traits that are similar, and are united in their opposition to Jesus.⁸¹ Despite their differences, which are sometimes implied in the text (cf. 22:23, 34), the author “looks upon the representatives of Israel as a homogeneous group.”⁸² These leaders are presented as representatives “of the people” (2:3). When they are introduced in the story they are described as allied

⁷⁵ Camp, “Woe to you,” 149.

⁷⁶ See pp. 213–14, 272–74.

⁷⁷ See Camp, “Woe to you,” 94–101, for several examples.

⁷⁸ Willits, *Shepherd-King*, 98.

⁷⁹ Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 33.

⁸⁰ I use the term “religious” since their leadership is primarily, but not exclusively, related to religious aspects and to separate them from “political” leaders like king Herod. The term is also commonly used in narrative studies of Matthew. Jesus, John, and the apostles are also presented as religious leaders, but are separated from this group, since their point of view differs from the other religious leaders in a distinct way.

⁸¹ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 17–18; Powell, “Religious Leaders,” 35–37; Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 215 n. 24; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 46–47; Carter, *Matthew*, 202. Cf. Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 164. For a different view, see Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 215, and Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 319. Regarding the different groups that are included in this character, see p. 255.

⁸² Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 1. See further p. 255.

with Herod, and thus implicitly unified and harmonized in the opposition against Jesus.⁸³ The first time the reader encounters them is in the context of a plot to kill Jesus. This foreshadows their conflict with Jesus and the resolution of that conflict.⁸⁴ As other ancient biographies, Matthew thus gives a foreshadowing of the crisis or death of the protagonist.⁸⁵

Herod, the main character contrasted with the newborn leader, can be seen as a precursor of the religious leaders in the way he anticipates their opposition against Jesus.⁸⁶ Both Herod's and the religious leaders' opposition to Jesus is motivated by a threat to their power and control over the people. At the end of the story it will be clarified to the reader that the conflict involves a struggle over the influence of the people (27:18).

The troubling of "all Jerusalem" with Herod anticipates the final rejection of Jesus by the crowds of Jerusalem in the end of the biography (27:20, 25).⁸⁷ Even if Jerusalem as a whole is involved in the opposition against Jesus,⁸⁸ the responsibility of its leaders is underlined in the story. Writing about the chief priest and the scribes, John Nolland rightly points out that "Matthew stresses a leadership role in and responsibility for the people."⁸⁹ A contrast between the powerful and powerless people and places can also be recognized. On one side, there are Herod, the Pharisees, the scribes, the chief priests, and Pilate, all associated with Jerusalem, which do not receive Jesus. On the other side, there are the powerless people, Joseph and Mary, and the disciples, associated with Bethlehem and Nazareth, which do receive him.⁹⁰

The comparison with the greatest leader

The role of Herod in the story is not only as a contrast to Jesus as a different leader. Through the depiction of Herod, in a way that reminds the reader of the infanticidal Pharaoh and the escape to Egypt, Jesus is also subtly presented as a "new Moses."

⁸³ See e.g. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 116; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:238; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 28. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 112 n. 119, presents a different view.

⁸⁴ Powell, "Religious Leaders," 44.

⁸⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 232–33.

⁸⁶ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 48–49.

⁸⁷ H. J. Bernard Combrink, "The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative," *TynBul* 34 (1983): 61–90 (78); Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 119; Gundry, *Matthew*, 28.

⁸⁸ See e.g. R.T. France, "Matthew and Jerusalem," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 108–27 (126): "Jerusalem—the city, its leaders, its people and its temple—represents for him the opposition."

⁸⁹ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 112. See further pp. 250–53.

⁹⁰ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:239, and Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 76–77.

In the same way as Moses had to flee from Egypt and then returns to deliver the people of God, Jesus has to flee to Egypt and then returns to deliver the people of God.⁹¹ The words to Joseph in 2:20 are the same as the words to Moses in Exod 4:19. Jesus had outlived his persecutors, just as Moses did.⁹² Allusions to Moses are even seen later in Matthew.⁹³

What do the parallels between Jesus and Moses signal to the reader, and what does it mean for the introduction of Jesus? Taylor and Harvey emphasize the importance of Moses in the OT and his leadership: “Moses was the man chosen by God *to lead* the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, through the Sinai peninsula, and eventually to the border of the Promised Land. As the *founder* of Israel’s religion, he is certainly the most important figure of the OT.”⁹⁴

Through the references to Moses the reader recognizes that the new leader, Jesus, is related to the greater former leader, Moses. The favorable comparison with Moses is thus a kind of *synkrisis*.⁹⁵ As seen in the analysis of the biographies in the previous chapter, comparison is sometimes used in order to highlight the good qualities of the leader.⁹⁶ In this way the reader gets confirmation that Jesus is going to be a true leader for the people of Israel. Later in the story it will also be shown to the reader that Jesus, like Moses, founds a new community (cf. 16:18).⁹⁷ France helpfully explains that the author

⁹¹ Cf. 2:13–14 with Exod 2:15.

⁹² The haggadic traditions about Moses also contain information that God spoke in a dream to Moses’ pious father and that Pharaoh ordered the infanticide because he had found out, from sacred scribes, about a future liberator of Israel. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:192–194, for a detailed presentation of the parallels between Moses and Jesus.

⁹³ See further Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), and Wayne S. Baxter, “Mosaic Imagery in the Gospel of Matthew,” *TJ* 20 (1999): 69–83. According to Baxter it is more accurate to speak about “imagery” than “typology,” since the author does not explicitly say that Jesus is the new Moses (p. 81).

⁹⁴ M. A. Taylor and J. E. Harvey, “Moses,” *NIDOTTE* 4:949–62 (949). Italics mine. Cf. Ari Z. Zivotofsky, “The Leadership Qualities of Moses,” *Judaism* 43 (1994): 258–69 (258): “Moses, the quintessential prophet and teacher, the lawgiver and the redeemer, was also the archetypal Jewish leader; the Torah and Midrash are replete with accounts of his leadership.”

⁹⁵ Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 80. See further Allison, *New Moses*, 12, who gives examples of implicit *synkrisis* in other ancient biographies. Allison points out that parallels between Jesus and others “must be reckoned a compositional habit of Matthew” (p. 137). Cf. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 68, who discusses the mention of John the Baptist and Moses in the Johannine prologue: “Like the *synkrisis* found in other encomia, the evangelist’s *synkrisis* in his prologue immediately contextualize Jesus in relation to other, revered persons, and bolster his unique status.” Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1368A.

⁹⁶ See Isocrates, *Evag.* 52–53, 57, who compares Evagoras with Conon, and Plutarch, *Comp. Lyc. Num.*, who compares Numa with Lycurgus.

⁹⁷ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 81. France here speaks of Jesus, in a similar way as Moses, as “Israel’s leader” and as “the founder of a new community of the people of God.”

sets up the typological model for the newborn Messiah to play the role of the new Moses, who will deliver his people (cf. 1:21) and through whose ministry a new people of God will be constituted just as Israel became God's chosen people through the exodus and the covenant at Sinai under the leadership of Moses.⁹⁸

The linking of Jesus with Moses confirms that he is a true leader, and perhaps also what kind of leader he is going to be. George Coats proposes that some of the narratives about Moses (e.g. Exod 2:11–22) intend to set up Moses as a leadership model for all following leaders in Israel. David and all who follow in his line should be heroes like Moses and not satisfy their own greed, but engage with the sufferings of the people.⁹⁹ Coats states that “the adequacy of any particular Davidic heir as leader of the Lord's people might be judged on the basis of that person's success or failure in matching the Mosaic model ... A new David must also be a new Moses.”¹⁰⁰ The Mosaic leadership model affected the tradition in the Deuteronomistic history (especially in the presentation of Joshua and Josiah) and the prophetic theology after the fall of the monarchy.¹⁰¹ It had its greatest impact by showing the people and the king what leadership ought to be like. The leaders should not be above the people and apart from their suffering. On the contrary, the leaders should live with the people and make the suffering of the people their own suffering, just as Moses did. For the sake of his oppressed people he gave his life and his work. Coats also highlights the relevance for the Mosaic leadership model to Jesus:

This image of the heroic leader helps the first century evangelists understand who Jesus was. Jesus, the new Moses as well as the new David, was hero [sic] for his people because he identified with them in their suffering, their sin, their death.¹⁰²

Already in the baptism scene in the next chapter it is confirmed to the reader that this is a feature of Jesus' leadership in Matthew's story. That Jesus, the Righteous one,¹⁰³ needs to be baptized by John with a baptism of repentance (3:11), does not imply that Jesus is a sinner. On the contrary, through his baptism, Jesus identifies

⁹⁸ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 63. See also Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 107–108.

⁹⁹ George W. Coats, *The Moses Tradition*, JSOTSup 161 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 112–13. Cf. Zivotofsky, “Leadership Qualities of Moses,” 259, and Taylor and Harvey, *NIDOTTE* 4:958, who state: “Moses provides a model for strong, effective, and responsible leadership that should be emulated: He identified with the people; he took care of their physical and spiritual needs ... he exercised his leadership with a keen sense of justice and compassion ... he delegated responsibilities to others.”

¹⁰⁰ Coats, *Moses Tradition*, 113.

¹⁰¹ See also Gerald E. Gerbrandt, *Kingship according to the Deuteronomistic History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 68, and Allison, *New Moses*, 91.

¹⁰² Coats, *Moses Tradition*, 114.

¹⁰³ See below, pp. 148–49.

totally with his people and shows solidarity with their needs.¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Gibbs points out that 3:17 probably alludes to Isa 42:1 and Jer 38:20 LXX (not Ps 2:7) and thus presents Jesus in this scene not as king, but as the people of Israel, “God’s son.”¹⁰⁵ Since Jesus identifies with the sinful people of Israel and stands with them, his baptism shows that he is “with and for Israel to save.”¹⁰⁶ The baptism of Jesus implies that he “binds himself to the destiny of Israel,” to use the expression of David Garland.¹⁰⁷ In this way Jesus follows the Mosaic leadership model and acts like the former great leader. He does not distance himself from the people, but instead identifies with their needs and problems. The following scene, the temptation narrative (4:1–11), clarifies that Jesus, the Son, is also separated from Israel, the people. Where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds.¹⁰⁸

The Moses imagery thus affirms to the reader that Jesus is a true leader, just as Moses was. Moreover, the comparison indicates that the new leader will follow the Mosaic leadership model, identify with the needs of the people and not act selfishly.

3.2 The prepared and appropriate leader (3:1–4:11)

In the context of the birth of Jesus, Matthew has introduced both the true leader, Jesus, and the untrue present leadership. The author does not write about the childhood of Jesus, but jumps forward in time and begins to characterize the adult Jesus, through his words and deeds.

In the previous chapter it has been clarified that the portraits of the good leaders underline that the protagonist was worthy of the leadership of the people, mainly due to his virtues. Xenophon states that Agesilaus was deemed “worthy of the kingship (ἄξιος τῆς βασιλείας)” of Sparta, because of his ancestry and virtue (ἀρετή) (1.5). Philo underlines that Moses was both well prepared for his leadership (1.60–64) and given the position because of his virtue, goodness, and kindness (1.148). Plutarch also points out that Numa was a worthy leader when he states that “it is good to acquire the kingdom by righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) ... for it was virtue which reckoned him honorable so that he was deemed worthy of a kingdom (ὥστε βασιλείας ἀξιοθῆναι) (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.2).

¹⁰⁴ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:57. See also e.g. Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 140, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 120.

¹⁰⁵ Jeffrey A. Gibbs, “Israel standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel (Matt 3:13–17),” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 511–26 (520).

¹⁰⁶ Gibbs, “Israel standing with Israel,” 521. See also Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing*, 130–31.

¹⁰⁷ Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Gibbs, “Israel standing with Israel,” 525–26. Cf. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God’s Son (Matt 4:1–11 & par): An Analysis of an Early Christian Midrash*, ConBNT 2, trans. John Toy (Lund: Gleerup, 1966), 20–24, 40–44, and Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:69.

Similarly to other biographies of good leaders, Matthew shows the reader that Jesus was prepared for leadership and worthy of a leadership position because of his good character. The moral qualities confirm that he is an appropriate leader. In this way Matthew conforms to biographical writing when it deals with the preparation of Jesus for ministry and underlines his good character before he begins his ministry.¹⁰⁹ Donald Hagner rightly notes that “[t]he whole section 3.1–4.11 can be seen as the preparation for the ministry of Jesus.”¹¹⁰

3.2.1 The preparation of the leader

Influenced by John the Baptist

With John the Baptist’s appearance in 3:1, the reader gets to know a new character, who is not in opposition to Jesus. On the contrary, these two characters share the same evaluative point of view and there is an essential continuity between their ministries in the story.¹¹¹ This is clearly seen in their proclamation of the same message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (3:2, 4:17).¹¹² Jesus also associates himself with John later in the story (11:19, 21:23–32). The Baptist can thus be described as both the “predecessor” and “colleague” of Jesus.¹¹³ Frickenschmidt points out that the author makes use of *synkrisis* and compares John and Jesus. In 3:11 the two characters are compared in the *autosynkrisis* of John.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 21, proposes that the reader who at the beginning of the story was reminded of biographies gets disappointed in the following narrative: “The education and development of a hero are important in biographies, but Matthew’s story has nothing to say on this.” The description of a protagonist’s education is certainly common in ancient biographies, as seen in Philo’s *Moses* and Plutarch’s *Numa*. At the same time, in the biographies of ideal leaders education was not always mentioned (see Isocrates’ *Evagoras* and Xenophon’s *Agesilaus*). The most important motif in ancient biographies of ideal leaders seems to be to show the reader that the protagonist was appropriate as leader and worthy of the position because of his virtues. Matthew also gives information about the preparation of Jesus (see below), which is underlined in some biographies (e.g. Philo’s *Moses*). Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 104, who suggests that Jesus’ association with John the Baptist should be understood from the perspective of nurture and training in the encomium.

¹¹⁰ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:43.

¹¹¹ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 98, 799. John P. Meier, “John the Baptist in Matthew’s Gospel,” *JBL* 99 (1980): 383–405 (401), points out that “Matthew has taken pains to make John and Jesus parallel figures.” See also Allison, *New Moses*, 137–39.

¹¹² See also 3:10 and 7:19.

¹¹³ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 805. Morris, *Matthew*, 80, suggests that the end of the ministry of John (4:12) becomes the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (4:17). For a different view, see D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Mark and Matthew*, rev. ed., EBC 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 23–670 (146 n. 12).

¹¹⁴ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 468–69. See also Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels*, 100–01, for the comparison between Jesus and John.

It is obvious that John and Jesus are closely related. But what is the relationship between them? In his *autosynkrisis* John explains his own ministry and then declares: “but he who comes after me (ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος) is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry” (3:11). In one way, John is here presented as a disciple to Jesus. The notion about carrying sandals refers to a disciple who carries his master’s shoes and the rabbinic principle that the disciple should serve his teacher like a slave.¹¹⁵ However, Jesus also seems to be presented to the reader as a follower of John, since ὀπίσω (“after”) often relates to discipleship (cf. 4:19, 10:38, 16:24).¹¹⁶ The use of the word ὀπίσω thus suggests that Jesus is presented as a kind of disciple of John prior to his own ministry. Another reason for this view is that Jesus’ first proclamation (4:17) is the same as John’s (3:2), which indicates that Jesus was influenced by John’s preaching.¹¹⁷ That the message of Jesus and John is the same indicates, above all, that they “share the same overall vision of what God is in the process of doing,” as Nolland points out.¹¹⁸ Jesus does not only share the same message as John, he also evaluates the religious leaders in the same way as John (see 3:7 and 12:34). Daniel Harrington suggests that “Jesus’ seeking out of John and requesting his baptism indicate some contact between the two in which John has the role of mentor.”¹¹⁹

Consequently, the reader learns that John the Baptist plays a role in the preparation of Jesus’ ministry. Whatever the exact relationship between them, John is presented as one who influences Jesus. The new leader is, in some way, trained and prepared by John, the forerunner. At the same time, it is emphasized in the text that Jesus is superior to John and, in the words of France, “the disciple who becomes master” and “the follower who takes the lead.”¹²⁰

The descent of the Spirit of God upon Jesus in the baptism (3:16) expresses that God empowers Jesus to accomplish his ministry. In Matthew the Spirit is associated with the coming of the kingdom and the ministry of Jesus and his disciples (10:20, 12:18, 12:28).¹²¹ The next event also shows the influence of the Spirit upon Jesus,

¹¹⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:315.

¹¹⁶ Krister Stendahl, “Matthew,” in *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black (London: Nelson, 1962), 769–98 (773); Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 104; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 113. According to Blomberg, *Matthew*, 79, the phrase refers to “one who follows after a leader.” For a different view see e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:313.

¹¹⁷ See e.g. Aaron Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus Did: Acquiring Spiritual Power Through Apprenticeship* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 93.

¹¹⁸ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 175.

¹¹⁹ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, SP 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 53. Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 123, who also describes John as the mentor of Jesus and refers to Jesus’ “apprenticeship with the Baptizer.”

¹²⁰ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 113.

¹²¹ Cf. Carson, “Matthew,” 290.

since the reader here is told that the Spirit “led” (ἀνάγειν) Jesus to the wilderness (4:1).

Tested in the wilderness

Before Jesus begins his public activity, one more preparatory event occurs. He is led by the Spirit to the wilderness in order to be tempted by the devil (4:1). Here Jesus fasts for forty days and nights (4:2). Like other ancient biographies, Matthew here tells about the testing of the protagonist.¹²² The former leaders of Israel (e.g. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David) also had to pass a period of testing before their ministry began.¹²³ Jesus’ time in the wilderness could thus be understood as an important test before his public ministry begins, as Witherington points out: “Only when Jesus the royal one has passed the test in regard to these things, in regard to the will to power especially, is he able to go forth and begin his ministry.”¹²⁴

The Spirit leads Jesus to the desert “to be tempted (πειρασθῆναι)” (4:1). This event, when Jesus is tempted by the devil, anticipates later events when Jesus is tested by the religious leaders. These leaders are portrayed as evil and have affinity with the Evil One, the devil (12:34, 13:38–39). Satan is testing Jesus three times, and the religious leaders will also repeatedly be described as testing Jesus (16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35). The temptation of Satan can thus be seen as a preparation of the leader for coming tests in his public ministry.¹²⁵ It should be noted, however, that this kind of temptation, in the Jewish context, primarily aims to test the character of the person.¹²⁶ Shuler rightly underlines that the passage clarifies that the protagonist is prepared for coming tasks, since “it is apparent that Jesus is presented as a messianic figure of obvious moral strength, capable both of withstanding temptation and of giving spiritual and scriptural leadership.”¹²⁷

¹²² See Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 266, and Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 67.

¹²³ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 138. Cf. Witherington, *Matthew*, 86–87.

¹²⁴ Witherington, *Matthew*, 87.

¹²⁵ Cf. Camp, “Woe to you,” 85, who proposes that “the temptations might be seen as a form of education . . . This ‘test’ indicates that he is ready for ministry and provides the transition to the deeds section of his life.”

¹²⁶ Gerhardsson, *Testing of God’s Son*, 31, notices that the temptation narratives in the OT is not education, but a way to find out the person’s real character and relationship to God. Gerhardsson points out that “God tempts his elect ones to test their character and inquire into their way of life.”

¹²⁷ Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels*, 96. See also Shuler, “Philo’s Moses and Matthew’s Jesus,” 98.

3.2.2 A righteous and self-controlled leader

Righteousness

At the baptism movement at the river Jordan the religious leaders make their first major appearance. Two distinct groups, the Pharisees and the Sadducees (cf. 22:34), are mentioned together in their leadership role.¹²⁸ The differentiation by the author between the people and their leaders, which was indicated in the previous chapter, is now obvious. The people confess their sins and are baptized, but the leaders do not.¹²⁹ The criticism of the leaders does not concern their Jewish origin, which is the same as the people generally, but their ideas and behavior as religious leaders.¹³⁰ Commenting on this passage, Daniel Patte points out: “It is the first instance of many in the Gospel of Matthew where the author seems exclusively concerned with defining good religious leaders.”¹³¹

For the first time in the story Jesus now has an active role and takes an initiative to be baptized. From the first words that Jesus utters in the story¹³²—“it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness¹³³ (πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην)” (3:15)—he shows himself to be a man with a heavy concern for righteousness.¹³⁴ This concern is clearly confirmed to the reader in the first teaching discourse of Jesus, where righteousness is the central topic.¹³⁵ The reader has been prepared for this character trait, since Jesus’ father, Joseph, has already been characterized as “a righteous (δίκαιος) man” (1:19). At the end of the biography the same term is applied to Jesus by Pilate’s wife, and his righteousness is clearly underlined (27:19, cf. 27:4). Gerhard Barth thus correctly points out that the overall presentation of Jesus

¹²⁸ Carson, “Matthew,” 132.

¹²⁹ Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 122; Luz, *Matthew*, 1:136. Cf. Carson, “Matthew,” 131.

¹³⁰ Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 46

¹³¹ Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 58 n. 5.

¹³² For the significance of the first words of a character in a story, see Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 143.

¹³³ I chose to translate the term δικαιοσύνη to “righteousness” in Matthew and not to “justice” (as often in the comparative material), since the term in Matthew is wide-ranging and often used in a theological sense while in the other biographies it primarily relates to just treatment of others. The term δίκαιος is yet sometimes related to justice in Matthew (cf. 20:4) and thus there are some overlaps in the usage. See further below.

¹³⁴ R. H. Smith, “Matthew 28:16–20, Anticlimax or Key to the Gospel,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 32 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 589–603 (597). See also Karl Kertelge, “δικαιοσύνη,” *EDNT* 1:325–30 (329): “The ‘righteousness’ becomes the program of Jesus.” Cf. 6:33.

¹³⁵ The term δικαιοσύνη is used five times in the discourse (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33). Cf. Smith, “Matthew 28:16–20,” 597–98.

underlines that “Jesus is the Sinless One, the Righteous One who fulfills all righteousness, who does the will of God entirely.”¹³⁶

What is then the meaning of the term “righteousness” and what does it relate to? In the thought world of classical Greece “the righteous” (δίκαιος) refers primarily to one who fulfills his obligations towards the gods and other men and behaves fittingly according to the laws and orders of his society.¹³⁷ In his description of the virtue of “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη), Aristotle begins with notions about the importance of keeping inherited customs and established laws and then continues with the following words:

But the first of the claims of righteousness are duties to the gods, then to the divine powers (δαίμονας), then to country and parents, then to the departed; among the claims is reverence (εὐσέβεια), either as a part of righteousness or as an accompaniment to it. Piety (δσιότης), truth, faithfulness, and hatred of wickedness also follow righteousness (*Virt. vit.* 1250B).¹³⁸

In the OT, “righteousness” is related primarily to the relationship between God and man, and behaviour that upholds this relationship.¹³⁹ Here it is in a special way related to the king, since it’s the duty of the king to uphold righteousness in the nation. This is done by the king when he, for example, cares for the poor and needy.¹⁴⁰ Daniel Block points out that the main purpose of the OT leader is related to righteousness: “The primary role of leaders is to embody righteousness and promote justice within the community.”¹⁴¹ The usage of δικαιοσύνη in the LXX is related both to God’s saving activity and faithfulness to the covenant, forensic elements, and obedience to God’s will and a mode of life that pleases him.¹⁴² In accordance with other Greek literature, δικαιοσύνη can be described as a cardinal

¹³⁶ Gerhard Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” in *Tradition and Interpretation of Matthew*, by Günter Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz J. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 58–164 (137). Cf. Dan O. Via, “Narrative World and Ethical Response: The Marvelous and Righteousness in Matthew 1–2,” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 123–45 (124), and Smith, “Matthew 28:16–20,” 600.

¹³⁷ Horst Seebass, “Righteousness,” *NIDNTT* 3:352–56, 58–65 (353). Gottlob Schrenk, “δικαιοσύνη,” *TDNT* 2:192–210 (192), speaks about a “very close connection between legal, ethical and religious terminology.” He gives several examples of connections between righteousness and piety (pp. 192–94). Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 109, likewise underlines the close relationship to piety.

¹³⁸ Cf. Cicero, *Inv.* 2.160–62; Menander Rhetor, 1.361.17–25.

¹³⁹ Seebass, *NIDNTT* 3:355; Kertelge, *EDNT* 1:326; Ceslas Spicq, “δικαιοσύνη,” *TLNT* 1:326–36 (328–29).

¹⁴⁰ Colin Brown, “Righteousness,” *NIDNTT* 3:356–58 (357).

¹⁴¹ Daniel I. Block, “Leader, Leadership, OT,” *NIDB* 3:620–26 (624).

¹⁴² Schrenk, *TDNT* 2:196.

virtue in the LXX.¹⁴³ In rabbinic Judaism “righteousness” is identified with obedience to the law and the gaining of merits which give assurance of a place in the coming kingdom.¹⁴⁴

Since δικαιοσύνη is otherwise used in the ethical sense in Matthew, denoting the behaviour of humans, most scholars conclude that the term in 3:15 also refers to the moral conduct.¹⁴⁵ Jesus is thus contrasted with the righteous leaders who do not bear fruit.¹⁴⁶ Other scholars, however, propose that the statement in 3:15 refers to the salvific activity of God and not to ethical righteousness. The baptism, with its inauguration of Jesus’ ministry, should thus be understood as a beginning of the fulfillment of the salvation plan of God.¹⁴⁷ One argument for this view is the words “for us”, which points to the roles of the forerunner and the Messiah to together begin the inauguration of the kingdom (cf 11:12–13).¹⁴⁸ Another is the usage of “fulfill,” which often relates to the salvation-historical concept in the story of Matthew.¹⁴⁹ As noted above, the baptism of Jesus implies an identification with the people, since it is the mission of Jesus to save the people from their sins (1:21).¹⁵⁰ Through his baptism Jesus stands with the sinful people in order to save them.¹⁵¹ These arguments favor the *salvific* meaning of “righteousness” in 3:15. This does not, however, imply that the moral conduct of Jesus is not included or that a contrast with the religious leaders is not present. The following scene in the desert (4:1–11)

¹⁴³ Spicq, *TLNT* 1:330.

¹⁴⁴ Seebass, *NIDNTT* 3:558–59.

¹⁴⁵ See e.g. Schrenk, *TDNT* 2:198; Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 179; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:327. For a detailed discussion about this topic, see Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and his World of Thought*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and especially pp. 91–94. Crowe, *Obedient Son*, 184–86, proposes that 3:15 refers to the ethical requirements of God upon humanity and shows that Jesus alone, as the Son, can fulfil every aspect of these requirements.

¹⁴⁶ See e.g. Bauer, *Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 66, and Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 37.

¹⁴⁷ See Donald A. Hagner, “Righteousness in Matthew’s Theology,” in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige, JSNTSup 87 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 101–20 (116–17). Cf. John Reumann, “Righteousness” in the New Testament: “Justification” in the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 127; Morris, *Matthew*, 65.

¹⁴⁸ Talbert, *Matthew*, 55–56.

¹⁴⁹ Meier, “John the Baptist in Matthew’s Gospel,” 391–92; Gibbs, “Israel standing with Israel,” 521–22; Roland Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora im Reich des Messias: Mt 5,13–20 als Schlüsseltext der matthäischen Theologie*, WUNT 177 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 129–30. Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing*, 124, shows that the term could also be understood in the sense of “filling up” righteousness in contrast to the religious leaders who “fill up” the measure of their sins (23:32). According to Eubank, “[t]hese words explicate, from under the shadow of the cross, the full extent of what it means for Jesus to fill up all righteousness; he meekly submits, not only to baptism, but also to death on a cross, and so stores up treasure in heaven that overflows to those under the debt of sin” (p. 129). Cf. Isa 53:11.

¹⁵⁰ See pp. 143–44.

¹⁵¹ See Gibbs, “Israel standing with Israel,” 521.

clearly presents Jesus as an obedient and righteous man (see below). The salvific aspect of righteousness is not separated and distinct from the ethical aspect.¹⁵² Jesus' baptism is also, at the same time, a confirmation of John's call for repentance¹⁵³ and his "way of righteousness (ὁδὸν δικαιοσύνης)" as Jesus later describes John's movement (21:32). The salvation is related to both forgiveness and repentance (cf. 21:43).¹⁵⁴

The righteousness of Jesus in Matthew's story is clearly related to *obedience* to the will of God. Birger Gerhardsson points out that the principle of knowing the tree from its fruit does not only refer to the religious leaders, who bear bad fruit (3:8–10). The principle is also used in reference to Jesus, who does the will of God (e.g. 4:1–11), fulfils the law (e.g. 5:17–19, 7:12, 22:34–40), and thus bears good fruit. For this reason are his high claims legitimized.¹⁵⁵ The obedience of Jesus is clearly shown to the reader by the temptations in the desert, where Jesus repeatedly underlines the importance of doing the will of God (4:4, 7, 10). The text should be understood in light of Deut 8:2–3 and God's testing of his people's ability to keep his commandments.¹⁵⁶ Jesus not only rejects the temptations in the desert. Similar temptations, to choose an easier path of life, are offered to him both in the middle (16:22) and in the end of the story (27:39–43).¹⁵⁷ But the leader is obedient and faithful to his mission. The clearest evidence of Jesus' willingness to obey God's will is, however, in the scene in Gethsemane. Here Jesus prays to be released from suffering and death if possible. But he clearly emphasizes that he wants to do God's will: "Yet (πλὴν), not as I want (θέλω) but as you want" (26:39). In obedience to the Scriptures he willingly accepts arrest (26:54). Senior rightly points out that "Jesus is presented by Matthew as the ultimate example of true fidelity or 'righteousness.'"¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Cf. Chouinard, "Literary Study," 219, who points out that in 3:15 "Jesus is portrayed as both knowledgeable of the divine will and determined to be wholly obedient to what God requires." See Ps 40:7–11 for an integration of salvific and ethical aspects of righteousness in the OT.

¹⁵³ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 120.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Kertelge, *EDNT* 1:329, who describes "righteousness" in Matthew as both an expression of God's salvation and as "God's demand to mankind, a condition for their realization of their salvation." Cf. also Via, "Narrative World and Ethical Response," 141–42, and Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 328 and n. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Birger Gerhardsson, "'An Ihren Früchten sollt ihr sie erkennen': Die Legitimitätsfrage in der matthäischen Christologie," *EvT* 42 (1982): 113–26.

¹⁵⁶ See Gerhardsson, *Testing of God's Son*, 36–70, for parallels between Matt 4:1–11 and Deuteronomy. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:352, and Donaldson, "Vindicated Son," 115.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Tord Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet*, 2 vols., KNT (Uppsala: EFS-förlaget, 1989–90), 2:470, who points out that the mocking of Jesus in 27:39–43 is the climax of the temptation of Jesus' loyalty to his mission.

¹⁵⁸ Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1985), 170. See also pp. 141 and 164–66 where he underlines Jesus' obedience and fidelity. For a similar view, see e.g. Luz, *Matthew*, 3:408, and Karl Olov Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*

The dramatic scenes in the desert and in Gethsemane, where Jesus shows commitment to the Scriptures and to prayer, also clarify that the righteousness of Jesus is closely related to *piety*.¹⁵⁹ The baptism narrative also gives a divine confirmation of the new leader and characterizes Jesus as a man with God's favor. The reader is shown, in a very obvious way that this coming leader is a pious man with an intimate relationship with God. A similar divine confirmation is seen in the transfiguration story (17:5).¹⁶⁰ That piety is an important part of a righteous life is also seen in the first teaching discourse of Jesus, which focuses on righteousness. Here Jesus refers to almsgiving, prayer, and fasting as "practicing" (ποιεῖν) "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνην) (6:1).¹⁶¹

The Sermon on the Mount¹⁶² also shows that righteousness is concerned with the *relationship to others*. When Jesus has pointed out that his follower's righteousness must surpass that of the religious leaders (5:20), he gives six examples of righteous conduct in the context of relationship with others (5:21–48). Later in the narrative Jesus confirms that love of God and the neighbor are the greatest commandments of the law and the prophets (22:35–40).

The righteousness of Jesus is, moreover, seen in his concern for *justice*. This concern is expressed by his compassionate ministry to the marginalized, afflicted, and needy people (e.g. 11:28–12:14),¹⁶³ and his judgment, especially upon the failed leadership.¹⁶⁴ It is further seen in the importance of obeying the commandments (cf.

on Jesus' Prayer at Gethsemane: *Courageous, Committed, Cowardly?* NovTSup 166 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 141–43.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 110, and Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 147, who in his comparison of the Gethsemane story in Mark and Matthew, points out that the difference in Matthew is "a matter of shifting the emphasis to Jesus' piety."

¹⁶⁰ Talbert, *Matthew*, 211. Talbert recognizes a parallel between the divine confirmation of Jesus before he starts his career and divine confirmation of Numa (7) and Lycurgus (5) which precedes the beginning of their career. The baptism of Jesus has the same function as a launching of his career (p. 59). Cf. Aune, *Literary Environment*, 48: "The baptismal scene (Mark 1:9–11), provides divine legitimation for Jesus' identity 'son of God' or 'Messiah,' in a manner that functions similarly to the definition provided by ancestry, birth, and education in Greco-Roman biography."

¹⁶¹ Cf. 1 Tim 6:11 for the close relationship between righteousness and piety.

¹⁶² If "sermon" is understood as proclamation, the description of the first discourse as "Sermon on the Mount" is inappropriate, since the text says that Jesus "taught" (ἐδίδασκεν) his disciples. However, since this is an established description of the discourse I also make use of it. Cf. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 159 n. 10.

¹⁶³ See Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel*, SNTSMS 123 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Beaton shows the emphasis on justice in Matthew and points out that 11:28–12:14 is "a section in which the issues of Law, christology, mercy and justice all converge, and in which Matthew presents a non-confrontational Jesus concerned with the setting forth of justice evidenced in the liberation of the oppressed and in the demeanour and manner in which he carries this out" (p. 165).

¹⁶⁴ See p. 263.

5:19, 28:20).¹⁶⁵ When Jesus outlines the failures of the religious leaders, he criticizes them for neglecting “justice” (χρίσις), one of “the weightier matters of the law” (23:23, cf. 12:20).¹⁶⁶ In his teaching he also makes clear that one day he will come in glory and “reward each person according to what he has done (ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν πράξιν αὐτοῦ)” (16:27, cf. 12:36–37). On this future day the angels will “separate the evil from the righteous (τῶν δικαίων)” (13:49, cf. 13:41) and harsh punishment waits for the evildoers (13:42, 50; 25:41, 46). His concern for justice is clearly seen in the judgment scene in the eschatological discourse (25:31–46), where his role as king is underlined (25:31, 34, 40). Here Jesus foretells of severe punishment for those who do not receive and serve his needy brothers.¹⁶⁷ The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (20:1–16) also illustrates his concern for justice (20:4, 13), but at the same time, shows that his goodness, to some extent, challenges common ideas about justice (20:15).

The leader is not only presented as one with demands of righteous living and a concern for justice. Jesus himself expresses that his mission is not to “call the righteous (δικαίους), but sinners (ἁμαρτωλούς)” (9:13) and his compassion is strongly underlined throughout the story.¹⁶⁸ He also teaches his followers the necessity of forgiveness (6:14–15, 18:22–35) and relates his own death to the forgiveness of people’s sins (26:28, cf. 20:28).

“Righteousness” in Matthew is thus a fundamental virtue that includes several aspects, as in the OT. The specific usage of the term relates both to God’s salvation, obedience to God’s will, piety, the relationship to one’s neighbor, and justice. Even if righteousness is related to the salvation of God in 3:15, the main usage of the term in Matthew underlines the ethical responsibility of man.¹⁶⁹ Consequently, there are a number of similarities between the usage of the term in Matthew and in other Greek literature.

Self-control

The first part of ancient biographies often tells of the temptations of the protagonist, in order to clarify his character for the reader. Frickenschmidt describes the common motifs in this way:

¹⁶⁵ See further p. 185. For the close relationship between law and justice, see e.g. Philo, *Mos.* 2.4, 9; Plutarch, *Mor.* 780E; Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (ap. Stobaeus. 4.7.61).

¹⁶⁶ The term χρίσις is often used in the sense of “judgment” (e.g. 5:21), but in this context, together with the moral qualities of “mercy” and “faithfulness,” it should probably be understood as “justice.” See France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 873.

¹⁶⁷ Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 158–65, rightly points out that the demands of righteousness in the teaching of Jesus are eschatologically motivated.

¹⁶⁸ See 4.3.2.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 187.

Die erste Phase einer Biographie war zugleich auch der Abschnitt, in dem auf frühe Anzeichen von Fehlern und Schwächen einer Person geachtet wurde. In diesem Zusammenhang wurde meist von zwei Arten von Versuchungen erzählt, denen der Charakter der Hauptperson ausgesetzt war: Versuchungen durch sinnliche Reize oder Macht und Versuchungen durch Bestechung. Erstere konnten durch Selbstbeherrschung grundlegende asketische Fähigkeiten abgewehrt werden, letztere durch unbeirrbare Integrität und Höferschätzung immaterieller Werte gegenüber Möglichkeiten, sich zu bereichern.¹⁷⁰

In his comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero, Plutarch points out that “authority (ἐξουσία) and power (ἀρχή), which set all passion in motion and reveal all badness” are “that which mostly are thought and said to show and test the character (τρόπον) of a man” (*Comp. Dem. Cic.* 3.2). The temptation scene (4:1–11) in Matthew is a clear example of this kind of character test. The narrative does not only underline the righteousness of Jesus, as noted above, but it also reveals his self-control.¹⁷¹

The practice of fasting is in itself an act of self-discipline.¹⁷² The reader gets to know that Jesus fasted “forty days and forty nights” (4:2). The long fast shows the great self-control of Jesus, who can resist his desires for food. That Jesus also teaches his followers to fast (6:16–18, 9:14–15) confirms the importance of the activity for Jesus.

The first temptation by Satan shows that Jesus is not going to use his powers for his own pleasure or in order to satisfy his personal needs.¹⁷³ In the third temptation, the climax of the temptations, Jesus is offered “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” (4:8) if he worships Satan. Jesus is thus tempted with enormous wealth and absolute political power.¹⁷⁴ But the leader is faithful to what is written in the OT and resists the temptation. He does not accept the offer from the devil to abuse his power for personal objectives, but follows his Father’s purposes. The story of the temptation of Jesus thus establishes the picture of Jesus as a righteous man with self-control.¹⁷⁵ Talbert notices that “when confronting the temptations of ... wealth

¹⁷⁰ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 266. Cf. Michael W. Martin, “Progymnastic Topic Lists: A Compositional Template for Luke and Other Bioi,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 18–41 (37), who notices that it is standard to tell about ascetic experiences in the biography’s section on nurture and training, following the progymnastic topic list. See e.g. Jos. *Vita* 8–27. For the importance of self-control in antiquity, see Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 46–65.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Acts 24:25 for the close relationship between righteousness and self-control.

¹⁷² Cf. John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount: Christian Counter-Culture*, BST (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 136–38.

¹⁷³ See e.g. Morris, *Matthew*, 73.

¹⁷⁴ See Blomberg, *Matthew*, 87, and Bauer, “Kingship of Jesus,” 314 n. 24.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 7:5 for the relationship between temptations and self-control.

and power, he [Jesus] reflects temperance.”¹⁷⁶ He further points out that Jesus in this way is presented as an ideal king in accordance to the Greco-Roman view: “The ideal king does not use his office to gratify his own desires ... he gains control of himself first before trying to guide others.”¹⁷⁷

Neyrey, surprisingly, concludes that “Jesus’ virtue of self-control ... was of little interest as such to Matthew.”¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, he rightly points out that Jesus repeatedly teaches self-control to his followers in matters of wealth (6:19–24, 19:24) and sexuality (5:27–28, 32; 15:19; 19:9, 18).¹⁷⁹ The instruction of Jesus to his disciples to not show anger (5:21–22, 38–42) is also related to self-control.¹⁸⁰ In addition, his dramatic sayings about the seriousness of beings led astray by one’s parts of the body (5:29–30, 18:8–9) clearly underlines self-discipline. Another scene in the story that highlights the self-control of Jesus is his silence in the trials, in front of both the religious leaders (26:59–63) and Pilate (27:12–14). Jesus also exhibits self-control when he is mocked and ridiculed (e.g. 27:27–31). Writing about the Lukan passion narrative, John Darr points out: “For Greco-Roman readers, Jesus’ resolute silence in the face of tyranny is an example of *autarkeia*, or strong self-control.”¹⁸¹ The prayer in Gethsemane, however, makes clear to the reader that Jesus is not presented as one with *apatheia* according to the stoic ideal.¹⁸² The unique character of the death of Jesus should yet be noticed.¹⁸³

When Jesus judges the religious leaders and points out the reason for their failure in the discourse in chapter 23, he characterizes them with the term *ἀκρασία* (23:25). This word is the opposite of *ἐγκράτεια* and expresses the lack of self-control and temperance.¹⁸⁴ In contrast to these leaders, Jesus is portrayed as a leader with self-control.

¹⁷⁶ Talbert, *Matthew*, 242. See also Janice C. Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, “Matthew and Masculinity,” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Janice C. Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, SemeiaSt 45 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 67–91 (71).

¹⁷⁷ Talbert, *Matthew*, 68. J. G. Janzen, “The Yoke That Gives Rest,” *Int* 41 (1987): 256–68 (267), also points out that Jesus, who responds to every temptation with a statement from Deuteronomy, is presented as a man who fulfills the kingship ideals in Deut 17:16–17.

¹⁷⁸ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 123. He suggests that the temptation narrative shows the self-control of Jesus, but underlines his piety more (p. 121).

¹⁷⁹ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 122–23.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1999), 88–89; Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 87–88.

¹⁸¹ Darr, *On Character Building*, 165. See also Yieh, *One Teacher*, 65. Cf. Jam 3:2.

¹⁸² See Hare, *Matthew*, 301, and Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 335: “Equanimity as an ideal is fundamentally alien to the narrative accounts of Gethsemane.”

¹⁸³ See pp. 276–77.

¹⁸⁴ Ceslas Spicq, “*ἀκρασία, ἐγκράτεια*,” *TLNT* 1:60–62; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:127.

3.3 Summary

The theme of leadership

This chapter has clarified that the beginning of Matthew introduces a leadership theme. The author describes the birth of Jesus, a kernel event in the story, as the birth of a leader. By making use of common leadership terms (ἡγούμενος and ποιμαίνειν) Jesus' role as leader is highlighted and he is thus introduced as a leader early in the story (2:6). The birth of Jesus immediately leads to a conflict with the present leadership in Jerusalem. The negative portrayal of these leaders shows that Jesus is introduced as a true leader, whose leadership clearly differs from the current leaders. The Moses imagery indicates that the newborn child will be a great leader and founder of a new community, just like Moses. The first part of the biography also narrates how Jesus is prepared for his coming leadership by John the Baptist, the empowerment of the Spirit, and the temptations in the desert.

The character of the leader

Though Jesus is mainly a passive character in this section of the story the reader gets, nonetheless, information of two of his main character traits. The baptism of Jesus and the following testing by Satan underline the *righteousness* of Jesus, a fundamental virtue, which is related to both piety, obedience to God's will, relationship to others, and justice. Jesus' concern for righteousness is clearly seen in the first teaching discourse, where it is the central topic.

The long fast in the wilderness and the resistance against the temptations, also highlight the *self-control* of Jesus. He resists enticements to use his privileges for his own pleasure and for the gaining of power. The teaching of Jesus, which emphasizes restraint in matters of wealth, sexuality, and anger, shows the importance of self-control for Jesus. In contrast to the religious leaders, who lack self-control, Jesus is presented as a leader with control over his passions and desires.

The relationship between the leader and the people

The reader is also given some information about Jesus' relationship to the people, even if his public career has not yet begun in this part of the biography. Jesus is clearly presented as *king* in the beginning of the book. This leadership role is associated with Jesus through the presentation of him as the Messiah, the foretold ideal King. It is also confirmed to the reader in the second chapter where kingship is a main theme.

The name "Jesus" implies that the coming leader is going to save his people and to benefit them in an important way. The usage of the term ποιμαίνειν together with the contrast between Jesus and king Herod also points to a *benefitting leadership* and suggests that Jesus will be merciful, restore the people, and care for them.

The Moses imagery in the second chapter gives an indication that the new leader, like Moses, will not rule from above but suffer with the oppressed people and identify with their needs. The baptism of Jesus clarifies this to the reader and shows that he identifies with the people and stands with them. In this way a *closeness* between the leader and the people is underlined.

4. The leader and his followers

(Matt 4:12–11:1)

In the previous section of Matthew (1:1–4:11), the beginning part of the biography, Jesus has been introduced as a true leader of Israel. Though some of his actions are presented in this section, he is mainly a passive character who does not exercise leadership. In 4:12–22 the story takes a new turn; Jesus enters the stage as an active leader and his ministry begins.

The new phase of the story is shown to the reader in 4:17 with the following words: “From that time Jesus began (Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο)¹ to proclaim: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” This phrase refers back to Jesus’ move to Capernaum (4:12–13), the place where he launches his public ministry.² 4:12–17 thus marks a shift from the introduction and preparation of the leader to an active exercise of leadership. Jesus is now opening his public ministry to Israel, clearly communicated to the reader by the use of the word *κηρύσσειν*, which means “to make an official announcement,” or “to make public declarations.”³ The leader goes public and a new stage in his life is initiated. This passage also advances the plot and can thus be considered a kernel event in the story.⁴

According to Frickenschmidt, the transition from the beginning to the middle part of a biography is the protagonist’s first activity in the public eye.⁵ When Isocrates

¹ The function of this phrase, which is repeated in 16:21, for the structure of Matthew has been vividly discussed. Some scholars, like Kingsbury and Bauer, consider it to indicate the main structure of the book (Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 7–11; Bauer, *Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 85–86). But there are several problems with this view, as Frans Neirynck, “ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ ΗΡΞΑΤΟ AND THE STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW,” *ETL* 64 (1988): 21–59, has pointed out. Regardless of the view of the structure of Matthew, the phrase can nonetheless be considered as a major turning point of the story and the life of Jesus. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 128, rightly concludes that there is “little doubt that the formula marks important transition points in Jesus’ life.” See also e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:li, 1:43; Powell, “Plot and Subplots,” 193.

² See e.g. Neirynck, “ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ ΗΡΞΑΤΟ,” 25–32; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:387; Luz, *Matthew*, 1:160.

³ BDAG, “κηρύσσω.”

⁴ Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” 244. Cf. Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks,” 474, who instead considers 4:17–24 to be the second kernel event in Matthew’s story.

⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 273–76. Frickenschmidt proposes that the beginning part of the biography includes the first public action of the protagonist, and he thus suggests that the middle part begins in 4:18 (p. 460). Cf. Weren, “The Macrostructure of Matthew’s Gospel,”

has described the ancestry, birth, and youth of Evagoras (12–22), he begins the middle part of his biography with a description of the recovery of the kingdom by the leader. Plutarch indicates a turn to the middle part in his biography when he, after narrating the origin of Numa and his way to the throne, points out that his “first undertaking in the office (παραλαβὼν δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν πρῶτον)” was to dissolve the bodyguard (7.3). The transition from the middle part, the presentation of the public career, to the end part in ancient biographies varies greatly, but is often marked by notifications about the escalation of a conflict or the death of the protagonist.⁶ In Matthew, the end part begins in 26:1 and the middle part thus covers 4:12–25:46.

At the beginning of the biography, the reader only got a glimpse of the character of the protagonist. The middle part provides the reader with a more complete view of the subject, since the reader now can see him in action.⁷ Through narrating the deeds and words of the protagonist, the author reveals his individuality and character, but also the influence and effect of his person.⁸

The main characters of Matthew’s story besides Jesus, the protagonist, are the disciples, the crowds, and the religious leaders.⁹ This is clarified to the reader successively in the middle part of the biography. The relationship between Jesus and the other main characters in the gospel is important, since it makes a significant contribution to the portrait of Jesus.¹⁰ Even if these groups are present throughout the whole story, the first part of the career (4:12–11:1) has more focus on the leader and his followers (the disciples and the crowds) than the opponents (the religious leaders), while the second part pays more attention to the relationship between the leader and his opponents (12:1–26:1). This chapter deals with the first part of Jesus’ career and especially with the leader and his followers. Through the emphasis on *followers* around Jesus, the presentation of him as leader is clearly established to the reader. At the same time, more information about Jesus’ character traits and his relationship to the people is given in this part of the biography.

188, who proposes that 4:11–17 is a “hinge” text before the public ministry of Jesus which actually begins in 4:18.

⁶ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 305–08.

⁷ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 277.

⁸ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 278.

⁹ Cf. Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 454: “Matthew’s narrative has maintained a striking contrast between three groups: the disciples, the crowds, and the religious establishment of Israel.” It should be noted, however, that the crowds are not presented as a “character” in the same sense as the disciples and the religious leaders. See further p. 194.

¹⁰ Cf. Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 421.

4.1 The master and his apprentices (4:12–22)

In 4:12–13 the reader is told that Jesus moves from Nazareth and makes his home in Capernaum. When Jesus launches his ministry it is far away from Jerusalem and the center of the power of the religious leaders. Galilee is the place in the story where the mission is initiated, developed, and, after the negative response in Judah, launched again to reach all nations (28:16–20). In 1:1–4:11 the reader has mainly been told *what* Jesus will do. The following verses, 4:12–25, where Jesus starts to proclaim, teach, heal, and call disciples, begin to address the question of *how* he is to carry out his mission.¹¹

Leaders in antiquity were often surrounded by devoted followers, as Wilkins points out: “The first-century Greco-Roman world displayed a variety of religious, philosophical and political leaders, each of whom had followers committed to their cause, teaching and beliefs.”¹² In this passage, Jesus calls four individuals to follow him as his disciples/apprentices. He addresses the fishermen by the Sea of Galilee with the following words: “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of humans (δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων)” (4:19, cf. 9:9, 19:21). One of the first actions of Jesus, when he begins his public ministry, is thus to recruit disciples in order to fulfill his mission.

4.1.1 Jesus the role model

The initiative of Jesus

Many scholars underline the differences between the common methods of the Jewish rabbis and Jesus’ way of calling disciples.¹³ While the “Jewish model” of the rabbis meant that the “learners” offer themselves to join the teachers (cf. 8:19), Jesus himself takes the initiative and calls his disciples. Since the first commitment of a Jewish disciple was to the law, a disciple could choose to follow another rabbi to get more understanding of the law. Jesus, on the other hand, calls his disciples with a total demand of loyalty.¹⁴ Moreover, scholars point out that the rabbinic disciples were focused on the teaching of their master (the Torah), while the focus of Jesus’ disciples was on the person of their master.¹⁵ It should be noted, however,

¹¹ Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks,” 474.

¹² Michael J. Wilkins, “Disciples and discipleship,” *DJG* 202–12 (202).

¹³ See especially Karl H. Rengstorf, “μαθητής,” *TDNT* 4:415–60 (444–50). Cf. Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. James Greig (New York: Crossroad, 1981 [1968]), 50–57.

¹⁴ Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 49.

¹⁵ Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 417–19; Hans Weder, “Disciple, Discipleship,” trans. Dennis Martin, *ABD* 2:207–10 (209); Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 91, 98.

that that the rabbis also, to some extent, were person-centered, and that Jesus is presented as knowledge-centered.¹⁶ Nonetheless, there is an obvious difference in the recruitment of disciples.

Why then does Jesus take the initiative and call his disciples? Some scholars suggest that Jesus is calling his disciples as a prophet, in a similar way as Elijah called Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19–21).¹⁷ But Elijah is not portrayed as a teacher and Elisha is presented as a servant rather than a disciple/student.¹⁸ Other propose that Jesus summons followers in a similar way to philosophers and teachers in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁹ Even if this likeness is rightly noticed, it is doubtful that the observation is enough of an explanation for the initiative of Jesus.

The reason why Jesus takes the initiative and calls his followers can, however, also be understood from the presentation of Jesus as a leader. This interpretation is probable since Jesus makes use of the words “I will make you fishers of humans” (4:19). Jesus has a plan for his disciples and therefore he takes the initiative.²⁰ The twelve disciples were chosen by Jesus to be trained by him for their roles as apostles.²¹ This becomes clear to the reader in the mission discourse (10:1). Later in the story, when Jesus says that the twelve disciples shall sit on twelve thrones in the future (19:28), it is confirmed that Jesus has a very special plan for his twelve disciples.²² Jesus’ initiative is, consequently, related to his role as leader and the

¹⁶ Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 113. See below and further 4.2.1.

¹⁷ E.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:393; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 147; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 135.

¹⁸ See further Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 99–100, for differences between these narratives. Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 113, proposes instead that Jesus takes the first initiative since his prophetic proclamation (4:17) makes it difficult for people to recognize him as a master. After the calling of the four disciples, he is recognized by other people as a master, and then disciples take the initiative for apprenticeship (cf. 8:19–20). But the calling of Matthew in 9:9, when Jesus already has a small group around him, makes this view unlikely.

¹⁹ See Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 87–94, and Talbert, *Matthew*, 20–21, for examples in Greek literature. Robbins proposes that “Mark’s portrayal of summons and response through the protagonist Jesus is an intermingling of Jewish traditions and general cultural traditions” (p. 117). Cf. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 188–92. See also Arthur J. Droge, “Call Stories in Greek Biography and the Gospels,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1983 Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 22 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983): 245–57, for narratives of how philosophers/teachers call disciples in later ancient Greek biographies.

²⁰ Cf. *Incomplete Commentary on Matthew (Opus Imperfectum)*, 7: “And he did not choose them as apostles, but he chose them because they could be made apostles. Just as a jeweler, if he sees precious, uncut gems, chooses them not on what they are but what they can become” [Kellerman].

²¹ See Alexander B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve: Timeless Principles for Leadership Development*, reproduced from 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988 [1894]), 12.

²² Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 328, who proposes that “from an early point in his ministry Jesus was apparently thinking in terms of an alternative ‘Israel’ with its own leadership based now not on tribal origin but on the Messiah’s call.”

recruitment of appropriate partners in order to accomplish the mission.²³ Since Jesus has been introduced as a leader in 2:6, it is not surprising for the reader that he is one who takes initiatives.

A model for the disciples

The calling of the fishermen informs the reader about several aspects of the leadership of Jesus, and how he relates to his followers. With the words “come after me” Jesus shows that he is a role model for his disciples. In the Jewish context, the disciples who followed a rabbi were supposed to imitate the example of their master and not only pay attention to the teaching. The reason for this is that the rabbi personifies the Torah.²⁴ Gerhardsson helpfully explains the learning process in the Rabbinic Judaism in antiquity:

The pupil had to absorb all the traditional wisdom with ‘eyes, ears and every member’ by seeking the company of a Rabbi, by serving him (שימש), following him and imitating him (הלך אחריו), and not only by listening to him. The task of the pupil is therefore not only to hear (שמע) but also to see (ראה).²⁵

When Jesus says “come after me” he invites the disciples to an apprenticeship and to learn through imitating him. Jesus’ words reflect the common pedagogical principle of the teachers in antiquity, since it was also expected in the Greek and Roman world that the teacher should be a model for his pupils.²⁶ In 10:24–25 Jesus underlines the principle of likeness between a disciple and a teacher: “A disciple

²³ Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission*, 50. See also Zarate, “Leadership Approach of Jesus,” 92, who notices that Jesus “makes an intentional selection of individuals.” He further suggests that “[t]he Matthean author presents Jesus as a great thinker and leader, a strategist who had a specific plan in mind and executed it to perfection” (p. 162). Cf. Blake E. Wassell and Stephen R. Llewelyn, “‘Fishers of Humans,’ the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor, and Conceptual Blending Theory,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 627–46 (628), who in their discussion of the metaphor “fishers of humans” consider “the hypothetical pragmatic concerns of a forward-thinking, Galilean charismatic.” Cf. Mark 3:13, Luke 6:13.

²⁴ See e.g. William D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 455: “The life of the rabbi was itself Torah.” Cf. R. Kirschner, “Imitatio Rabbinica,” *JSJ* 17 (1986): 70–79 (78). He proposes that “[t]he description of Jesus of Nazareth which emerges from the Gospels of the New Testament exhibits obvious affinities to the paradigm of the Palestinian master” (n. 16).

²⁵ Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, trans. Eric J. Shape, ASNU 22 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1961), 182–83. Cf. Phil 4:9. The pedagogy which was practiced by the Pharisaic-Rabbinic teachers was called “learning through serving.” See Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 242; Davies, *Setting of the Sermon*, 455–57; Yieh, *One Teacher*, 81. Cf. Sir 10:2.

²⁶ Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 185. See also Wilkins, *Matthew*, 395: “The ultimate goal of a disciple is to be like the master—a general principle of master-disciple relations in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. This general principle of discipleship also applies to relations with Jesus as Teacher and Master.”

(μαθητής) is not above (ὑπέρ) the teacher (διδάσκαλος) ... it is sufficient (ἀρκετός) for the disciple to become like (γένηται ὡς) his teacher.” The aorist subjunctive form of γινόμεαι can be translated as “may become like” and points to a successively growing into the likeness of the master.²⁷

In Matthew’s story, the teaching of Jesus is integrated within the narrative of his life. It could not be separated from how he lives and behaves.²⁸ While *μανθάνειν* (“to learn”) is used a couple of times in the story (11:29, 24:32), *ἀκολουθεῖν* (“to follow”) is a more prominent term in the characterization of the disciples. They learned through imitating the life of Jesus, not only through his words.²⁹ Gerhardsson thus rightly underlines: “The Matthean Jesus lives as he teaches. He is therefore also a model—the model—for his believers. The typical invitation is: ‘Follow me!’”³⁰ In the beginning of Jesus’ ministry the author highlights one central characteristic of Jesus’ leadership, which will be shown throughout the story: Jesus leads by example.

The structure of Matthew’s biographical story also points to Jesus as a model for his disciples to imitate. Chapters 5–9 prepare the reader for chapter 10 and the instruction of the ministry of the disciples. The presentation of Jesus as model is most clearly seen in chapters 8–10, where the author first gives examples of Jesus’ ministry (8–9) and then tells about his sending of the apostles to do the very same things (10). When the disciples are sent out to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and heal the sick (10:7–8), they are called by the leader to do the same thing that he has been doing earlier in the story.³¹ Between the calling of the disciples (4:18–22), where Jesus says he will make them fishers of humans, and the first ministering task (10:1–5), the disciples have both heard the teaching of Jesus and seen his ministry.

²⁷ B. Rod Doyle, “Disciples in Matthew: A Challenge for the Church Today,” *EAPR* 29 (1992): 306–29 (314). Doyle proposes that “the peculiarly Matthean presentation of the disciples is by way of their being like their master” (p. 325). Cf. Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 106; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:197.

²⁸ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 270. See also Samuel Byrskog, “Das Lernen der Jesusgeschichte nach den synoptischen Evangelien,” in *Religiöses Lernen in der biblischen, frühjüdischen und frühchristlichen Überlieferung*, ed. Beate Ego and Helmut Merkel, WUNT 180 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 191–209 (204–207).

²⁹ Samuel Byrskog, “The Didactic Identity and Authority of Jesus – Reconsidered,” in *The Identity of Jesus: Nordic Voices*, ed. Samuel Byrskog, Tom Holmén, and Matti Kankaanniemi, WUNT II/373 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 99–109 (101).

³⁰ Gerhardsson, “Christology of Matthew,” 25. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:717. For the presentation of Jesus as a man of integrity, see 5.3.2.

³¹ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:197, for a list of parallels between Jesus and the disciples (cf. p. 2:151). See further p. 205. Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus According to Matthew*, SMRSHLL 5 (Lund: Gleerup, 1979), 46, also notices that Jesus’ words in the healing narratives have an instructional character and thus likens Jesus to a teaching physician at a university hospital who, while he treats the patient, explains to his student what is happening (the cure).

Consequently, at this latter point in the story they have been given a visual lesson by Jesus and explanations of what it means to be a fisher of humans.³²

That Jesus is presented as a role model is also seen in the teaching ministry, which the disciples are given at the end of the story (28:19–20). Byrskog notices that the instruction in 5:13–20 shows that both the deeds and the teaching of the disciples are to be conformed to the pattern of Jesus. The disciples further have to pay attention even to the small commandments, just as Jesus does. The ministry of Jesus is the model for the disciples' ministry.³³

The leader and his co-workers

The disciples are not only called to follow Jesus, but he also says that he shall make them “fishers of humans (ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων)” (4:19). In the form of a metaphor the reader is informed about the “job or task description” of Jesus' disciples.³⁴ Blake Wassell and Stephen Llewelyn rightly point out that the metaphor should primarily be understood within its own literary context.³⁵ In Matthew's story, the calling of the fishermen points back to 4:17 and the general statement of the proclamation of Jesus, and forward to 4:23–25 and the summary of Jesus' ministry. It is thus sandwiched between these two statements about Jesus' ministry. Already in the beginning of the story, the mission of Jesus is connected with that of the disciples.³⁶ Jesus thus promises to equip the fishermen, which is indicated by the use of ποιεῖν (“make”),³⁷ to become his co-workers in the work of the kingdom.³⁸

What is in view here is thus not the eschatological judgment of the fish, as some scholars suggest with a reference to Jer 16:16, but the activity of the fishermen.³⁹ This understanding of the metaphor is confirmed by the observations of Wuellner,

³² Zarate, “Leadership Approach of Jesus,” 136.

³³ Samuel Byrskog, “Matthew 5:17–18 in the Argumentation of the Context,” *RB* 104 (1997): 557–71 (567).

³⁴ Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* NTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 8.

³⁵ Wassell and Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,” 637–38. They suggest that the metaphor, in its Markan setting, is related to the proclamation of the kingdom.

³⁶ Bauer, *Structure of Matthew's Gospel*, 58; Terence L. Donaldson, “Guiding Readers—Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy,” in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 30–49 (35); Warren Carter, “Matthew 4:18–22 and Matthean Discipleship: An Audience-Oriented Perspective,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 58–75 (68–69).

³⁷ Cf. 23:15 where Jesus criticizes the religious leaders for making (ποιεῖν) proselytes and influence them in a negative way. BDAG, “ποιέω,” describes the usage of the verb in 4:19 and 23:15 as “to undertake or do someth. that brings about an event, state, or condition, *do, cause, bring about, accomplish, prepare* etc.”

³⁸ Cf. Wassell and Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,” 636.

³⁹ See e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:77, and Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 179 n. 36. Contra Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:398, and Turner, *Matthew*, 136.

who proposes that the metaphor refers to collaboration, cooperation, and partnership with Jesus.⁴⁰

The call to become “fishers of humans” implies a break with the former socio-economic circumstances, and a new vocation and livelihood which require new skills.⁴¹ By accepting Jesus’ offer of apprenticeship the fishermen will be trained and developed by the master in order to engage in the ministry of the kingdom. The first disciples can thus rightly be described as the “trainees” of Jesus.⁴² As their master, “Jesus promises that he will exercise a creative influence in their lives by transforming them into ‘fishers of men,’” as Chouinard points out.⁴³

Possibly, the fishing metaphor points to the commission of the disciples in the end of the narrative to be disciples-makers themselves (28:19).⁴⁴ In his survey of the usage of the metaphor in both Greco-Roman and Rabbinic literature, Wuellner points out that it often refers to disciple-making.⁴⁵ Taken in this way the metaphor clearly points to a leadership position for the fishermen. By following the teacher they will become teachers themselves.⁴⁶ At the same time it is important to recognize that in contrast to the Jewish rabbis, the apprentices of Jesus remain to be disciples of the one Teacher (23:8) even when they are given a teaching role themselves.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, it is possible to conclude with Nolland that “what is in view is an apprenticeship which prepares these men for carrying out the same activity as Jesus himself.”⁴⁸ This is confirmed to the reader later in the story (e.g. 10:1–5). Consequently, the fishermen are exhorted to follow Jesus so that they themselves can become leaders.⁴⁹ The calling of the fishermen thus differentiates

⁴⁰ Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* 172.

⁴¹ Wassell and Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,” 638. Contra Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 151, who suggests that Jesus shows his followers that their skills as fishermen are useful in the kingdom. Cf. Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* 100. The metaphor does not refer to the skills of the followers, but to their mission. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:404; Luz, *Matthew*, 1:162.

⁴² Carson, “Matthew,” 148.

⁴³ Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 247.

⁴⁴ See Mark A. Powell, “The Mission of Jesus and the Mission of the Church in the Gospel of Matthew,” *TSR* 16 (1994): 77–89 (85). Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:162; Witherington, *Matthew*, 96.

⁴⁵ See Wuellner, *The Meaning of “Fishers of Men,”* 71: “Inspired by the classical Greek *paideia* ideal, ‘man-fishing’ and ‘disciple-making’ (*mathēteuein*) become interchangeable. The same is true for the Rabbinic tradition, regardless of whether one considers the metaphoric use of fishing as Hellenistic influence or as part of traditional Near Eastern educational ideas.” For examples, see pp. 69–71, 111–13. Cf. *Incomplete Commentary on Matthew*, 7.

⁴⁶ Cf. Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 13: “These words ... show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others.”

⁴⁷ See e.g. David L. Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 85; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 238. See further p. 287.

⁴⁸ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 179 (see also p. 191). Cf. Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 14.

⁴⁹ Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 56–57. See also Zarate, “Leadership Approach of Jesus,” 7.

them from other followers. The apprentices of Jesus will later, to some extent, replace Jesus as he has replaced John.⁵⁰

In 4:18–22 Jesus is thus presented to the reader as a master who gathers apprentices around him in order to accomplish his mission. As the leader, Jesus takes the initiative and calls disciples, whom he will develop to become his co-workers. Jesus is the model and leads his followers by example.

4.1.2 Willing followers

It is stated in the text that Jesus “called” (καλεῖν) the fishermen to follow him (4:21). How then is the reader to understand this calling of disciples? Is Jesus making an authoritative command or does he rather invite the fishermen? What is the nature of the call? These questions are important since they relate to the characterization of Jesus in the passage. The author is not explicitly telling the reader why the fishermen left their nets, so here we have to fill the gap with the most probable explanation.⁵¹

The common view

Scholars often emphasize the authority of Jesus’ call and the obedience of the fishermen. Scott Spencer argues that Jesus is portrayed as an alternative imperial ruler in the way that he calls his followers. He is summoning people with an “imperious” call.⁵² Stephen Barton likewise proposes that Jesus gives a “word of command to follow.”⁵³ He understands the response of the disciples to be “radical obedience” to the call of Jesus.⁵⁴ Several Matthean scholars express a similar

⁵⁰ Wassell and Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,” 637–38.

⁵¹ Some scholars understand the reaction of the fishermen in 4:18–22 as a consequence of Jesus’ proclamation in 4:17 and thus suggest that it shows an appropriate response to the proclamation (Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 149; Edwards, “Characterization,” 1316–17). Even if the proclamation of the kingdom provides a wider context for the calling of disciples, as a way in which Jesus carries out his mission, there are good reasons to separate the proclamation of Jesus in 4:17 and the calling of disciples in the following verses. As will be shown later in the present chapter, the author makes a distinction between Jesus’ ministry of proclamation and his teaching ministry (4:23, 9:35, 11:1). In addition, the disciples in Matthew’s story are the twelve apostles (see 4.1.3). Consequently, the proclamation in 4:17 should be seen as a part of Jesus’ ministry of proclamation, while 4:18–22 refers to his teaching ministry. See Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 93. Cf. Weren, “The Macrostructure of Matthew’s Gospel,” 188, who proposes that 4:11–17 is a “hinge” text before the public ministry of Jesus which actually begins in 4:18.

⁵² F. Scott Spencer, “Follow me’: The Imperious Call of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels,” *Int* 59 (2005): 142–53. See also N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 298, who states that “Jesus commanded [the disciples], imperiously, to leave their present commitment and to follow him.”

⁵³ Stephen Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, SNTSMS 80 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 138. See also Wassell and Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,” 634.

⁵⁴ Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 128. But see also p. 212 where he states: “the willingness to leave household and family ties is of the essence of discipleship.” Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*,

view.⁵⁵ Wilkins' words summarize the view of many scholars: "The calling scene especially highlights Jesus' authority. When he calls, people obey."⁵⁶

Jesus is clearly presented in Matthew as a man with authority. The narrator explicitly tells the reader in 7:29 that Jesus taught "as one having authority" (ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων). Later in the story it becomes clear that the main issue in the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is the divine authority of Jesus.⁵⁷ In the climax of the story Jesus is said to been given "all authority (πᾶσα ἐξουσία) in heaven and on earth" (28:18). Jesus is without question a man with authority. It is, however, doubtful to conclude that Jesus calls his disciples with authoritative commands. Several reasons imply that the emphasis in this passage is not on the authority of Jesus' call, but rather on the willingness of the followers and the attractiveness of Jesus as leader. The calling is more like an invitation than a command.

Linguistic considerations

Firstly it should be noted that the used Greek language does not imply that Jesus gives an authoritative command. Jesus calls the fishermen with the words δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου.⁵⁸ This is obviously a hortative sentence. The adverb δεῦτε is used in Matthew within contexts that describe invitations or exhortations.⁵⁹ The closest parallel to 4:19 is 11:28 where Jesus is presented as a humble leader who can give people rest.⁶⁰ This call is often described by scholars as an "invitation" given by

111, likewise refers to the calling of the fishermen as "commands." But his description of the calling is also unclear, since he both states that Jesus is presented as a teacher "who gathers disciples and gains their willingness to adopt his mode of activity" (p. 109) and that Jesus' "commands" are "powerful enough to gain an obedient response from people" (p. 114). He also states that "Jesus simply summons people" (p. 113) and that "the disciples are simply attracted to Jesus' mode of action" (p. 115).

⁵⁵ Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 5, describes Jesus' call as "an imperious confiscation, a laying-claim to man." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:397 (cf. 2:99), propose that "Jesus' words, which contain no why, are not invitation. They are unconditional demand." In a similar way Cousland, *The Crowds*, 157, states: "Like a political ruler, Jesus commands and his subjects obey." See also Carter, "Matthew 4:18–22," 62; Yieh, *One Teacher*, 80; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 147–148; Turner, *Matthew*, 136; Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 127.

⁵⁶ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 177–78. See also Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 57, 127–28.

⁵⁷ See Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 125–26, and Powell, "Religious Leaders," 202–10.

⁵⁸ In 9:9 Jesus is also calling Matthew by saying (λέγειν) to him: "Follow me (ἀκολουθεῖ μοι)." The information of this event is scant and it is thus probable that it should be understood from the earlier narration of the calling of the fishermen.

⁵⁹ It is used when the tenants exhort each other to kill the son (21:38), when the king's servant invites people to the wedding (22:4, cf. 25:34), and when the angel exhorts the women to see the empty tomb (28:6).

⁶⁰ Contra Cousland, *The Crowds*, 163, who proposes that there is a great difference between 4:18–22 and 11:28: "One is very clearly an invitation; the other is a command." At the same time he says that "[t]he invitation to discipleship at 4:19 is prefaced by δεῦτε, just as it is here [11.28]" (p. 162). Italics mine.

Jesus.⁶¹ The phrase *ὀπίσω μου* is used in different ways in Matthew and the context is thus needed to decide the matter.⁶² The exact phrase *δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου* is used once in LXX in a context where Elisha “led” (*ἀπήγαγεν*) people to Samaria (2 Kgs 6:19).

The reader is moreover told that the fishermen “followed” (*ἠκολούθησαν*) Jesus and not that they obeyed him. As seen in the introduction, this term is commonly used to express people’s adherence to their leader. It is rarely used as expressing obedience or force, but refers most often to the voluntary response of people.⁶³ Since *ἀκολουθεῖν* is used also about the crowds who are following Jesus voluntarily, it is most natural to understand the following of the disciples in the same way.

In Matthew *ἀκολουθεῖν* is used both in the literal sense of the word (e.g. 9:19) and in the metaphorical sense as a term for discipleship (e.g. 16:24). According to Kingsbury, two factors—personal commitment and cost—indicate when discipleship is intended. Both these factors are found in the calling of the fishermen and Kingsbury thus concludes that *ἀκολουθεῖν* is used in a metaphorical sense.⁶⁴ It is doubtful, however, if the literal and metaphorical meanings can be separated in this way. The term is used 25 times in Matthew and only in two instances (10:38, 16:24) does it clearly have a metaphorical sense. Both times are related to taking up one’s cross. In all other instances the literal meaning also makes sense in the context. This is also the case in 4:19, where the fishermen get a call to an apprenticeship and respond by following the master.⁶⁵ The relationship between a master and an apprentice involves “following” in both the literal and the metaphorical sense.⁶⁶ This is confirmed to the reader in 5:1–2.

⁶¹ See e.g. Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 135; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 447; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 348.

⁶² It is used in phrases that both highlight authority (16:23) and willingness (16:24).

⁶³ See p. 72.

⁶⁴ Jack D. Kingsbury, “The Verb Akolouthein (‘to follow’) as an Index of Matthew’s View of His Community,” *JBL* 97 (1978): 56–73 (58).

⁶⁵ It should be noted that Jesus promises the fishermen that he will make them “fishers of humans,” to be his co-workers in the ministry. It is probable that this promise played a role in their decision to follow Jesus. See Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew’s Narrative Portrait: How the Text-Connotted Reader Is Informed* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 20–22, who points out that the fishermen “find this goal [to become fishers of men] highly attractive—enough to drop everything at once and follow Jesus.” Cf. Mark A. Powell, “Characterization on the Phraseological Plane in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark A. Powell, SBLSymS 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 161–77 (165): “When he says to his (future) disciples, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people’ (4:19), his words carry an implicit evaluation regarding their acceptability to him and potential for ministry.”

⁶⁶ Cf. Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 110, who points out that “the pursuit of an apprenticeship normally involved breaking off one’s family life and one’s former occupations. An apprenticeship in Torah required that the disciples came to live with their master.” It should be noted, however, that the fishermen were not primarily invited to study the Torah, but to partake in the ministry of Jesus. The usual apprentice relationship implied that the disciple himself chose to follow his master voluntarily. See Blendinger, *NIDNTT* 1:481.

Kingsbury points out that the term in Matthew which best captures the calling of Jesus to discipleship is not *κελεύειν* (“command”) but *καλεῖν* (“call”), which is also used in 4:21. He further concludes that “Jesus never ‘commands’ but always ‘summons’ or ‘invites’ person to follow him.”⁶⁷ It should also be noted that the NT writers uses the verb *καλεῖν* in different ways. In Paul the call is effective: the one who is “called” is a believer (e.g. Rom 8:30). But in the synoptic gospels, by contrast, the call is something like an invitation.⁶⁸ In Matthew it is explicitly stated that “many are called (*κλητός*), but few are chosen (*ἐκλεκτός*)” (22:14).

Leadership ideals in ancient biographies

Another main reason against the proposal that Jesus is commanding the disciples to follow him is the idea in antiquity that a good leader has willing followers. In chapter two it has been noted that biographies of good leaders underline that people *willingly* followed the leader. Xenophon, for example, develops the concept of “willing obedience” in his writings. He mentions that the Asiatic Greeks “voluntarily (*ἐθελούσιοι*) joined and assisted” Agesilaus back to Greece. They did not only follow a ruler, but also a father and a friend (1.38). When Philo describes how Moses led the people to their new homeland, he also points out that “he received the authority willingly from his subjects (*παρ’ ἐκόντων ἔλαβε τὴν ἀρχήν*)” (1.163). In addition to the observations in chapter two, Arthur Droge notes that a common feature in later ancient biographies of divine men is “the power of attraction these figures exert over the masses and the gaining of individual and specially privileged disciples.”⁶⁹

In Matthew, the reader has already been presented with Jesus as a true leader, contrasted with Herod who is zealous for power (2:1–16). Later in the story it is clarified that Jesus is a “humble” (11:28–29) and “gentle” (12:19–20) leader. When

⁶⁷ Jack D. Kingsbury, “On Following Jesus: The ‘Eager’ Scribe and the ‘Reluctant’ Disciple (Matthew 8.18–22),” *NTS* 34 (1988): 45–59 (46–47). Ellingworth, “Translating the Language of Leadership,” 137, likewise concludes: “In contrast with this apparently authoritarian note, the Gospel writers use quite different language in speaking of what we might today call Jesus’ leadership. Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus call on his followers to obey (*hypakouō*) or submit themselves (*hupotassō*) to him: he simply asks them to ‘come after’ him...or ‘follow him.’” In a similar way Bonnie Howe, “Authority and Power,” *DSE* 84–88 (85), states: “In the process of making disciples, Jesus models authoritative, gentle shepherding of God’s people. He displays noncoercive power and authority that invites and does not force, that frees and then empowers.” See also Morris, *Matthew*, 85, and David W. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical Images for Leaders and Followers* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster, 1993), 33. The verb *κελεύειν* is used by Jesus in the story (8:18, 14:19, 14:28), but not when he is calling his disciples.

⁶⁸ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 62–63.

⁶⁹ Droge, “Call Stories in Greek Biography,” 245. Droge shows some interesting parallels in Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae*, 19–20, and Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum*, 2.48, 7.2–3. However, these examples are written in the third and the fourth century and can thus not be considered to represent the idea in the time of the composition of Matthew. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions*, 188–89, however, notes that the idea of attraction is present already with Plato and Xenophon. Cf. Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 25–31.

Jesus teaches about leadership (20:25–28), he criticizes those who “lord it over” (κατακυριεύουσιν) and “oppress” (κατεξουσιάζουσιν) their people.⁷⁰ The dialogue with the rich young man also clarifies that not everybody who is called by Jesus follows him (see 19:21–22). Jesus does not force people to join him.⁷¹ Peter’s question about recompense for leaving everything and following Jesus and the answer of the master (19:27–28) likewise imply the voluntary character of the following. That Jesus should give authoritative commands to the fishermen to follow him does thus not fit the overall portrait of Jesus. It is more probable that Jesus is characterized as a good leader with willing followers.

A charismatic and attractive leader

The observations above imply that the call of Jesus should be understood as a kind of invitation, rather than an authoritative command. The calling narratives highlight the willingness of the followers and thus establish the portrayal of Jesus as leader. At the same time, the response of the fishermen puts the attention on the person of Jesus. Harrington rightly comments: “The lack of preparation (there is no indication they know about Jesus beforehand) and the quickness of their response (‘immediately’) highlight the attractiveness and persuasiveness of Jesus.”⁷²

In an influential study about the historical Jesus, Martin Hengel suggests that Jesus’ call should be understood as a prophetic call in the same way as Elijah called Elisha. He proposes that the call of Jesus has a “binding force” and “abruptly detaches those called from their previous obligations.”⁷³ Though Hengel overstates the force of the call,⁷⁴ it should be noted that Jesus is also presented as a prophet in Matthew’s story,⁷⁵ and as one who is empowered by the Spirit (cf. 3:16). Hengel thus appropriately relates the response of the fishermen to the “charisma” of the leader. He pays attention to the role of charisma with regard to following leaders in antiquity, and suggests that “‘following’ and ‘discipleship’ ... depend on the effects of the *charismatic* personality who breaks through the barriers of the commonplace.”⁷⁶ The theory of charismatic leadership was first developed by Max

⁷⁰ Cf. Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 84, who make the following statement about Jesus in Mark’s story: “Jesus has no authority to ‘lord over’ people ... he cannot make them obey (as he can the demons).” See also pp. 81 and 107.

⁷¹ An exception is 14:22 where the author tells that Jesus “urged upon (ἠνάγκασεν) the disciples to get into the boat.” This is, however, not in a context where Jesus compels people to follow him, but to go away from him so he can be alone for prayer (14:23).

⁷² Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 72.

⁷³ Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 5. He also talks about “the powerfully effective saying of Jesus in Mk 1.17/Mt 4.19” (p. 17).

⁷⁴ Cf. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 62–63.

⁷⁵ See 4.2.2.

⁷⁶ Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 34. Italics his. See also George Mark Fihavango, *Jesus and Leadership: Analysis of Rank, Status, Power and Authority as Reflected in the Synoptic Gospels from a Perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)* (Neuendettelsau:

Weber. For Weber charisma is a quality of extraordinariness, which is ascribed to the leader by the people.⁷⁷

It should thus be noted that the invitation the fishermen get comes from a charismatic authority.⁷⁸ The one who calls is not just an ordinary teacher, but one with an extraordinary personality. The invitation is thus also a summons from an authority. Still, the calling of Jesus is not a “command” and the response of the fishermen is not simple “obedience.” If the term “obedience” should be used with regard to the response, it should be underlined that it is “willing obedience.”

The lack of information in the description of the meeting between Jesus and the fishermen awakes the curiosity of the reader. Who is this man the fishermen immediately follow? What is the identity, character, and personality of the man who is so irresistible? The gap of information is then answered successively in the narrative by the presentation of Jesus and his person, which explains the response of the fishermen.

It is thus reasonable to conclude that Jesus, when calling his disciples, is not portrayed as one who gives authoritative commands to get people to join him. To the contrary, this narrative more likely presents Jesus as an attractive leader with an outstanding personality and with followers who willingly respond to an invitation and summons.

4.1.3 The future leaders

In the calling narrative the reader gets to know new characters when the disciples are entering the scene. The disciples, who can be seen as a single character in Matthew’s story,⁷⁹ do not play a major role of the plot of the story. Nevertheless, they are important to the story and also play a significant role after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In addition, they play an important role for the characterization of Jesus as leader in the story, since they are his apprentices whom he prepares for their future role as leaders.

Erlanger Verlag, 2007), 90. Cf. Witherington, *Matthew*, 96. For a different view, see Zarate, “Leadership Approach of Jesus,” 149, who does not find any charismatic characteristics in the passage.

⁷⁷ Bruce J. Malina, “Jesus as Charismatic Leader?,” *BTB* 14 (1984): 55–62 (55–56). Cf. Bengt Holmberg, “Karisma som sociologisk förklaringsmodell i tolkningen av Jesus,” *SEÅ* 67 (2002): 61–77 (63–64). Even if a great variety of charismatic leadership theories have developed since Weber, Gary Yukl, an influential leadership theorist, concludes that most of these later theories “emphasize follower attributions of extraordinary qualities to the leader” (Gary Yukl, “An Evaluation of Conceptual Weakness in Transformational and Charismatic Leadership Theories,” *LQ* 10 [1999]: 285–305 [294]). In Luke’s version of the calling of the fishermen (5:1–11), the extraordinariness of Jesus is clearly emphasized.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 63–64, and BDAG, “καλέω,” which describes the usage of the verb καλεῖν in this passage as “to use authority to have a person or group appear, *summon*.”

⁷⁹ See e.g. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 13, and Carter, *Matthew*, 202.

The meaning of μαθητής

In 5:1 the reader first hears the word μαθητής. In the Greek world this term often refers to an apprentice of someone who is superior in knowledge.⁸⁰ In the time of Matthew it could be used in different ways to signify a pupil of a teacher, a learner of something, or an adherent of a person or teaching.⁸¹ The term was, in the late Hellenistic period, most often referring to an adherent. The master determined the character of the adherence.⁸² Since the word is used in Matthew's story about disciples of John (9:14) and the Pharisees (22:15–16) it has no specified meaning. Wilkins explains that the term “signifies an intimate follower of a person or teaching—one who has moved into a vital, committed association; but that association varies with each group.”⁸³

That the disciples of Jesus are not merely his adherents, but also pupils who receive teaching from him, is made clear by the use of the term *μανθάνειν* (e.g. 9:13, 24:32).⁸⁴ As seen above, Jesus is further presented as a master who trains and equips his disciples for ministry. It is thus appropriate to understand the “disciples” of Jesus as apprentices to a master.⁸⁵ This is confirmed by the fact that the disciples are separated from the crowds in the story and depicted as a small group of devoted followers around Jesus.⁸⁶ For the disciples, Jesus is the “supreme teacher and leader (23:7–10).”⁸⁷

Throughout the story Jesus spends a lot of time with his disciples and thus creates an intimate group of followers.⁸⁸ Even if “disciple” is used frequently in the story, Jesus never addresses his followers with this word. Instead he seems to favor the expression “my brothers” (12:49, 28:10, cf. 23:8). This shows the close association of Jesus with his followers and his relational orientation.⁸⁹ The relationship between Jesus and the disciples is close and private, especially at the end of the story.⁹⁰ This intimate relationship is underlined by the private settings in which Jesus spends time

⁸⁰ Rengstorf, *TDNT* 4:416.

⁸¹ See Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, especially chapters one and three.

⁸² Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 42.

⁸³ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 107. Cf. Rengstorf, *TDNT* 4:441.

⁸⁴ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 612, points out that “[d]iscipleship in the ancient world often involved a significant commitment to a rigorous course of study and disciplined lifestyle in order to attain to the master's level of expertise.”

⁸⁵ See e.g. Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 91; Witherington, *Matthew*, 218; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 423.

⁸⁶ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 228.

⁸⁷ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 221.

⁸⁸ Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Jesus Taught* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 84–85. See also Zarate, “Leadership Approach of Jesus,” 105–06.

⁸⁹ Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission*, 55.

⁹⁰ Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 138.

with his disciples. While Jesus often meets his opponents in public settings such as an open field (12:1–8), the synagogue (12:9–14, 13:54–58), and the temple (21:23), he meets his disciples in private settings such as the house of Peter (8:14), his own house (13:36), or someone else’s house (26:18).⁹¹

The twelve

Frequently in the story the reader is told that “the disciples” surrounded Jesus. In 10:1–4 the author explicitly names “his twelve disciples” (10:1), who also are presented as “the twelve apostles” (10:2), and the reader thus gets information about whom “the disciples” refers to. The author also makes use of the verb *μαθητεύειν* to denote followers other than the twelve (13:52, 27:57, 28:19).⁹² When the substantive *μαθητής* is used, it always refers to the twelve.⁹³ Jennifer Brown thus correctly refers to “Matthew’s consistent representation of these twelve men as ‘the disciples.’”⁹⁴

Later in the story, in 19:28, it is clarified to the reader that the number of twelve is related to the twelve tribes of Israel and indicates that these disciples play a significant role in the restoration of all Israel.⁹⁵ In Matthew, the term “disciple” is thus obviously connected with a leadership role.⁹⁶ Paul Minear shows that the distinction between disciples and crowds in the story underlines the training process of Jesus. He concludes that “his *mathetai* form a much more limited and specialized group than is usually supposed. They are those chosen and trained as successors to Jesus in his role as exorcist, healer, prophet, and teacher.”⁹⁷ Minear finds four

⁹¹ Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 70–71.

⁹² In 13:52 *μαθητεύειν* is used for the twelve and other teachers in the community of Jesus (see below).

⁹³ Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 191–93; Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 133; Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 36. Cf. Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 40, who proposes that there are instances in the story when the term refers to different people than the twelve (e.g. 10:42), but then the term is used without an article and the context is that Jesus teaches about discipleship in a general way.

⁹⁴ Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 39. See also e.g. Ernest R. Martinez, “The Interpretation of ‘OI MATHĒTAI’ in Matthew 18,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 281–92; Mark Sheridan, “Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke,” *BTB* 3 (1973): 235–55 (237, 254); Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 347–48. Cf. Seán Freyne, *The Twelve: Disciples and Apostles. A Study in the Theology of the First Three Gospels* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 151–206, and Wilkins, “Named and Unnamed Disciples in Matthew: A Literary-Theological Study,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 30 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1991), 418–39 (437).

⁹⁵ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 409. See also Benedict T. Viviano, “Gospel according to Matthew,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, student ed. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 630–74 (650).

⁹⁶ See further pp. 233–37.

⁹⁷ Paul S. Minear, “The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew,” *ATRSup* 3 (1974): 28–44 (31).

characteristics of the disciples in Matthew's story: 1) a life with sacrifices because of the itinerant mission, 2) as the delegates of Jesus a special vocational assignment, 3) authority to fulfill the assignment and to lead the church, 4) a role which both corresponds and competes with the role of the Pharisees and the scribes.⁹⁸

Within the twelve disciples, there are also indications of an inner circle of three disciples who have a special place. Peter, James, and John are mentioned at two times in the story (17:1, 26:37), which suggest that they are portrayed as "Jesus' closest companions."⁹⁹ In addition, Peter is also presented as the leader of the Twelve.¹⁰⁰

The teaching role of the disciples

In the story of Matthew, Jesus begins his public ministry by calling disciples (4:18–22) and finishes it by sending them out to teach and disciple the nations (28:16–20). "Between these poles, the disciples are with Jesus, hearing and seeing, learning and practicing," as Gerhardsson points out.¹⁰¹ In the discussion above of the term "fishers of humans," it has been noted that the didactic activity of Jesus is closely related to the preparation of the coming mission of the disciples. Keener thus appropriately describes "disciple" in Matthew's story as "a future teacher in training."¹⁰²

In the first teaching discourse the reader is provided with an example of the master teaching his apprentices. The teaching is primarily addressed to the disciples (5:1–2) and secondarily to the crowds (7:28).¹⁰³ Since the disciples are in the foreground and the crowds in the background, Jesus is presented as a trainer of his disciples.¹⁰⁴ The content of the discourse also indicates the responsibility of the future teachers:

Therefore, whoever abolish one of the least of these commandments, and teaches (διδάσκειν) others in this way, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches (διδάσκειν) them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (5:19).

⁹⁸ Minear, "Disciples and Crowds," 37–38.

⁹⁹ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 645.

¹⁰⁰ See further pp. 235–37.

¹⁰¹ Gerhardsson, "Christology of Matthew," 27. See also Andrew T. Lincoln, "Matthew—a Story for Teachers?," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter, JSOTSup 87 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 103–25 (106), who proposes that "the story of the disciples ... is a story of those who are being prepared to teach with authority among all the nations."

¹⁰² Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 292. See also Andrew J. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 133.

¹⁰³ See e.g. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 225; Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 154.

¹⁰⁴ Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 105.

Jesus is thus instructing his disciples for their coming tasks in this discourse.¹⁰⁵ The statement in 5:19 is taken up in the end of the story when Jesus finally commissions his disciples to teach the coming disciples “to observe *everything*” which has been commanded by him (28:20). The Sermon on the Mount is thus a part of the preparation of the disciples for their future mission.¹⁰⁶

The teaching role of the disciples is also highlighted in the story by the presentation of them as “scribes.” In the end of the kingdom discourse in chapter 13 Jesus declares: “Therefore (διὰ τοῦτο) every scribe (γραμματεὺς) who has been instructed (μαθητεύειν) in the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a household, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (13:52). Some scholars dispute that this is a reference to the twelve disciples, since the author here uses the verb μαθητεύειν, which elsewhere is not used about the twelve (27:57, 28:19).¹⁰⁷ It should be noted, however, that 13:52, which is the last sentence in the discourse, obviously gives a conclusion or summary to the reader. David Orton shows that the conclusion is based on the preceding verse and the understanding of the disciples, to whom “it has been given to know the secrets (τὰ μυστήρια) of the kingdom of heaven” (13:11).¹⁰⁸ Since the disciples understand, they can appropriately be described as “scribes.”¹⁰⁹ Even if the “scribe” in 13:52 has a wider reference than the twelve disciples (cf. “every”), it also refers to them. This is confirmed by Jesus’ saying in 23:34 that he is sending “scribes” (γραμματεῖς).¹¹⁰ France rightly points out that the reference to the disciples as “scribes” characterizes them “as authorized teachers for the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ See Byrskog, “Matthew 5:17–18,” 567.

¹⁰⁶ Byrskog, “Matthew 5:17–18,” 567–68. See also Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament*, 67–68, and Jonathan A. Draper, “The Genesis and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount,” *JSNT* 75 (1999): 25–48 (47).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 133, and Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 161.

¹⁰⁸ David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*, JSNTSup 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 141–43.

¹⁰⁹ Orton, *Understanding Scribe*, 142. See also e.g. Jack D. Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction-Criticism* (London: SPCK, 1969), 126; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 241; Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 179. Orton points out that the main ideal of the apocalyptic scribe, in the time of the composition of Matthew’s story, was understanding through revelation. (p. 152). See further chapters 3–5 in Orton’s study. Cf. Sir 38:34–39:3.

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Orton, *Understanding Scribe*, 155; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 245. The reader takes this verse as a reference to the disciples since the language is reminiscent of 10:17–23 and the mission of the twelve.

¹¹¹ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 546. The disciples’ authority to bind and loose (16:19, 18:18) also imply that they are authorized as teachers. See further pp. 234–35. Cf. Orton, *Understanding Scribe*, 160, who proposes that 16:15–19 and the giving of the keys to Peter show “the proper authorization of a scribe.”

The development of the disciples in the story, which results in them being given a teaching role, confirms that an apprentice relationship is in view.¹¹² The portrayal of the apprentices in Matthew has an important function in the presentation of Jesus as leader. *Jesus, the leader, calls and gathers a small group of disciples to be trained by him for a future leadership role.*

4.2 The main tasks of the leader (4:23–9:35)

By the summary statement given in 4:23 the reader is told that Jesus “went throughout all Galilee, teaching (διδάσκων) in their synagogues and proclaiming (κηρύσσων) the good news of the kingdom and healing (θεραπεύων) every disease and every sickness among the people.” A similar summary with the same three main activities—διδάσκειν, κηρύσσειν, and θεραπεύειν—is given in 9:35, and the two summaries thus function as a kind of *inclusio* for this part of the story.¹¹³ It is thus clarified to the reader that these three central activities are the main tasks of the leader.¹¹⁴ They particularize for the reader *how* the introduced leader (2:6) leads the people.¹¹⁵ The function of the summaries is also to give the atmosphere and background to the events that are narrated in the story.¹¹⁶

The content of the middle section of the biographies normally give priority to the deeds and words of the protagonist. Chapters 5–9 in Matthew are a clear presentation of Jesus as a great man in both words and works.¹¹⁷ While the first chapters, 5–7, present him as a man of the word, the following chapters, 8–9, present him as a man of the deed. Even if Matthew has a chronological structure, it is also to some extent topically ordered, like *Agesilaus* and *Moses*, with regard to the teaching of Jesus.¹¹⁸ But in contrast to many other biographies, the presentation of the teaching of Jesus is well integrated in the narrative of his public career.¹¹⁹ For

¹¹² See Weder, *ABD* 2:209, for this idea in the rabbinic tradition.

¹¹³ Jack D. Kingsbury, “Observations on the ‘Miracle Chapters’ of Matthew 8–9,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 559–73 (566–67); Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:411; Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 147.

¹¹⁴ Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*, 23, describes these activities as “the actual *programme* of Jesus’ active ministry.”

¹¹⁵ Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 708. Cf. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 171.

¹¹⁶ Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 242.

¹¹⁷ William G. Thompson, “Reflections on the Composition of MT 8:1–9:34,” *CBQ* 33 (1971): 365–88 (367).

¹¹⁸ Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels*, 99.

¹¹⁹ See Kea, “Writing a *bios*,” 575–79. Kea concludes that in most biographies the teaching of the protagonist was not integrated in the narrative, but “appears as an ‘add on’ to the narrative of the figure’s career” (pp. 578–79). In contrast to other biographies the teaching of Jesus is not summarized by the author but presented as Jesus’ own speech. “The effective result of Matthew’s effort is a tighter integration of Jesus’ career and teaching” (p. 579).

this reason the teaching material of Jesus significantly contributes to the presentation of his character.¹²⁰

4.2.1 διδάσκειν

Jesus the Teacher

The first activity of Jesus is διδάσκειν, which is normally translated with “teaching.” The importance of this activity is made clear to the reader since it is mentioned first in the summary passages (4:23, 9:35, 11:1), which function as explicit reminders to the reader of the main characteristics of the ministry of Jesus.¹²¹

It has already been noted that Jesus is presented as a kind of master, with apprentices around him. Later in the story Jesus is also referred to as διδάσκαλος, “teacher,” twelve times (e.g. 10:24–25). Some scholars play down the importance of this title for the Christology of Matthew.¹²² Though it is inadequate to say that Jesus is merely a teacher, it is not an inaccurate description.¹²³ Moreover, that Jesus, who represents the evaluative point of view of the author, refers to himself as “the teacher” (10:24–25, 23:8–10, 26:18) four times in the story shows the reader that teacher is a significant role.¹²⁴ Byrskog further points out that in order to understand the portrait of Jesus, one has also to take into account the didactic deeds of Jesus.¹²⁵

The structure of the gospel, with its five discourses, also leads the reader to understand Jesus as a teacher in Matthew. Camp points out that one function of these discourses is to present Jesus as “a great teacher who knows and does the will of God.”¹²⁶ The location of the first discourse after the summary of the ministry of

¹²⁰ Kea, “Writing a *bios*,” 582.

¹²¹ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 205–06, 212. Cf. Gerhardsson, “Christology of Matthew,” 21, and Yieh, *One Teacher*, 17.

¹²² Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 92–93, proposes that “teacher” is not a prominent christological title of Jesus in the story, since it is only outsiders (and Judas) who call him “teacher.” His disciples, the insiders, calls him “Lord” (see e.g. 26:20–25). Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 215, however, shows that the implications of the fact that characters who are negatively related to Jesus address him as “teacher” (12:38, 22:16, 22:24) is not that the title has a derogatory meaning in Matthew. The implications are that διδάσκαλος is not used as a confessional label, which refers to the prominence and christological status of Jesus. See also Byrskog, “Das Lernen der Jesusgeschichte,” 202, for the importance of Jesus’ role as teacher for Matthew’s Christology.

¹²³ Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 344.

¹²⁴ See e.g. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 213; Yieh, *One Teacher*, 85–88. For a different view, see Rainer Riesner, “Teacher,” *DJG* 934–39 (935).

¹²⁵ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 281. Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 70–71. The biographical genre further implies that the deeds of Jesus are essential for the making of the portrait of Jesus. See e.g. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 161.

¹²⁶ Camp, “Woe to you,” 86.

Jesus further emphasizes the importance of the teaching of Jesus. Another indicator of the significance of this ministry is that it covers much of the discourse time in the story and in this way is distinguished from the proclaiming and healing ministry of Jesus.¹²⁷ In Matthew's story, Jesus is primarily a teaching leader.¹²⁸

The meaning of διδάσκειν

In the portrait of Jesus as a good leader, the description of him as teacher is important. But what does the activity of διδάσκειν imply? In the Greek literature generally this term refers not only to transmission of information, but also to the transmission of skills.¹²⁹ In ancient education, διδάσκειν usually refers to a teacher who instructs disciples by both words and example.¹³⁰ It has already been noted that the disciples of Jesus are presented as his apprentices, who are trained by the master in order to cooperate with Jesus and replace him in the ministry of the kingdom. The use of the term διδάσκειν indicates that the master not only transfers information, but also skills to his apprentices.¹³¹ Since the reader is not explicitly told what kind of skills Jesus apprenticed his disciples in, Milavec proposes that it can be taken for granted, because of the Jewish context of the story, that it refers to mastering the ways of the Lord (cf. 22:16).¹³² Jesus' teaching about the will of God is not, however, the only expertise he transmits to his apprentices. He also develop skills that relate to the ministry of teaching, proclamation, and healing. The apprentices of Jesus are trained in all the three main tasks of the leader.

That Jesus is portrayed as a master with apprentices is also shown in the way that the disciples are portrayed as understanding (13:51). The parables help them to understand the message of the kingdom, but they need to be explained. For that

¹²⁷ Yieh, *One Teacher*, 27. Cf. Powell, "Plot and Subplots," 194.

¹²⁸ Cf. Lincoln, "Story for Teachers," 122: "When one views the narrative as a whole, what is primary and most pervasive in the portrayal of its central character is not a particular title but his role as teacher." Cf. also Witherington, *Matthew*, 19.

¹²⁹ According to Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 219, διδάσκαλος generally "denoted a person or a personified item conveying information or skills to others by superior knowledge and ability." Italics his. See also Klaus Wegenast, "διδάσκω," *NIDNTT* 3:759–65 (759). He notes that the usage of the term in LXX, however, does not relate to knowledge or skills, but to instruction in how to live one's life according to God's will (p. 760). Cf. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 81, who proposes that the master-pupil relationship in rabbinic Judaism has its primarily influence from Greece, and not from the OT. Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 84, thus overstates the case when he proposes that διδάσκειν "always signified what the master does by way of progressively enhancing the personal skills of his apprentice."

¹³⁰ Hans D. Betz, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount," *CurTM* 25 (1998): 165–75 (171).

¹³¹ Contra Wegenast, *NIDNTT* 3:763, who proposes that the term is not used in the synoptics to refer to the development of the abilities of the disciples.

¹³² Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 85. Cf. Helmut Flender, "Lehren und Verkündigung in den synoptischen Evangelien," *EvT* 25 (1965): 701–14 (705).

reason the understanding of the disciples is a matter of pedagogical activity.¹³³ This is seen by the use of διασαφείν in 13:36, which has the meaning of “make clear” and “explain.”¹³⁴ So even if understanding is told to be a divine gift (e.g. 13:11–12), the pedagogical part should not be neglected.¹³⁵ The disciples, who don’t understand at first, understand after Jesus’ instruction (e.g. 16:12, 17:13). In this way the reader is indirectly informed about the teaching qualities of Jesus. He does not only provide his disciples with information, but also helps them to grasp it and reach understanding.¹³⁶

The understanding of διδάσκειν as an activity in a relationship between a master and apprentices is confirmed by the portrayal of Jesus as a teacher mainly to his twelve disciples. In the story, Jesus often gives private instructions to his disciples from their questions (e.g. 13:10, 36; 17:19; 20:17; 24:3). The five teaching discourses are also mainly addressed to the disciples.¹³⁷ Jesus is thus most prominently the teacher of his own disciples.¹³⁸ Yieh even proposes that Jesus defines himself as the teacher of his followers and disciples only, since he is only referring to himself as a teacher when he is talking to his disciples.¹³⁹ This conclusion, however, is doubtful.

It should be noted that Jesus does not only teach his disciples in private. The first mentioning of διδάσκειν is in the summary statement in 4:23 where the reader is told that Jesus “went throughout all Galilee, teaching (διδάσκων) in their synagogues (ταῖς συναγωγαῖς).” This statement is significant since the synagogues were public centers of education and community at that time.¹⁴⁰ In 9:35 it is repeated to the reader that Jesus is teaching in the synagogues in “all the towns (πόλεις) and villages (κώμας).” Kingsbury’s proposition, that Jesus is presented as Israel’s teacher in

¹³³ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 230. Andrew H. Trotter, “Understanding and Stumbling: A Study of the Disciples’ Understanding of Jesus and His Teaching in the Gospel of Matthew” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1986), 95, also underlines that the disciples first understand after Jesus’ explanation, but suggests that it depends upon the fact that they are chosen (in contrast to the crowds).

¹³⁴ LSJ, “διασαφέω”, BDAG, “διασαφέω.”

¹³⁵ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 233.

¹³⁶ Trotter, “Understanding and Stumbling,” 126 (see also pp. 95–96, 280). For a similar view, see Ulrich Luz, “The Disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995 [1971]), 115–48 (120), and Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 134, 166. At the same time it should be noted that the disciples are also characterized as misunderstanding, when they do not understand the mission of Jesus. See e.g. Trotter, “Understanding and Stumbling,” 284–85, and Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 36 (and further pp. 18–24).

¹³⁷ The first part of chapter 13, where Jesus addresses the crowds, is the exception.

¹³⁸ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 222, 228.

¹³⁹ Yieh, *One Teacher*, 75.

¹⁴⁰ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 156. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 182, points out that if anyone would like to speak to a Jewish audience about God at the time of Matthew, the synagogue was the most important place.

4:18–11:1, is thus appropriate.¹⁴¹ The first of the teaching discourses to the disciples is given when the crowds are also listening (5:1, 7:28). The third is partly addressed to the crowds (13:2, 34). Moreover, the whole discourse in chapter 23, where Jesus teaches about leadership, is addressed to both the disciples and the crowds (23:1, cf. 22:33). Consequently, διδάσκειν is not to be understood as the equivalent of the training of the apprentices. The usage of the term shows that Jesus is also presented as teacher to the people in general.

In Matthew's story, Jesus is presented as both the Master of his disciples and the Teacher of the people. The verb διδάσκειν is used to express both the activity of the master who instructs his apprentices and the activity of the teacher who informs the people in a general way. The teaching role of Jesus implies that he informs, explains, and instructs people.

A new lawgiver?

In his biography of Moses, Philo points out that the perfect leader needs to be not only king, priest, and prophet, but also legislator, “so that through his legislation he can command things which need to be done and forbid things which should not be done” (ἵνα διὰ μὲν τῆς νομοθετικῆς προστάτη ἂν δεῖ καὶ ἀπαγορεύη ἂ μὴ δεῖ πράττειν) (2.187). When Philo discusses the virtue of benevolence of the legislator he also describes a teaching function of the lawgiver, namely “to explain (ἀναδιδασκούσης) the purposes for the common good” (2.9). Plutarch likewise presents Numa as a lawgiver (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.1). As seen above, Jesus' role as teacher is greatly emphasized in the story, and he is presented as the teacher of Israel. Is Jesus also presented as a legislator who gives the people a new law?

The first teaching discourse plays an important role for the characterization of Jesus, as seen by the following statement: “When Jesus had finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching (διδάχῃ), for he taught them as one having authority (ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἐξῶν), and not as their scribes” (7:28–29).¹⁴² The reactions of the crowds (7:28–8:1) do not emphasize the rhetorical ability of the teacher, but his authority.¹⁴³ This is made clear to the reader, not only explicitly in 7:29, but also indirectly in the teaching of Jesus through the six “antitheses”: “You have heard that it was said ... But *I* say to you ...”¹⁴⁴

In the second chapter the author made an implicit comparison between Jesus and Moses.¹⁴⁵ In 5:1 the reader is told that Jesus “went up to the mountain,” which may

¹⁴¹ Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 20. Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:166.

¹⁴² Cf. Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 254: “By highlighting the crowd's response at the conclusion of the discourse (cf. 9:33–34), the narrator reveals that his ultimate concern in the discourse is christological.”

¹⁴³ Contra Talbert, *Matthew*, 96.

¹⁴⁴ 5:21–22, 27–28, 31–32, 33–34, 38–39, 43–44. See e.g. Betz, “Portrait of Jesus,” 174.

¹⁴⁵ See pp. 141–43.

imply that the Moses typology continues. In his influential article, Benjamin W. Bacon argues that the gospel is structured as a new Torah in five great discourses. Thus he described the Sermon on the Mount as a “discourse of the Lawgiver.”¹⁴⁶ The parallel to Moses should not be overstated, since the reader only has implicit references to Moses. The author does not present Jesus “programmatically as a second Moses.”¹⁴⁷ Even if there is a reminder of Sinai, it does not necessarily imply that Jesus is presented as a second Moses who gives a new Torah.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the reader, who recently got a comparison between Jesus and Moses, will probably also see a parallel between the two in the Sermon on the Mount.

What then is the relationship between Jesus and the Mosaic law? It is clear that Jesus affirms the law of Moses as God’s words, which the quotations in the temptation narrative also make clear (4:4, 7, 10, cf. 15:3–4). Jesus repeatedly puts together the law *and* the prophets (5:17, 7:12, 11:13, 22:40). This conjunction points to the totality of the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁴⁹ At the same time it underlines that the prophets has equal importance as the law.¹⁵⁰ The law could not be understood rightly apart from the prophets.¹⁵¹ But does the Mosaic law have abiding authority for the followers of Jesus? The question, which has been vividly discussed by scholars, is primarily related to the understanding of the six “antitheses” in 5:21–48 and the statement in 5:17: “Do not think that I have come to abolish (καταλύνειν) the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish but to fulfil (πληροῦν).”

Most scholars propose that Jesus does not come with a new law, but brings a new understanding of the law of Moses, when he demands a righteousness that goes beyond living according to the letter of the law.¹⁵² The reason for the main critique

¹⁴⁶ Benjamin W. Bacon, “Jesus and the Law: A Study of the First ‘Book’ of Matthew (Mt. 3–7),” *JBL* 47 (1928): 203–31 (207). According to Bacon, the evangelist is “presenting the whole message of Jesus as a new and higher Torah” (p. 204). Cf. Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, BST (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 89; Allison, *The New Moses*, 172–80; Wayne Baxter, “The Narrative Setting of the Sermon on the Mount,” *TJ* 25 (2004): 27–37 (31).

¹⁴⁷ Luz, *Matthew*, 1:182. See also Morris, *Matthew*, 93–94; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 296–98.

¹⁴⁸ Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 157.

¹⁴⁹ Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 92; Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 137; Klyne Snodgrass, “Matthew and the Law,” in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark A. Powell, SBLSymS 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 99–127 (114).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. 22:36–40 where Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment in the law (22:36) and concludes that “all the law *and* the prophets” depend on the love commandments (22:40).

¹⁵¹ Snodgrass, “Matthew and the Law,” 106–07. In this way Jesus differs from Judaism, which generally regarded Torah to have greater importance (p. 111). See also Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 218.

¹⁵² See e.g. Davies, *Setting of the Sermon*, 102; Snodgrass, “Matthew and the Law,” 113; Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 64. Donald A. Hagner, “Ethics and the Sermon on the Mount,” *ST* 51 (1997): 44–59 (47), proposes that Jesus intensifies the law, and thus speaks of “intensification” rather than “antitheses.”

of the religious leaders is thus that they do not understand the original intention of the law.¹⁵³ While this is the case in some of the “antitheses,” Jesus also points to a problem with making the Mosaic law the basis for ethics.¹⁵⁴ In the third “antithesis” (5:31–32), about divorce, Jesus does not interpret the law in a new way but adjusts the instruction in a way that goes against the law of Moses (cf. 19:3–9).¹⁵⁵ In his later controversies with the religious leaders over the Sabbath, Jesus underlines that he is “lord (κύριος) of the Sabbath” (12:8). The statement that “it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what goes out from the mouth; that defiles a person” (15:11) is likewise hard to combine with the law of Moses.¹⁵⁶ Jesus is thus presented as one with authority over the law of Moses.

There is no consensus of the understanding of the meaning of “fulfil” (πληροῦν) in 5:17.¹⁵⁷ The term is, however, usually used in a temporal sense in Matthew, which signals that something in the prophetic hope in the OT now begins to fulfil.¹⁵⁸ The next verse indicates a temporal understanding of the term, since Jesus declares that “until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota or a stroke of a pen from the law will pass away, until everything has *happened* (ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται)” (5:18).¹⁵⁹ This understanding of “fulfil” is affirmed by 11:13 where Jesus underlines the change of circumstances in his own time by his and John the Baptist’s arrival: “For all the prophets and the law prophesied *until* (ἕως) John.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time, the usage of πληροῦν in the context of 5:17 also indicates that the teaching of Jesus fulfils the intention of the law of Moses. Jesus explicitly points out, in the same teaching discourse, that his teaching is in agreement with the law and the prophets (7:12, cf.

¹⁵³ See e.g. Günther Bornkamm, “End-expectation and Church in Matthew,” in *Tradition and Interpretation of Matthew*, by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz J. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 31, and Stott, *Message of the Sermon*, 76.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Allison, *New Moses*, 184: “Jesus is directly dealing with the words of Moses—but not so much interpreting them as qualifying and adding to them.” Cf. Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 93–95, and Witherington, *Matthew*, 117–18.

¹⁵⁵ See especially 19:8–9 for a contrast between the instruction of Moses and Jesus.

¹⁵⁶ See further Roland Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate,” in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 53–84 (64–70), for several examples in Matthew where Jesus’ words and deeds are in tension with the law of Moses.

¹⁵⁷ Morris, *Matthew*, 108, shows that the term has been understood in mainly three ways: 1) That Jesus would do what is said in the Scripture, 2) that Jesus would explain the full meaning of the Scripture, or 3) that Jesus would bring the Scripture to its completion through his life and teaching. According to Morris, there is a truth in all three interpretations. Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 77, who proposes that “Jesus has come to fulfill the eschatological prophecies, to obey God’s will, and to teach the full measure of God’s demands.”

¹⁵⁸ John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel*, TI (New York: Paulist, 1979), 224–28. See also Richard E. Menninger, *Israel and the Church in the Gospel of Matthew*, AUS 162 (New York: Lang, 1994), 107.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora*, 289.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora*, 277–80.

22:40). There is, consequently, no major conflict between the ethics of Jesus and the intention of the law of Moses. Nonetheless, the latter does not adequately express the will of God in the new age of salvation.¹⁶¹ The coming of the kingdom, the Messiah, and the new age brings a new relationship to the Mosaic law.¹⁶² The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount is thus ethics for a new age.¹⁶³

At the end of the story it is confirmed to the reader that the instruction of Jesus is the new authoritative teaching, since Jesus here exhorts his disciples to teach the nations, “to observe everything *I* have commanded you” (28:20). The biographical genre of Matthew, moreover, implies that the teaching of Jesus, and not the Torah, is the authority.¹⁶⁴ Richard Menninger thus correctly concludes that “Jesus’ teaching is the true will of God replacing the true will of God as *formerly* contained in the Law.”¹⁶⁵

Is it then appropriate to describe the teaching of Jesus as “law”? It has rightly been pointed out that the character of the teaching of Jesus is not legalistic, since it focuses on the character of the human heart, which lies behind the outward behavior. Laws are concerned with conduct which is possible to control and not with the inner motivation of people.¹⁶⁶ The Sermon on the Mount provides illustrations of the required attitude and actions, rather than a set of rules.¹⁶⁷ But the Pentateuch also contains more material than legal principles, and the differences should thus not be overstated.¹⁶⁸ Though the teaching of Jesus mainly concerns inner motives and thoughts it also relates to concrete behaviors (cf. 5:31–32, 19:16–19). It should, however, also be noted that Jesus’ ethics does not concern political directives, since it is addressed to individuals who follow Jesus, and should thus be seen as general principles which express the will of God.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶¹ Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 29.

¹⁶² Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 108. Cf. Allison, *New Moses*, 189–90, who points to the parallels between Matthew and the presentation of the new covenant in Jer 31:31–34.

¹⁶³ Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 173. See also Stephen Westerholm, “The Law in the Sermon on the Mount: Matt 5:17–48,” *CTR* 6 (1992): 43–56 (50); Hagner, “Ethics of the Sermon on the Mount,” 44–59; Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora*, 403.

¹⁶⁴ See Kea, “Writing a bios,” 585. Cf. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 338–39.

¹⁶⁵ Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 107. Italics his. See also pp. 114–18 for his discussion about the antitheses. Cf. Deines, *Die Gerechtigkeit der Tora*, 402–03. It is, however, to be noted, with Allison, *New Moses*, 275, that there is “no polemic against Moses in Matthew. The lawgiver is not Jesus’ adversary but, like the Baptist, his typological herald and foreshadow.”

¹⁶⁶ George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 291–93. See also Roger Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives*, SNTSMS 48 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 23–24.

¹⁶⁷ Westerholm, “The Law in the Sermon on the Mount,” 50.

¹⁶⁸ Allison, *New Moses*, 323.

¹⁶⁹ Margaret Pamment, “The Kingdom of Heaven According to the First Gospel,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 211–32 (216).

Nonetheless, the great authority of the teaching of Jesus and his role as king suggests that his teaching should be understood as a kind of “law.” William Davies proposes that the Sermon on the Mount represents “a Messianic law,” and thus reminds that Jesus’ role as teacher could not be separated from his role as king.¹⁷⁰ As other ancient kings, the Messiah in the OT stands in a close relationship to the law.¹⁷¹ Jesus’ role as a judge further implies that his teaching is to be understood as a law. Jesus makes clear that the practice of “lawlessness” (ἀνομία) is a reason for condemnation on the day of judgment (7:23, 13:41, cf. 23:28).¹⁷² There are also several parallels between the presentation of Jesus and the Hellenistic lawgivers. These are, for example, the emphasis on the divine authority of the lawgiver, the completeness of the law, and the lawgiver as a model for the people.¹⁷³

When Jesus, in the very end of the story, commissions his disciples he instructs them with the following words: “Go therefore and disciple all nations ... teaching them to *observe* everything I have *commanded* you (τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν)” (28:20). Byrskog points out that τηρεῖν and ἐντέλλεσθαι are “rather ‘legal’” terms.¹⁷⁴ This implies that “the least of these commandments (ἐντολῶν)” in 5:19 do not refer to the OT or the Mosaic law, but to the teaching of Jesus.¹⁷⁵ In Matthew’s portrait of Jesus, his roles as king and teacher are intertwined, which the yoke saying in 11:25–30 also shows.¹⁷⁶ This gives reason to characterize the teaching of Jesus as a “law.”¹⁷⁷ It can thus be concluded with Allison that Matthew “presents us with

¹⁷⁰ Davies, *Setting of the Sermon*, 107–08. He finds support for “a Messianic Torah” in e.g. Isa 2:1–5 and 42:1–4. See pp. 122–39. Cf. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 327; Allison, *New Moses*, 185.

¹⁷¹ Davies, *Setting of the Sermon*, 122. Even if Davies speaks about the “law” of Jesus, he underlines that Jesus is an interpreter of the Mosaic law (pp. 107–08). But Jesus actually gives new commandments, as seen above. See also Marty E. Stevens, *Leadership Roles of the Old Testament: King, Prophet, Priest, Sage* (Eugene, OR: Cascade/Wipf and Stock, 2012), 18, who points out that “kings in the ancient world were depicted as law-givers and guardians of justice.”

¹⁷² Cf. Jerome H. Neyrey, “Jesus, Gender, and the Gospel of Matthew,” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice C. Anderson, Semeia St 45 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 43–66 (58–59): “Jesus proposes a law (5:21–46; 16:24–26) and acts as enforcer of his law, namely, as a judge (16:27).” For the presentation of Jesus as a judge, see further pp. 248–50.

¹⁷³ See Dieter Zeller, “Jesus als vollmächtiger Lehrer (Mt 5–7) und der hellenistische Gesetzgeber,” in *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium: Festschrift für Wilhelm Pesch*, ed. L. Schenke (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 299–317.

¹⁷⁴ Byrskog, “Matthew 5:17–18,” 568. See also Stendahl, “Matthew,” 798. In 19:17 τηρεῖν is used in the expression “keep the commandments (τήρησον τὰς ἐντολάς).” Likewise, ἐντέλλεσθαι is used in 19:7 with reference to Moses’ instructions.

¹⁷⁵ Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 458–60; Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 112; Byrskog, “Matthew 5:17–18,” 568–69; Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah,” 78–80.

¹⁷⁶ See pp. 220–21.

¹⁷⁷ In other early Christian literature, the teaching of Jesus is also referred to as a “law” or “commandments.” Paul declares that his position is “under the law of Christ (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ)” (1 Cor 9:21). In Gal 6:2 he speaks about fulfilling “the law of Christ (τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ).”

the *nomos* of the Messiah—if not in terminology then in substance.”¹⁷⁸ Consequently, it is reasonable to speak about Jesus as a new “lawgiver.”¹⁷⁹

Even if the term “lawgiver” is not used in Matthew, the information the reader is given about Jesus and his teaching implies that he is presented as one. The great emphasis on the authority of Jesus as teacher, the use of legal terms, the inauguration of a new age by the arrival of Jesus and the kingdom, the kingly role of Jesus, the allusions to the former lawgiver, and similarities with other lawgivers give good reasons to conclude that Jesus is presented as a new lawgiver. The new law of the Messiah is fulfilling the intentions of the former law.

4.2.2 κηρύσσειν

The second main activity of Jesus is related to the verb κηρύσσειν (“proclaiming”). The two activities mentioned in 4:23 and 9:35, διδάσκειν and κηρύσσειν, both emphasize the importance of words in the ministry of Jesus. But is there a difference between them? Some scholars emphasize the overlapping function of the two activities.¹⁸⁰ But since κηρύσσειν has a prophetic character, which will be argued below, it is appropriate to make a distinction between them.¹⁸¹ Even if the two activities are closely related to each other, they are also distinguished by the author three times (4:23, 9:35, 11:1) and should thus be separated.

For additional references to the law of Christ, see Barn. 2:6; Herm. Sim. 5.6.3; Justin, *Dial.* 11.2, 4. In 14:3 Justin also speaks about “the new lawgiver (ὁ καινὸς νομοθέτης)” (cf. 12.2). According to John, Jesus gives his disciples “a new commandment (ἐντολή)” (13:34, cf. 15:12) and underlines the importance of observing his commandments (14:15, 21; 15:10). See also e.g. 1 Clem 13:2–3, 2 Clem 3:2–4, and Ign. Eph. 9:2. Cf. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 110–23, who discusses “the law of Christ” in early Christianity.

¹⁷⁸ Allison, *New Moses*, 187. See also Frank Thielman, *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 69–71, and Graham Stanton, “What is the Law of Christ?,” *ExAud* 17 (2001): 47–59 (49).

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, trans. J. Holland-Smith and W. J. O’Hara (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 203; Allison, *New Moses*, 190; Stanton, “What is the Law of Christ?,” 51.

¹⁸⁰ See e.g. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 267, who proposes that both proclamation and teaching call for active decision, which implies that teaching is also proclamation. See also Byrskog, “Das Lernen der Jesusgeschichte,” 200–01. Cf. Flender, “Lehren und Verkündigung,” 706. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:168–69, suggests that both proclamation and teaching relate to a missionary activity, and thus concludes that the two activities are almost the same.

¹⁸¹ See e.g. Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 92; Lothar Coenen, “κηρύσσω,” *NIDNTT* 3:48–57 (56); Witherington, *Matthew*, 97. Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 184, suggests that the discourse in chapter 13 provides the reader with examples of Jesus’ preaching to the crowds.

The meaning of κηρύσσειν

The verb κηρύσσειν is used primarily “to announce or to proclaim publicly.”¹⁸² It emphasizes that something is revealed in a public way.¹⁸³ That this also is the case within Matthew’s story is clearly seen in the following saying of Jesus in the mission discourse: “What I say to you in the dark you shall say in the light, and what you hear whispered in the ears you shall proclaim (κηρύσσειν) on the roofs” (10:27). The term refers to the activity of a herald, who makes known a message that is given to him by an authority.¹⁸⁴ This implies a likeness with the ministry of the prophet, a person whose speech is recognized as God’s voice.¹⁸⁵

The proclamation is closely related to “the message of the kingdom (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας),” which is described as the content of the proclamation in both 4:23 and 9:35 (cf. 24:14, 26:13). In ancient Greek literature generally, Gerhard Friedrich points out, “εὐαγγέλιον is a technical term for ‘news of victory’.”¹⁸⁶ In the Roman imperial cult, it relates to the emperor and the proclamation of his birth, his coming of age, and in particular his accession to the throne.¹⁸⁷ In the NT, the term “denotes the news that concerns God or comes from God.”¹⁸⁸ The understanding of the new era in the gospels is primarily shaped by the hopeful visionary discourses in Isaiah 40–66, where the verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is used (e.g. 40:9–11, 52:7).¹⁸⁹ The announcement that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (4:17), thus implies that the restorative rule of God is approaching.¹⁹⁰ Since Jesus is presented as the King and the one who inaugurates the rule, the good news is closely related to himself.

The proclamation of Jesus makes also a serious demand of the people. This is seen in 4:17, the first mention of the proclamation of Jesus in the story: “Repent

¹⁸² Fred B. Craddock, “Preaching,” *ABD* 5:451–54 (452).

¹⁸³ Coenen, *NIDNTT* 3:54.

¹⁸⁴ Morris, *Matthew*, 51. Cf. Rom 10:15: “And how are they to proclaim (κηρύσσειν) unless they are sent (ἀποστέλλειν).”

¹⁸⁵ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 120.

¹⁸⁶ Gerhard Friedrich, “εὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγέλιον, κτλ,” *TDNT* 2:707–37 (722). A similar usage is seen in the LXX (e.g. 2 Sam 18:19–20, 2 Kgs 7:9). See further Georg Strecker, “εὐαγγέλιον,” *EDNT* 2:70–74 (71).

¹⁸⁷ Friedrich, *TDNT* 2:724–25. See further Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel*, 25–35.

¹⁸⁸ Strecker, *EDNT* 2:71.

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 15. See also Kenneth L. Schenk, “Gospel: good news,” *DJG* 342–45 (343). There are three explicit references to texts in Isa 40–66 chapters in Matthew (3:3, 8:17, 12:17–21). The verb εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is also used once in Matthew (11:5). For a different view, see Strecker, *EDNT* 2:71, who proposes that the cult of the Hellenistic ruler is the main background. He, nonetheless, points out: “The NT proclamation of the εὐαγγέλιον can take on both OT-Jewish and Hellenistic-Greek traditional elements.”

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:1x; Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 12–13. For a different view, see Becker, *NIDNTT* 2:112, who suggests that the teaching of Jesus and Jesus himself is the gospel.

(μετανοεῖν), for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” Since the reader recently (3:2) has heard the harsh message of John the Baptist, the message of Jesus is also understood as a serious call for repentance, “a radical change of heart and mind.”¹⁹¹ That repentance is a requirement is confirmed to the reader in the discourse about the kingdom of heaven (chapter 13), where Jesus clarifies the necessity of righteous living for involvement in the kingdom (13:36–43, 47–50).¹⁹² The message of the kingdom thus encourages and confronts the audience at the same time. It implies both the realization of God’s restorative rule and the demands on man to repent.¹⁹³

The proclamation is, consequently, closely related to a prophetic ministry.¹⁹⁴ The reader already has this understanding of κηρύσσειν, since it was used in reference to the ministry of John the Baptist in 3:1, who clearly has a prophetic ministry in the story (cf. 21:26). In the mission discourse, the close relationship between “proclamation” (10:7, 27) and “prophet” (10:41) is confirmed to the reader.¹⁹⁵ The role of the proclamation is to “make space” for the new age to grow.¹⁹⁶ It is thus a preparatory ministry, which establishes a need for change among the listeners. The teaching and healing ministry is then effecting the change through its guidelines and possibilities.¹⁹⁷ Friedrich underlines the difference between the modern understanding of “preaching” and the character of κηρύσσειν in the NT. The focus of the latter is not on the content, but on the event, since the divine intervention is accomplished through κηρύσσειν.¹⁹⁸ Friedrich’s proposal is somewhat overstated, since the coming of the kingdom in Matthew is also a future event (see e.g. 5:20, 25:34), but nevertheless rightly underlines the close relationship between proclamation and the coming of the kingdom.

Jesus the Prophet

The prophetic character of κηρύσσειν thus suggests that Jesus is presented as a prophet. The content of the proclamation of Jesus, which includes both an announcement of salvation and a summons to repentance (4:17), also implies that

¹⁹¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:388. See also Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 148, who points out that Jesus’ proclamation in 4:17 “functions as an adequate summary of his call to Israel to return to God’s path.”

¹⁹² Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet*, 1:64.

¹⁹³ Cf. Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 56, and Margaret Hannan, *The Nature and Demands of the Sovereign Rule of God in the Gospel of Matthew*, LNTS 308 (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 34.

¹⁹⁴ Coenen, *NIDNTT* 3:53, points out that “*kērygma* is the phenomenon of a call which goes out and makes a claim upon the hearers: it corresponds to the life and activity of the prophets.” See also Paul S. Minear, *Matthew: The Teacher’s Gospel* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), 44.

¹⁹⁵ See Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 120.

¹⁹⁶ Coenen, *NIDNTT* 3:57.

¹⁹⁷ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 103.

¹⁹⁸ Gerhard Friedrich, “κηρύξ, (ἱεροκῆρυξ), κτλ,” *TDNT* 3:683–718 (703–04). See also Becker, *NIDNTT* 2:109.

Jesus acts as a prophet. The prophetic ministry of Jesus is confirmed to the reader successively throughout the story through his words and deeds.

As noted in the previous chapter,¹⁹⁹ Jesus' ministry is in many ways similar to John the Baptist's ministry; Jesus himself regards John the Baptist as a prophet (11:9). When Jesus announces judgment upon the Galilean cities (11:20–24) he also resembles the Old Testament prophets (cf. 16:13–17).²⁰⁰ He compares his ministry with the ministry of Jonah (12:41) and mentions that the people of Nineveh “repented at the proclamation of Jonah (μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ).” In addition, Jesus also describes himself as a prophet when he is rejected by his hometown and declares: “A prophet (προφήτης) is not dishonored except in his own country and in his home” (13:57). When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem he is also described as “the prophet” by the crowds (21:11, cf. 21:46). He is, moreover, presented as a prophet when he makes predictions about the future (10:16–23, 24:1–31).²⁰¹

The disciples of Jesus, who are apprenticed for partaking in the ministry of Jesus, also become involved in prophetic ministry. Jesus not only sends them out to “proclaim” (κηρύσσειν) the kingdom of heaven (10:7). In 10:41–42 he identifies his disciples according to their different characteristics and functions. One of these is “prophet.”²⁰² The prophetic ministry of the disciples is also indicated to the reader in 13:17 and 23:34 (cf. 5:11–12).

According to David Turner, the prophetic role of Jesus is most clearly seen in his conflicts with the religious leaders.²⁰³ Like the former prophets of the people, Jesus is rejected by Israel.²⁰⁴ It should be noted, however, that Jesus' role as king/Messiah is the central one in his confrontations with the religious leaders.²⁰⁵ Jesus clearly has a prophetic role in Matthew's story, but “prophet” is not an adequate description of his full identity, and it is not his most central role (cf. 16:13–17).

¹⁹⁹ See pp. 145–46.

²⁰⁰ James I. McDonald, *Kerygma and Didache: The Articulation and Structure of the Earliest Christian Message*, SNTSMS 37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 20.

²⁰¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:160, refer to the verses in 10:16–23 as “very specific prophecies.” Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 888. See further Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel*, 149–50, for more indications of a prophetic ministry in the life of Jesus.

²⁰² See Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 120, and Bartlett, *Ministry in the New Testament*, 78–79.

²⁰³ Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 151.

²⁰⁴ Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 3, pays attention to the common motif of a “rejected prophet”: “The phrase ‘rejection of the prophets’ describes Israel's negative response to the messengers whom God sends to the nation to remind it of its obligations to the Torah. Instead of listening to these messengers and turning back to God in renewed covenantal relationship, Israel too often refuses to believe the prophets and at times goes so far as to violently reject them.” Cf. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel*, 152–61. He concludes that “to be a prophet, at least in Matthew's Gospel, is to suffer and be rejected” (p. 154).

²⁰⁵ See 5.3.1.

The prophetic ministry as a leadership role

It has been noted above that Jesus is presented as a prophet. Does then the prophetic office imply a leadership role? Some prophets in the OT are presented as rather lonesome persons. Is the prophet a leader?

In her study of leadership roles in the OT, Marty Stevens points out that the idea of the prophet as an isolated figure should not be overstated. The remembrance of their lives and words points to their social status and influence. It should further be noted that the prophets in the OT are different. Some prophets are peripheral to the power centers of the nation, while others are positioned in the royal court and involved in the leadership over the nation.²⁰⁶ Horsley and Hanson separate between two different kinds of prophets in the Jewish tradition: the oracular prophet who delivers a message from God (e.g. Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah), and the action prophet who is a leader of a movement (Moses, Joshua). Some prophets combined the two roles (e.g. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha).²⁰⁷

The prophetic role is not usual in the other biographies of good leaders, but it is underlined in Philo's *Moses*. Philo even states that "the perfect leader (τῷ τελειοτάτῳ ἡγεμόνι)" needs to have a prophetic gift (2.187). The prophetic office of Moses is primarily related to receiving and delivering information from God. Philo explains that the benefit of the prophetic gift is "to find out by the providence of God everything which cannot be comprehended by reasoning (λογισμῶ); for what the mind fails to attain, prophecy can reach" (2.6). Philo points out that Moses not only passively mediated utterances from God, but also worked in partnership with God by asking questions and listening to answers (2.190, 2.246), and gave prophetic oracles by divine inspiration (2.46). The last function includes prophesying about future events (2.190, cf. 2.253).

In Matthew, the portrayal of John the Baptist shows that a prophet could have a leadership role. Though he launches his ministry in the wilderness, John proclaims a message publicly which receives great response from people from the whole region (3:1–5). His influence among the people is clearly underlined later in the story, since both political and religious leaders fear the reactions of the crowds in their treatment and judgment of John (14:5, 21:26). John is also presented as a kind of teacher with disciples (μαθηταί) (9:14, 11:2, 14:2). The crowds' declaration that Jesus is "the prophet" (21:11) when he enters Jerusalem with many followers further implies that "prophet" is a leadership role.

It can thus be concluded that Jesus is presented as a prophet in Matthew's story and that this role is a leadership role. The prophetic office is seen in the second main activity of Jesus, κηρύσσειν. This is confirmed by the overall presentation of Jesus through the portrayal of his words and actions. In his prophetic ministry Jesus both gives hope to the people and confronts them.

²⁰⁶ Stevens, *Leadership Roles of the Old Testament*, 40.

²⁰⁷ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 135–39.

4.2.3 θεραπεύειν

The third main activity of Jesus is *θεραπεύειν*, commonly translated as “healing” or “curing.” In the ministry of Jesus there is not only a proclamation of the kingdom of God with words. The reader also sees a demonstration of authority when Jesus cures the sick and expels demons (cf. 12:28). The verb *θεραπεύειν* refers both to healing of “ordinary” diseases and to exorcisms. The description of the ministry of Jesus, in both the summary passages and in the narration of different events, shows that healing miracles are a “normal” activity of Jesus.²⁰⁸ Nine times the reader is told that Jesus healed many sick. In addition to this, the author also narrates fourteen events where Jesus heals an individual. In this way Jesus is presented to the reader as “the healer of the people.” Gerhardsson rightly concludes that “*Matthean Christology has a conspicuous therapeutic aspect*.”²⁰⁹ What then are the implications of the healing ministry for the presentation of Jesus as leader?

The care of the shepherd

The healing activity of Jesus is seen by the author as a fulfillment of the OT prophecies (8:16–17, 11:2–6).²¹⁰ Through the use of the OT, the author presents Jesus as the Davidic Messiah who heals the sick.²¹¹ The therapeutic ministry of Jesus is especially related to him as “Son of David” (cf. 9:27).²¹² Why is the healing activity related to Jesus as Son of David? In 15:22–24 the use of “Son of David” in the context of healing is related to the shepherd imagery, which points to a fulfillment of Ezek 34.²¹³ The importance of the allusions to Ezek 34 for the portrayal of Jesus as leader has already been noted in the previous chapter.²¹⁴ In 9:36 the reader is informed that Jesus had compassion for the crowds because they had great needs, “like sheep without a shepherd.” The frequent use of the shepherd imagery in the gospel, with many allusions to Ezek 34, makes it probable to see this chapter as the background for the portrait of Jesus as a therapeutic Son of David.²¹⁵

²⁰⁸ Luz, *Matthew*, 1:166.

²⁰⁹ Gerhardsson, “Christology of Matthew,” 25.

²¹⁰ Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew*, WUNT 170 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 133–51, argues that 12:15–21 also has this function. But this quotation from Isaiah is mainly related to Jesus’ saying when he warns the crowds “not to make him known” (12:16).

²¹¹ Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer*, 183. She suggests that the author makes use of midrashic techniques, since none of the passages cited explicitly says that the Davidic Messiah will be a healer of the sick.

²¹² See also 12:22–23, 15:22, and 20:30–31. See further Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer*, 2.

²¹³ Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 282–83. This combination is also seen in 21:1–12, but now as fulfillment of the traditions from Zech 9–13. See Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 287–89.

²¹⁴ See p. 138.

²¹⁵ See e.g. Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 275; Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer*, 131–32; Wayne S. Baxter, “Healing and the ‘Son of David’: Matthew’s Warrant,” *NovT* 48 (2006): 36–50.

In Ezek 34:23 both the shepherd imagery and the servant motif are present, which are also central to Matthew's presentation of Jesus.²¹⁶

The healing ministry is thus related to the presentation of Jesus as leader. According to Louw and Nida the verb *ποιμαίνειν*, in the figurative extension of the meaning, is used in the sense of leading, "with the implication of providing for – 'to guide and to help', to guide and take care of.'" ²¹⁷ As the leader of Israel Jesus shows his care for the people by curing them from sickness and evilness and restoring them. While the OT generally uses "healing" in a metaphorical sense, referring to spiritual, psychological, and social restoration (e.g. Hos 5.11–13, Ezek 34), Matthew applies the image to Jesus' ministry which results in physical healings.²¹⁸

The meaning of θεραπεύειν

The primary meaning of *θεραπεύειν* in the NT is "to heal" or "to cure." In other ancient Greek literature, however, it has a wide range of meanings.²¹⁹ Often it is used in the sense of "serving."²²⁰ This meaning of *θεραπεύειν* is also indicated in Matthew, since Jesus fulfills the prophecy about the Suffering Servant in Isa 53 when he heals the sick (8:16–17).²²¹ By connecting the healing ministry of Jesus with the servant motif, the author emphasizes the mercy and humility of Jesus. Jesus is not presented as a self-serving leader, but as one who is identifying himself with the suffering of humanity.²²² In this way Jesus' ministry fulfills the ideal that the Son of David should serve the people (1 Kgs 12:7).²²³ As seen in the previous chapter, it likewise conforms to the leadership model of Moses.²²⁴ Closely related

See further Cousland, *The Crowds*, 187–91, for additional arguments for this view. Witherington, *Matthew*, 175, proposes that the healing activity of Jesus as son of David shows that Jesus is presented as sage. Solomon, the prototype of the Jewish sage, was also associated with exorcisms and healing of sickness (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45). But Solomon was associated primarily with exorcisms and Matthew's portrait of Jesus as Son of David is as the healer of Israel generally. The healing ministry of Jesus is also closely related to his humble service of the people. See Dennis C. Duling, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *HTR* 68 (1975): 235–52 (250–51); Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*, 87; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 186–87. Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer*, 104, rightly points out that the characteristics associated with Solomon's activity are also lacking (see further pp. 103–09).

²¹⁶ Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer*, 131–32; Baxter, "Healing and the 'Son of David,'" 49.

²¹⁷ Louw and Nida, "ποιμαίνω."

²¹⁸ Martin, "The Image of Shepherd," 276–77.

²¹⁹ Cf. LSJ, "θεραπεύω," which gives examples where the term means to serve, to take care of, to provide, and to foster.

²²⁰ Hermann W. Beyer, "θεραπεία, θεραπεύω κτλ.," *TDNT* 3:128–32 (129); Friedrich Graber and Dietrich Müller, "θεραπεύω," *NIDNTT* 2:164–69 (164).

²²¹ Gerhardsson, "Christology of Matthew," 24.

²²² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:38.

²²³ Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*, 87 n. 15. See also Cousland, *The Crowds*, 168.

²²⁴ See pp. 143–44.

to this ideal is the compassion of the leader, which is clearly seen in the healing ministry.²²⁵ Witherington further points out that the therapeutic ministry makes clear that Jesus, the king, brings welfare to the people: “The king wishes to have the entire allegiance of his subjects, and wishes and conveys to them shalom, well-being in all the aspects of their lives.”²²⁶

In contrast to διδάσκειν and κηρύσσειν, θεραπεύειν does not point to a leadership role. Jesus is presented as “teacher” and “prophet,” but not as “healer.” In the OT, healing ministry is sometimes a part of a prophetic office.²²⁷ In Matthew it is primarily related to the presentation of Jesus as Son of David, the Messiah, as seen above. Consequently, the healing ministry is related to Jesus’ role as king. At the same time it should be noted that the crowds’ following of Jesus is associated with the healing ministry (4:24–25, cf. 12:15, 19:2, 20:34). This ministry is thus significant for the presentation of Jesus as leader.²²⁸ *Through the combination of the shepherd imagery, the Davidic Messiah, and θεραπεύειν as one of the main tasks of Jesus, the author establishes a portrait of Jesus as a leader who really cares about the needs of the people and serves them.*

4.3 The shepherd of the people (9:36–11:1)

Ancient biographies often narrate both the appreciation and rejection of the protagonist by friends, opponents, crowds, people, and leaders, and the popularity of the protagonist is outlined.²²⁹ The reactions and the response of the people around the protagonist is clarified to the reader, as Frickenschmidt points out: “Im Mittelteil antiker Biographien konnten nicht nur einzelne Anmerkungen über Ruhm oder Mißbilligung bei den Vielen oder den Führenden auftauchen, sondern auch mehrfach folgende Schilderung solcher Reaktionen die ganze Erzählung prägen.”²³⁰

As already noted, the presentation of Jesus’ career in Matthew highlights first the great response to the ministry of Jesus and then the rejection and opposition. The appreciation of Jesus in the story is mostly related to “the crowds,” who get attention in the section of 9:36–11:1, which comes after the description of Jesus’ main tasks,

²²⁵ See 9:27, 14:14, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30–34. Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*, 47, rightly observes that “Matthew is obviously concerned to emphasize that Jesus’ healings are acts of *mercy* and love.” Italics his. On the compassion of Jesus, see further 4.3.2.

²²⁶ Witherington, *Matthew*, 97. Cf. Turner, *Matthew*, 33: “The texts that connect Jesus’s Davidic lineage with healing demonstrate that Jesus uses his royal authority to help, not to oppress, the needy.”

²²⁷ Cf. 1 Kgs 17:17–24, 2 Kgs 5:1–14.

²²⁸ Cf. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 168.

²²⁹ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 287–89.

²³⁰ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 287.

4:23–9:35. Together with the disciples, the crowds play a significant role—as followers—in the presentation of Jesus as leader. As the object of the ministry of Jesus they are the cause of the mission of the disciples, which is described in chapter 10.

4.3.1 A popular leader?

The great crowds

The first summary statement (4:23–25), with the emphasis of Jesus’ healing ministry (4:24), ends with the notion that “great crowds followed him” (ἡκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί) (4:25). After the Sermon on the Mount, the reader is told again that “great crowds followed him” (8:1), impressed by the authority of the teacher (7:28). Subsequently to the second summary statement of the ministry of Jesus (9:35), the reader gets more information about the crowds through the following statement: “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds (ὄχλους) he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without shepherd” (9:36).

Several scholars consider the crowds as a single character in the story. Cousland proposes that the crowds function like a stylized literary character in the story, since behavior and phraseology is repeated.²³¹ This conclusion is doubtful, since the term “crowds” is used in different ways in the story. Often it refers to great crowds who follow Jesus and are the recipients of his ministry. But in chapter 9 it is also used with reference to the people who lament the death of a girl (9:23, 25). In the passion story it refers to the people who are sent out from the religious leaders in order to arrest Jesus (26:47). The reader is also sometimes informed about the regions from where the crowds come from (4:25, 20:29). These are all reasons to not regard the “crowds” as a single character in the same way as the disciples or the religious leaders.²³² The repeated mentions of *crowds that follow Jesus* play, nonetheless, an important role in the story.

The primary function of the crowds is to shed light on the protagonist.²³³ Cousland correctly points out that the crowds have the function of a foil character, designed by the author to put focus on the main character.²³⁴ This view is confirmed by the biographical genre, with its focus on the protagonist. Through the repeated

²³¹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 43. See also Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 24, and Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 90.

²³² Cf. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 90. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 304, describes the crowds as “dynamic collectivities that cannot be generalized in terms of how they act, react, and are judged.”

²³³ Contra Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 24, who suggests that the characterization of the crowds results in a contrast between them and both the disciples and the religious leaders.

²³⁴ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 45.

references to crowds who *follow* Jesus, it is clarified to the reader that his ministry receives great response. The influence of Jesus is emphasized and the portrait of him as leader is established.

The portrayal of the crowds who follow Jesus are closely associated with the presentation of the people of Israel. This connection is seen in 10:6 where the apostles are sent out, for the sake of the needy crowds without shepherd (9:36), to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The crowds are thus related to “my people Israel (τὸν λαὸν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ),” to whom Jesus is sent to shepherd (2:6). But there are also distinctions between the two. The crowds are not equivalent to “the people,” but rather one component, since the latter includes both the crowds and the leaders of the people.

That the author distinguishes between the leaders of the people and the crowds is clearly seen in the openness of the crowds towards Jesus’ ministry and an increasing understanding of his identity. The leaders, on the other hand, are portrayed as entirely negative and unreceptive towards Jesus.²³⁵ The healing ministry of Jesus, which results in very different responses by the religious leaders and by the crowds, makes this evident. While it leads to opposition from the leaders (e.g. 12:22–24) it is described as the reason why the crowds follow Jesus (4:20, 12:15, 20:34). In this way the healing ministry sharply differentiates between the religious leaders and the crowds.²³⁶ Konradt rightly notices “the differentiation between the leadership and the ὄχλοι throughout the Gospel.”²³⁷

There is also a clear distinction between the disciples and the crowds.²³⁸ Cousland points out that even if the crowds are presented as “following Jesus,” they do not follow him in a dedicated way as disciples, which includes attachment to Jesus, renunciation of one’s family, self-denial, and eventually death.²³⁹ But it should be noted that the disciples are presented as the apprentices of Jesus and the future leaders of his community. This explain some of the differences between the groups. The reader gets limited information about the crowds’ engagement and response to different aspects of Jesus’ teaching.²⁴⁰ The greatest difference between the groups concerns the ministry of Jesus. While the crowds are the object of his merciful and therapeutic ministry, the disciples are the co-workers of Jesus and thus subjects in

²³⁵ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 201–02.

²³⁶ Joseph A. Comber, “The Verb *Therapeuō* in Matthew’s Gospel,” *JBL* 97 (1978): 431–34 (433).

²³⁷ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 171. See also pp. 89–90, 167. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 76, likewise points out that “Jesus’ public ministry is undertaken not to the people as such, but to the crowds as distinct from their leaders.”

²³⁸ See e.g. 5:1; 14:15, 19, 22; 15:32, 36. For a different view, see Gundry, *Matthew*, 358–59.

²³⁹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 156.

²⁴⁰ A clear distinction between the two groups is, however, noted concerning their understanding in 13:10–17.

the ministry.²⁴¹ In Matthew's story, Jesus' followers consist of both the inner circles of his apprentices/disciples and the outer circle of the crowds.

Jesus and the crowds

The positive response by large crowds has been noted above. But the presentation of the crowds in the teaching discourse in chapter 13 and the last mention of "the crowds" who take responsibility for the blood of Jesus in 27:24–25 have made scholars to moderate the crowds' loyalty to Jesus.²⁴² What is the relationship between Jesus and the crowds? Does the popularity of the leader decline at the end of his career and does the biography end with the people's rejection of Jesus?

The negative portrayal of the crowds in chapter 13 is surprising, since they earlier have been presented positively, as Konradt points out.²⁴³ Though the group is in danger of judgment, a change is not impossible, which the exhortation to hear in 13:9 indicates.²⁴⁴ Jesus also continues to minister to them (14:13–14) and exhorts them to understand (15:10). In 21:9 they are further presented with some kind of insight into Jesus' identity. The description of the crowds in 13:10–23 is thus not a final evaluation.²⁴⁵ The great numbers of people Jesus fed (14:21, 15:38) further underlines the popularity of Jesus after the discourse in chapter 13.

The last mention of "crowd/s" in the story is in the narration of the judgment of Jesus by Pilate in chapter 27.²⁴⁶ After Pilate "washed his hand in front of the crowd (τοῦ ὄχλου)," the reader is told that "all the people (ὁ λαός) answered: 'His blood be on us and our children'" (27:24–25). Do these verses imply that all the earlier responsive crowds now finally turn against Jesus? Konradt has convincingly shown that this conclusion is improbable. He points out that the description in 26:47 about a crowd "from the high priests and the elders of the people" shows that this crowd is "newly defined in contrast with the preceding occurrences."²⁴⁷ This crowd is a Jerusalem crowd.²⁴⁸ The same is the case with the "crowd" in chapter 27, which is

²⁴¹ Cf. Minear, *Matthew*, 19, who points out that "Matthew shows a special interest in how Jesus trained the twelve to care for the crowds."

²⁴² Cousland, *The Crowds*, 22, proposes that the author presents the crowds as fulfilling the plan of God, and thus as both needy and responsive to Jesus and at the same time as a stubborn people who like their forefathers reject the prophet of God. Cf. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 170–71, who describes them as neutral in their relationship to Jesus.

²⁴³ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 244.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 253, and Minear, "Disciples and Crowds," 35, who points out: "In the parabolic vocabulary the *ochloi* represent several types of soil, both edible and inedible fish, both wheat and weeds, both sons of the Kingdom and sons of the devil."

²⁴⁵ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 256–59.

²⁴⁶ 27:15, 20, 24.

²⁴⁷ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 142. Contra Powell, "Religious Leaders," 149, who proposes that 26:47 indicates that the crowds and the leaders now have the same point of view.

²⁴⁸ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 143. Cf. Minear, "Disciples and Crowds," 35.

indicated by the use of $\pi\alpha\tilde{\varsigma}$ in 2:3 and 27:25.²⁴⁹ Konradt thus points out that it would “hardly make sense for Matthew to have undertaken the pointed and carefully executed differentiation of the authorities and the crowds, only to override it with one stroke in 27.20–25.”²⁵⁰ This conclusion is affirmed by the general negative portrayal of Jerusalem in Matthew’s story (cf. 2:3, 23:37) and the contrast between the resistant Jerusalem and the receptive crowds in Galilee.²⁵¹ Consequently, it is appropriate to conclude that it is not the people of Israel who take responsibility for the death of Jesus, but rather the people of *Jerusalem*.²⁵²

The influence of the religious leaders should also be noted. In 27:20 it is made clear to the reader that they “*persuaded* the crowds” ($\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\sigma\alpha\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \delta\chi\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) to release Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. The religious leaders are thus responsible for misleading the people of Jerusalem.²⁵³ The trial of Jesus also clarifies that a main reason for the hostility between Jesus and the religious leaders is the crowds’ great response towards Jesus’ leadership. In 27:18 the reader is told that Pilate “knew that it was out of envy ($\delta\iota\grave{\alpha}\ \phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\nu$) that they [the religious leaders] had handed him over.” The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders involves a power struggle over the influence of the crowds. Nolland correctly points out that the popularity of Jesus was the cause for the envy of the religious leaders.²⁵⁴

Consequently, it is appropriate to underline the popularity of Jesus among the people of Israel. The career of Jesus immediately resulted in a great response from the population in Judea, Galilee, and Syria (4:25). Throughout his public career Jesus is presented as a leader with crowds who follow him (8:1, 12:15, 19:2, 20:29).²⁵⁵ These repeated notions imply that the attitude of the ordinary people to

²⁴⁹ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 159–60. The term $\lambda\alpha\acute{o}\varsigma$ is used in this context (cf. 21:10–11, 23:37–39) as a synonym to $\delta\chi\lambda\omicron\varsigma$, which is also often the case in Luke–Acts. See further Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 153–66.

²⁵⁰ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 165.

²⁵¹ Cf. France, “Matthew and Jerusalem,” 112–13; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 167; Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 302–4. It should be noted, however, that several Galilean cities receive a harsh judgment from Jesus since they have seen his powerful actions but not repented (11:20–24).

²⁵² Warren Carter, “Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 259–82 (276); Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 166. Cf. Acts 13:27–28.

²⁵³ The influence of the religious leaders upon the people is generally noted by scholars. See e.g. Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 158; Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 115–16; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 229. Cf. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 338–39, who points out: “It is crucial for the understanding of Matthew to note that no judgment of final condemnation is uttered against the crowds ... Matthew is a Gospel which primary focus is the critique of leadership in defense of the people, the latter being presented as victims of abuse (9:36).”

²⁵⁴ John Nolland, “The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism,” in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 154–69 (165). See further pp. 272–73.

²⁵⁵ Cf. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 765, commenting on 20:29: “After a time of deliberate seclusion with his closest disciples, Jesus is now again the leader of a substantial popular

Jesus is mainly “of great popularity.”²⁵⁶ *Though Jesus receives serious opposition from the religious leaders and the people of Jerusalem, he is simultaneously, through the repeated characterization of following crowds, presented as a popular leader in Israel.*

4.3.2 The compassionate shepherd

The leaderless people

The reader is informed that when Jesus “saw the crowds he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and dejected (ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι), like sheep without a shepherd (ὥσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα)” (9:36). It is a common idea in the OT that when there is a lack of a true leader, a shepherd, the people will suffer.²⁵⁷ The scene in 9:35 is especially reminiscent of the context in Ezek 34:1–6.²⁵⁸ The reason why Jesus has compassion for the crowds is thus related to their lack of good leadership.²⁵⁹ That Jesus sees the people as leaderless is confirmed by the instructions to his disciples who are sent out to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6).²⁶⁰

The allusion to Ezek 34 makes clear to the reader that the crowds are especially needy.²⁶¹ Cousland points out that the “chief trait” of the crowds is “an overwhelming need.”²⁶² The notion that the people were “harassed and dejected” suggests that they not only lacked good leaders, but also suffered under leaders who devoured them.²⁶³ This also relates the scene closely to Ezek 34, where the poor state of the people is a result of harsh and brutal leadership. Timothy Laniak rightly

movement among his own Galilean people, even though they are now in the foreign territory of Judea.”

²⁵⁶ Nolland, “Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism,” 165. Cf. Minear, “Disciples and Crowds,” 31: “Far from being an amorphous and neutral category, the *ochloi* played a highly positive role as followers of Jesus, accepting his prophetic authority and accompanying him from the beginning to the end of his career.”

²⁵⁷ Num 27:17, 1 Kgs 22:17, 2 Chr 18:16, Ezek 34:5, Zech 10:2.

²⁵⁸ See e.g. Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 275; Huntzinger, “End of Exile,” 199–200; Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1–109 (35).

²⁵⁹ Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, 185. See also Bornkamm, “End-expectation and Church,” 18; Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 275; Witherington, *Matthew*, 207.

²⁶⁰ Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 278; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 90. Cf. Jer 50:6.

²⁶¹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 92.

²⁶² Cousland, *The Crowds*, 122.

²⁶³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 166; Witherington, *Matthew*, 207; Turner, *Matthew*, 263; Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 146.

concludes that it is “not simply human need that moves Jesus, but *their predicament as a flock not properly led*.”²⁶⁴

What have been neglected by the present leadership are both the spiritual and physical needs of the people, which can be seen by the immediate context where Jesus both deals with sickness and sin (9:2, 13).²⁶⁵ The description of the condition of the crowds in 9:36 is thus simultaneously a polemic against the religious leaders.²⁶⁶ The author does not repeat the leaderless state of the people in the feeding stories (14:13–21, 15:32–38), even if there are allusions to Ezek 34. This indicates that the crowds are not without shepherds any more, since Jesus has sent out his disciples to be shepherds for the lost sheep of Israel (10:6).²⁶⁷

A merciful leader

It is made clear to the reader that when Jesus saw the condition of the crowds, as needy and leaderless, “he had compassion for them (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν)” (9:36). The mercy of Jesus is emphasized in his relationship to the crowds and is thus related to his leadership as the shepherd of the people. The caring and compassionate leadership of Jesus, which was hinted to the reader in chapter two, is now clarified and underlined.²⁶⁸ The verb σπλαγχνίζεσθαι is used repeatedly in the portrayal of Jesus in the story.²⁶⁹ Hagner points out that it is “a strong word describing deep compassion.”²⁷⁰ It not only expresses a sympathy with people’s needs, but also a practical deed to meet the needs.²⁷¹ Often it is used when Jesus heals, to express the reason for his action. Cabrido rightly points out that compassion is a “key characterization” of Jesus.²⁷²

The mercy of Jesus is seen in multiple ways. Compassion is underlined in the section of 8:13–9:17, where he calls a social outcast (the toll-collector) and says that

²⁶⁴ Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, 185. Italics his. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:167. For a different view, see Luz, *Matthew*, 2:64.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 375.

²⁶⁶ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 166. Cf. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 407. Carter, *Matthew*, 125, suggests that the condition of the crowds is impacted by the “rule of Rome and its allies.”

²⁶⁷ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 121–22. The polemic against the present leadership and the introduction of new shepherds resemble the situation in Jer 23:1–5. See Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet*, 1:180–81.

²⁶⁸ The shepherd’s concern for lost sheep is also made clear to the reader in 12:11–14, where Jesus refers to the shepherd imagery and heals the hand of a man. Cf. Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, 188.

²⁶⁹ 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 18:27, 20:34.

²⁷⁰ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:260. BDAG translates the term σπλαγχνίζεσθαι to “have pity” and “feel sympathy.”

²⁷¹ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 373.

²⁷² John A. Cabrido, “A Mark of the Shepherd: The Narrative Function of σπλαγχνίζομαι in Matthew’s Story of Jesus,” *PhiSac* 43 (2008): 163–180 (164).

he has come for the sake of the sick.²⁷³ Baxter notices that Jesus is presented as a “man of the people” and not merely as a “man for the people,” the ideal king in the Greco-Roman tradition.²⁷⁴ This is made clear to the reader when Jesus reaches out to marginalized people (8:2–4) and spends time with despised sinners (9:9–12). “In sharp contrast to the elitist values of the Roman Empire, Jesus models inclusivity in his personal, social interactions.”²⁷⁵ Though Baxter’s presentation of the ideals in the Greco-Roman traditions needs to be nuanced, since it has been seen in chapter two that closeness to the people is underlined in some of the biographical presentation of good leaders, he correctly points out that Jesus is presented as a man of the people.

The sending of the disciples to partake in the ministry of proclamation and healing (10:1–8) follows immediately after the description of Jesus’ compassion for the crowds and the need of laborers for the harvest (9:36–38). The ministry of Jesus is thus clearly motivated by his compassion for the people (cf. 15:32).²⁷⁶ The therapeutic ministry and the feeding of the crowds are closely related, since the compassion of Jesus for the crowds is the reason for his action in both cases.²⁷⁷ The words of Jesus also show the importance of compassion for Jesus, since the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:23–35) emphatically underlines the necessity of compassion (18:27, 33).²⁷⁸ That Jesus is presented as a compassionate leader is further confirmed by the contrast with the religious leaders. They are repeatedly criticized for neglecting mercy (9:13, 12:7, 23:23). On the primary narrative level Jesus is the only character who is characterized in this way. Cabrido thus rightly concludes that the other leaders in Matthew’s story function as foil characters that Jesus is contrasted with: “Compassion distinguishes Jesus from Israel’s political and religious leadership and marks him as Israel’s true Shepherd.”²⁷⁹

Cousland points out that the following of the crowds is related to the shepherd imagery. In the OT and in Matthew the focus is on the leading of the shepherd and

²⁷³ Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 2:116. Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:52.

²⁷⁴ Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 194. Italics his.

²⁷⁵ Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 194.

²⁷⁶ Heinz J. Held, “Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories,” in *Tradition and Interpretation of Matthew*, by Günter Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz J. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 165–299 (258), points out that “mercy is repeatedly exalted as an essential moment of his action.” See also e.g. Cabrido, “A Mark of the Shepherd,” 168; Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 159. It should be noted that the motivation for the ministry of Jesus is also related to the coming of the kingdom. Cf. Bauer, *Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 90.

²⁷⁷ Minear, “Disciples and Crowds,” 31. The reader is here reminded about Ezek 34, which mentions both healing (34:4) and feeding (34:14–15) of God’s people. See Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 703.

²⁷⁸ The teaching of Jesus thus both underlines high ethical requirements (cf. 5:48) and the importance of compassion. Cf. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation. A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 101, who notices that throughout Matthew “rigor and mercy are set side by side.”

²⁷⁹ Cabrido, “A Mark of the Shepherd,” 179.

not the following of the sheep. The latter, however, is implicit since the shepherd is described as one who is going before his sheep.²⁸⁰ The crowd's attraction to Jesus is related to him as a leader from God who delivers blessings of the age of the Messiah to them.²⁸¹ "The crowds instinctively follow him because he, as their leader, can provide what their own leaders cannot. As shepherd to the sheep of Israel, he provides them with rest and fulfillment of their needs."²⁸² The use of the shepherd imagery and the allusions to king David shows that the relationship between Jesus and the crowds is thus defined, not as the one between a master and a disciple, but as the one between a king and his subjects.²⁸³

Jesus' ministry to the crowds visibly shows that Jesus benefits the people. The healing ministry in particular makes clear that his concerns are not only for the spiritual needs of the people, but also their physical wellbeing.²⁸⁴ Jesus is thus presented as a leader who has holistic concerns for the people.²⁸⁵ Keener points out that the statement in 14:14, where Jesus in compassion for the great crowds heals the sick among them, is "a description of Jesus gladly providing patronal benevolence for any who needed him."²⁸⁶

Neyrey proposes that the author characterizes Jesus as man of "magnanimity" (μεγαλοψυχία), a virtue often highlighted as a reason for praise in ancient rhetoric, since the deeds of Jesus are done for the sake of others.²⁸⁷ According to Neyrey, the benefactions of Jesus are seen most clearly in the healing ministry, but also in his

²⁸⁰ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 169. Cf. John 10:4–5, 27.

²⁸¹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 301. The crowds' following of the Davidic shepherd thus points to the fulfillment of Ezek 34:23. See Cousland, *The Crowds*, 170. Cf. Chouinard, "Literary Study," 268: "The shepherd-imagery directly connects with Matthew's Davidic Christology ... by amplifying the messianic involvement of Jesus with the people in terms of a compassionate leader."

²⁸² Cousland, *The Crowds*, 168.

²⁸³ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 171.

²⁸⁴ Morris, *Matthew*, 88. Possibly the healing ministry is to be understood as a partially outworking of the statement in 1:21, where Jesus is told to save the people from their sins. Cf. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 117. In the case of the healing of the paralytic man (9:2–9) there seem to be a relationship between sin and healing. See also France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 343–44.

²⁸⁵ See Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*, 51; Cousland, *The Crowds*, 117; Turner, *Matthew*, 139.

²⁸⁶ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 408. Cf. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 111, and Cabrido, "A Mark of the Shepherd," 167. Van Veldhuizen, "A Model of Hellenistic Philanthropy," 223, proposes that Jesus is presented as a ruler with the virtue of philanthropy in 25:31–46, seeing to the needs of the people. But "the least of these my brothers" (τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων) in 25:40 probably refers to the followers of Jesus and not to the poor and needy generally. This is the way the reader understands the term, since Jesus already has identified himself with his disciples in 10:40 and made clear that "brothers" are those who do the will of the Father (12:50). See e.g. John R. Donahue, "The 'Parable' of the Sheep and the Goats: A Challenge to Christian Ethics," *TS* 47 (1986): 3–31 (25); Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 207–31; Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 416. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 957, points out that "probably the majority of recent interpreters" understands the text in this way.

²⁸⁷ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 123–24. See also Talbert, *Matthew*, 242.

wisdom and teaching, feedings, rescues, exorcisms, forgiveness, and mercy.²⁸⁸ Though Neyrey rightly underlines that Jesus benefits the people in several ways, it seems more appropriate to describe him as a man of “benevolence” rather than magnanimity. Even if the latter virtue can be related to kindness,²⁸⁹ it has been clarified in the second chapter that benevolence is a common trait of the good leader and it is closely related to compassion, which is underlined in the portrait of Jesus.

In several ways Jesus is presented as a compassionate leader who cares for the people. The use of the shepherd imagery, the repeated notion of his merciful deeds, his concern for mercy in his words, and the contrast with unmerciful leaders clarify that Jesus is a compassionate leader who benefits the people physically and spiritually.

4.3.3 The empowering leader

In the beginning of Jesus’ career, the reader was told that Jesus called disciples to “follow” him and that he should make them to be “fishers of humans” (4:19). In the presentation of Jesus’ ministry of teaching, proclamation, and healing in 4:23–9:35 the disciples are frequently said to be following Jesus (e.g. 8:23, 9:19), but so far in the story they are not active in the ministry.²⁹⁰ They are rather presented as witnesses to the ministry of Jesus.²⁹¹ But in the following section, 9:36–11:1, often labeled as “the mission discourse,” the author begins to clarify this role of the disciples.²⁹² The notion in 10:1 that Jesus gave his disciples authority shows the reader that “[t]he promised empowering of Jesus’ disciples (4.19) is in progress.”²⁹³ This implies a shift in the characterization of the disciples, who now are not only Jesus’ followers, but also his co-workers. With the involvement of the disciples in ministry, a new phase of the story begins.²⁹⁴

The disciples’ mission (10:1–5) is an important part of Jesus’ training of his students in preparation for their final mission (28:16–20). Alexander Bruce points out that “[t]he mission of the disciples as evangelists or miniature apostles was partly, without doubt, an educational experiment for their own benefit.”²⁹⁵ The

²⁸⁸ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 42–43. Cf. Neyrey, “Jesus, Gender, and the Gospel of Matthew,” 59, where he points out that Jesus is presented as “benefactor.”

²⁸⁹ Cf. Isocrates, *Evag.* 45.

²⁹⁰ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 71–72.

²⁹¹ Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 259.

²⁹² Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 71–72. See also Edwards, *Matthew’s Narrative Portrait*, 46, and Carter, *Matthew*, 219.

²⁹³ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 81.

²⁹⁴ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 80–82.

²⁹⁵ Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 99. He also uses the expression “apprentice apostleship” about the mission of the Twelve (p. 109). Cf. Carson, “Matthew,” 276.

leader who has been teaching and showing the kingdom to his apprentices, now involves them to actively bring the kingdom to the people of Israel.

The summary statement in 9:35 not only finishes the text unit from 4:23, but also introduces a new segment which will last until 11:1, when another summary of the ministry of Jesus is given. In this way 9:35 functions as a “hinge” verse which links 4:23–9:35 with 9:35–11:1 and thus makes 4:23–11:1 into a unified text unit. For this reason, the ministry of the disciples is not only paralleled with Jesus’ ministry, but also integrated with his ministry.²⁹⁶

New leaders for Israel

The context of the mission discourse makes clear that the empowering of the disciples is for the sake of crowds. As noted above, Jesus’ compassion for the crowds results in him authorizing his disciples to be involved in ministry to them.²⁹⁷ The increasing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders, caused by the miracles of Jesus that are described in chapter 8–9, indicates that they are not true shepherds of the people any more. In this situation, when the crowds are without good leaders, Jesus sends out his disciples to minister to the people.²⁹⁸ The empowering and sending of the disciples is thus described as a solution to the problem with the needy crowds, which is also expressed by the harvest metaphor in verse 9:37. The tension between the great harvest, the scope and the pressing needs of the crowds, and the few laborers is resolved by Jesus’ commission of the disciples as his co-workers in the ministry.²⁹⁹

The reference to “the twelve” disciples for the first time in the story (10:1), which is also repeated in the discourse (10:2, 5; 11:1), implies that Jesus has finished calling disciples (4:18–22, 9:9) and that he now has a fixed group around him.³⁰⁰ The number twelve corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. 19:28) who are

²⁹⁶ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 72–73. Bauer, *Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 90–91, also points to the unity of 4:23–11:1 and an emphasized analogy between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the disciples. Cf. Shuler, “Philo’s Moses and Matthew’s Jesus,” 100, who suggests that the material in Matt 5–11 is topically ordered with the purpose to present Jesus as teacher, preacher, and healer and at the same time underline the faith which the disciple needs in order to minister as Jesus.

²⁹⁷ That the ministry of the disciples is an extension of Jesus’ care for the people is also seen in 14:16 where the disciples are taught to “emulate Jesus’ compassionate ministry,” as Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 297, notices.

²⁹⁸ Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 229. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:158.

²⁹⁹ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 79. Some scholars suggest that the harvest metaphor (9:37–38) points to the final judgment (see e.g. Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 139–40, and Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 138). Other scholars propose that the urgency of the situation is expressed (see e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:260, and Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 109). The context of the metaphor makes it probable that it refers to the needs of the crowds and the urgency of the situation.

³⁰⁰ Kingsbury, “Observations on the ‘Miracle Chapters,’” 562; Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 189 n. 47.

lacking good leaders. In this way the twelve disciples of Jesus are presented as new leaders of Israel.³⁰¹ Though Jesus is presented as the Shepherd of Israel, the disciples of Jesus are also to function as shepherds for the crowds who are “harassed and dejected, like sheep” (9:36). They can thus be described as “under-shepherds.”³⁰² This is confirmed in 10:6 where the disciples are sent to “the lost *sheep* of the house of Israel.” In addition, Jesus also gives the parable of the shepherd who searches for the lost sheep (18:12–14) when he instructs his disciples in how they should relate to the little ones.³⁰³

Leighton Ford notices that the author mentions Jesus’ contact with his disciples approximately twice as often as other groups (the crowds and the religious leaders). He also pays attention to the empowering leadership of Jesus in Matthew’s story and helpfully states: “He divided his energy among the many and the few, in line with his strategy of saving the sheep (the crowds) and building up the under-shepherds (the disciples).”³⁰⁴

Delegation of authority

In 10:1 the reader is told that Jesus gave “authority” (ἐξουσίαν) to his disciples. In chapter 8–9 he has clearly been presented as a man with authority and the reader is thus prepared for the following discourse. As one who possesses authority, he can give authority to others.³⁰⁵ The authority which Jesus gives to his disciples is the same that has recently been revealed when he had healed every sickness and disease (e.g. 8:2–3) and expelled unclean spirits (8:16, 28–34; 9:32–33). When the author describes the healing ministry of the disciples he uses the same words (πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν) as in the summary statement about Jesus’ healing ministry (9:35). It is thus evident that Jesus makes it possible for his apprentices to share his authority so they can share his ministry.³⁰⁶

When the reader is told in 10:5 that Jesus “sent out” (ἀπέστειλεν) his disciples it is implied that Jesus, who has delegated authority to his disciples, commissions them as his agents.³⁰⁷ According to Eung Park, the verb ἀποστέλλειν is a “technical term for delegation” and implies that the authority of the sender is imparted to the

³⁰¹ Turner, *Matthew*, 264.

³⁰² Huntzinger, “End of Exile,” 204. Cf. Minear, “Disciples and Crowds,” 32; Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 376–77; Turner, *Matthew*, 263.

³⁰³ Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 284, correctly concludes that the author “applies the shepherd image to the disciples as leaders who must go in search of a ‘little one’ who wanders.” Martin further observes that this is done “in imitation of the Master.”

³⁰⁴ Ford, *Transforming Leadership*, 164.

³⁰⁵ Talbert, *Matthew*, 122.

³⁰⁶ Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 80; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:265; Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 148. That Jesus is empowering his disciples to do the same thing that he himself does is also seen in 14:28–29, where both the master and the disciple walk on water. See Cousland, *The Crowds*, 164.

³⁰⁷ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 313.

one who is sent out.³⁰⁸ This is clarified to the reader in 10:40–42. The sending of the disciples can be understood more narrowly in light of their prophetic ministry, as seen above.³⁰⁹ In the OT the prophets were regarded as God’s agents.³¹⁰

Since the term “apostle” is used only in 10:2 it is exclusively used with a reference to “the twelve,” whose names are given to the reader.³¹¹ Park pays attention to the fact that the author does not distinguish between “the disciples” and the “apostles.” Consequently, “apostle” is defining the function of the disciples from this moment in the story.³¹²

The training of the Master

It has already been noted that Jesus is presented as a model for his disciples in Matthew’s story.³¹³ A lot of phraseological and substantive parallels in the mission discourse (e.g. “preach,” “heal the sick,” “raise the dead,” “cleanse lepers,” “cast out demons”) form an analogy between Jesus’ ministry and the disciples’ ministry.³¹⁴ Cousland rightly concludes that “it is Jesus’ own ministry that serves as the paradigm for the activity of his disciples ... they become *μυηταί* of Christ and his ministry.”³¹⁵

The only significant difference between Jesus and his disciples is that they are not commissioned to teach. This task will not be given to the disciples until the end of the story (28:16–20).³¹⁶ “Teaching” is the most prominent activity of Jesus and is related to both informing people generally and to apprenticing.³¹⁷ It is thus significant that it is not mentioned in the ministry of the disciples until the end of the story. The fact that teaching is reserved for the end shows the reader that the disciples are not yet fully equipped but still in a training process. Only when the disciples have fully learned the teaching of Jesus and when the mission is addressed

³⁰⁸ Eung C. Park, *The Mission Discourse in Matthew’s Presentation*, WUNT 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 91. For a different view, see Carson, “Matthew,” 276.

³⁰⁹ See p. 189.

³¹⁰ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 314–15.

³¹¹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:265.

³¹² Park, *Mission Discourse*, 86. Park further suggests that “the Twelve are called *μαθηταί* when they are trained, but they are called *ἀπόστολοι* when they are sent out for mission.” This proposal is, however, hard to sustain, since they are called *μαθηταί* when they are sent out for a worldwide mission at the end of the story (28:16).

³¹³ See 4.1.1.

³¹⁴ See e.g. Bauer, *Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 90–91.

³¹⁵ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 172. See also Hannan, *Sovereign Rule of God*, 79: “Jesus is the model of what it means to proclaim the good news of God’s *βασιλεία*.”

³¹⁶ Contra Witherington, *Matthew*, 228, who suggests that Jesus sends out his disciples to teach already in chapter 10.

³¹⁷ The proposal of Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus did*, 95, that the lack of this task shows that the disciples have not yet begun to make disciples themselves, is thus not a sufficient explanation.

to all people, they are ordered to teach.³¹⁸ Primarily, the disciples first need to understand the implications of Jesus' identity as Messiah (cf. 16:20–24).³¹⁹ The content of the story after the mission discourse also makes clear that Jesus continues to train his disciples to do the same thing as he does.³²⁰

The concluding statement of the discourse in 11:1 does not tell the reader anything about the disciples' ministry, but instead informs the reader that Jesus continues his.³²¹ The implication of this closing is that the author only gives the reader a concrete example of ministry in the action of Jesus. The commission and instruction of the disciples is thus to be understood in light of the example of Jesus.³²² The narrative conclusion in 11:1 that Jesus continued his ministry also shows that the mission of the disciples is parallel to the mission of Jesus, who is present with his missionaries (cf. 28:20).³²³

The mission discourse presents Jesus as a leader who empowers followers by delegating authority to them. Jesus is presented as a master who leads by example and who intentionally trains, develops, and empowers followers to become leaders themselves.

4.3.4 A man of peace?

When reading the mission discourse one wonders how Jesus is presented in relationship to peace. On the one hand the disciples are sent out to bring peace to the people (10:12–13), but on the other hand Jesus himself declares in the discourse: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace (εἰρήνην) on earth. I have not come to bring peace (εἰρήνην), but a sword (μάχαιραν)” (10:34). As Ulrich Luz remarks, the

³¹⁸ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 259.

³¹⁹ Cf. Bauer, *Structure of Matthew's Gospel*, 91.

³²⁰ See e.g. 14:22–33 and 21:18–22 (cf. 14:16), which make clear that the disciples can take part of the power of Jesus and thus perform mighty acts themselves. Their performance is, however, not completely successful (cf. 14:30–31, 17:16–17). See Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*, 52–61. Witherington, *Matthew*, 287, also points out that Jesus' saying in 14:16 shows that he expects his disciples to be shepherds to the people and to minister to them: “Perhaps one could call this on-the-job training.” See also Viviano, “Gospel according to Matthew,” 658.

³²¹ Some scholars draw excessive conclusions from this fact. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 173, for example, suggests that the reason for this is that the disciples are not yet prepared enough. The sending in 28:16–20 further implies, according to Barton, that the mission actually takes place outside the narrative time. Karen A. Barta, “Mission in Matthew: The Second Discourse as Narrative,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 Seminar Papers*, SPLSP 27 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 527–35 (530), however, rightly points out that since the text does not say that the disciples did not go out, the reader has to assume that they actually went out. In addition, the biographical genre of Matthew makes the focus on the protagonist appropriate.

³²² Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 126.

³²³ Park, *Mission Discourse*, 165–66.

sword saying “does not fit well” with the other sayings about peace.³²⁴ How does the reader understand this statement? Is Jesus presented in Matthew as a peaceful leader, like Plutarch’s Numa, or not?

Wiggins proposes that Jesus’ saying in 10:35 “points directly to purposeful, preemptive conflict.”³²⁵ It is doubtful, however, that it is the purpose of Jesus to create conflicts. More likely, the saying explains that divisions are unavoidable *consequences* of his and his followers’ ministry. As seen above, the prophetic proclamation of the kingdom is confrontational. Jesus is further engaged in a serious conflict with the religious leaders. The “sword” should be understood in this context as a metaphor for conflict and suffering and not be taken literally (cf. 26:51–52).³²⁶ It does not refer to warfare generally, but to the *persecution* of the followers of Jesus.³²⁷ In the context of the verse, the divisions which are the consequence of the proclamation of the gospel are not divisions among nations or people but within families.³²⁸ In addition, Jesus does not instruct his disciples to fight or resist the persecution, but to flee and to accept (10:23).³²⁹ The conclusion of Harrington is thus appropriate:

After the Beatitude on the peacemakers (5:9) and the call to love one’s enemies (6:44), Matthew could hardly have understood the saying as a call for (eschatological) warfare. Rather the saying simply calls attention to the decision required for or against the gospel, and the division among people that is a consequence of that decision.³³⁰

Though Jesus is clearly presented as a confrontational leader in Matthew’s story,³³¹ it does not imply that he is portrayed as a leader who seeks conflict and combat. On the contrary, both the words and deeds of the leader in the biography show his concern for peace. The teaching of Jesus presents him as peaceful and gentle. In the Sermon on the Mount, he encourages his followers to be “peacemakers”

³²⁴ Luz, *Matthew*, 2:109.

³²⁵ Wiggin, “Leadership Lessons,” 10.

³²⁶ See e.g. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 408, and Marius Nel, “‘Not Peace but a Sword’: Jesus and the Sword in Matthew,” *Neot* 49 (2015): 235–59 (243). For a different view, see Matthew Black, “‘Not peace but a sword’: Matt 10:34ff, Luke 12:51ff,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 287–94 (289).

³²⁷ Black, “‘Not peace but a sword,’” 288; Park, *Mission Discourse*, 153.

³²⁸ Black, “‘Not peace but a sword,’” 287–88. Cf. Luke 12:51.

³²⁹ Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:112: “Passive acceptance is the only possible response to the violence that results from the divisions caused by the gospel—the text speaks of no other violence.” Luz further points out that Matthew does not present “a revolutionary Jesus.” (p. 2:111).

³³⁰ Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 150 n. 34. See also Viviano, “Gospel according to Matthew,” 652; Nel, “‘Not Peace but a Sword,’” 241.

³³¹ See 5.3.1.

(εἰρηνοποιοί) (5:9) and to “not resist an evil person” (5:39).³³² In the mission discourse, he sends his apostles to bring peace to the people (10:12–13). The teaching of Jesus further underlines the importance of reconciliation and unity (5:23–26; 18:15, 19, 21–35). The presentation of Jesus in 12:19–20, as a man who “will not quarrel (οὐκ ἐρίσσει) ... break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick,” likewise underlines his gentleness.³³³

When Jesus comes to Jerusalem to confront its leadership, he enters the city riding on a donkey (21:1–7), which underlines his peaceful intentions.³³⁴ The reader is also informed that Jesus reluctantly judges the city (23:37). Moreover, his rebuke of the man who violently defends him in Gethsemane and the saying that “all who take the sword will die by the sword” (26:52), is a clear remark against violence and characterizes him as a man of peace.³³⁵ The contrast between Jesus, who does not make use of swords, and the squad sent out by the religious leaders, which were armed with “swords and clubs” (26:47), is striking.³³⁶

Through his actions and teaching Jesus shows great concern for peace, but he knows that his ministry will lead to conflicts. Peace is one of the main characteristics of the new messianic age according to the prophets (e.g. Isa 9:6–7, Zech 9:10). The statement in 10:34 shows that even if Jesus has inaugurated the presence of the kingdom of God (cf. 12:26), the peaceful messianic age has not yet arrived.³³⁷ Jesus’ ministry involves a combat against the evil forces (cf. 12:22–30). The consummation of the kingdom of heaven happens with the return of Jesus and only at that point he is portrayed as seated on the throne (19:28, 25:31). It is thus reasonable to conclude that the peaceful era still lies in the future. In order to attain this age Jesus needs to engage in a ministry which results in conflicts. France rightly points out that “the way to peace is not the way of avoidance of conflict.”³³⁸

³³² For Jesus’ teaching, through words and deeds, on nonviolence, see further Barbara E. Reid, “Violent Endings in Matthew’s Parables and Christian Nonviolence,” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 237–55 (242–48).

³³³ Michael Griffiths, *The Example of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 96; Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 203.

³³⁴ Morris, *Matthew*, 521; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:8. Cf. Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 86. He concludes that “Matthew has done well in portraying Jesus as a peaceable, meek, and humble king” (p. 90).

³³⁵ See e.g. Morris, *Matthew*, 675, and Nel, “‘Not Peace but a Sword,’” 251. Luz, *Matthew*, 3:419, even proposes that Jesus is here presented as a model of pacifism and even rejects self-defence. Cf. Hays, *Moral Vision*, 322. But it is doubtful if the statement, given in this context, could be interpreted in this way. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1013, argues that the general character of the statement in 26:52 suggests that “physical violence, and particularly retaliatory violence, is incompatible with following Jesus.” Cf. e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:513; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:791; Nel, “‘Not Peace but a Sword,’” 254–55.

³³⁶ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1014; Nel, “‘Not Peace but a Sword,’” 248.

³³⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:218; Nel, “‘Not Peace but a Sword,’” 239.

³³⁸ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 408.

Consequently, Jesus is presented as both confrontational and peaceful in Matthew.³³⁹

The consequence of the ministry of Jesus and his disciples is a disturbance of peace. The peaceful era will be established first in the return of Jesus and the fulfilment of the kingdom. At the same time, the words and deeds of Jesus in the story clearly portray him as a peaceful and gentle leader. Jesus is thus portrayed as both confrontational and peaceful.

4.4 Summary

The theme of leadership

In this section of the story, 4:12–11:1, Jesus begins a public career, takes initiatives, and launches a ministry of teaching, proclaiming, and healing. The theme of leadership, which was introduced in the previous section, is here continued. One of the first actions of Jesus is to call apprentices whom he trains, develops, and empowers to join him as co-workers in the ministry to the people of Israel. In the calling narratives the author uses leadership terms when he describes how Jesus invites people to follow him and how they respond. Jesus invites and summons the fishermen to “come after (δεῦτε ὀπίσω)” him and the reader is told that they “followed (ἠκολούθησαν)” the leader (4:20, 22). Jesus is presented as a leader who consciously calls and trains a group of twelve men to be leaders for the people in the future.

The portrait of Jesus as leader is established by the characterization of both his dedicated disciples and the large crowds who respond positively to his ministry and follow him. Jesus is repeatedly presented as a leader with different kinds of followers around him, and often the reader gets to know that “large crowds” follow the leader.

The shepherd imagery, which was introduced in 2:6, is repeated in 9:35–36 where Jesus recognizes the crowd’s need of a shepherd. The leaderless state of the crowds has made them needy, both spiritually and physically. In this situation, which resembles Ezek 34, Jesus is portrayed as the good leader of the people. The great need of the people makes him empower his disciples, through delegation of his authority, and involve them in ministry as his under-shepherds for the sake of the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6). Jesus, the Shepherd, thus provides good leadership for the leaderless crowds. The focus in this section is on the training of his disciples and the ministry to the crowds. But in the background a conflict with

³³⁹ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:703: “Despite its often violent polemics, no ancient document known to us shows more sensitivity to the desperate need for love and peace rather than hate and vengeance than does Matthew.”

the religious leaders is developing, which is indicated through the characterization of the crowds.

The character of the leader

This section belongs to the middle part of the biography. Jesus is here characterized through his words and deeds and more information is given about his moral character traits. The reader primarily learns that Jesus is a *compassionate* leader. When he sees needy people or hears their cries, he is merciful and reaches out to them. The compassion of Jesus is especially underlined in the context of his ministry to the crowds. That the crowds are leaderless, harassed, and dejected is harsh criticism against the religious leaders, who are repeatedly presented as unmerciful leaders. The compassion of Jesus is thus contrasted with the neglectful care of the religious leaders.

Though Jesus' ministry is necessarily confrontative and results in divisions, the overall portrait of the leader shows that he is characterized as a man of peace in the story. Through his words Jesus instructs his followers to bring peace to people, and in his teaching he encourages them not to retaliate and to seek reconciliation and unity. Likewise, the deeds of Jesus and his non-violent actions present him as a *peaceful and gentle* leader.

The relationship between the leader and the people

A lot of information about the leader's relationship to the people and how he leads them is given in this section. The reader now gets to know more about the leadership roles of Jesus. He is primarily presented as *teacher*, since teaching is described as his most prominent activity. He is mainly the master who informs, instructs, and explains things for his apprentices, but he is also presented as a teacher who informs the people in a general way. Jesus is further portrayed as a kind of lawgiver, though this title is not used in the story. His role as lawgiver is related to both his role as king and teacher. Matthew also presents Jesus as a *prophet* in the story. This is primarily seen in the close relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus and his public proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. This message both encourages and confronts the audience.

Jesus is obviously presented as a *role model* to his apprentices. Most clearly it is seen when Jesus invites the disciples to come after him and relate to him as their master and imitate him. That Jesus is a model is also seen in the structure of the biographical story. Chapters 8–9 give examples of Jesus' therapeutic deeds, which are followed by the commission of the apostles in chapter 10 to do the same thing that Jesus has done. The obvious parallels between the ministry of Jesus and the disciples highlight the presentation of Jesus as a role model and one who leads by example.

The first disciples are presented as *willing followers* of the leader when they immediately leave their tasks and follow Jesus. Jesus does not use authoritative

commands to make them follow him, but they choose to do so willingly. The crowds are also presented as willing followers who want to be around Jesus. At several instances the author tells the reader that great crowds respond to the mission of Jesus and follow him. In this way Jesus is presented as a popular leader in Israel.

The third main activity of Jesus, healing, shows the reader that Jesus has real concerns for the needs of the people. The healing ministry, together with the shepherd imagery and the characteristics of the Davidic Messiah, portrays Jesus as a leader who cares for their needs. He is presented as a benefactor of the people who *benefits the people* both spiritually and physically.

That Jesus is repeatedly presented as a leader who takes care of the crowds also implies that he is presented as a leader with a *close relationship* to the people. Through his merciful deeds, when he heals a marginalized person, calls a social outcast, and shares the fellowship with sinners, he is portrayed as a man of the people. Jesus is, however, foremost presented as living closely with his apprentices, whom he spends most time with and teaches in private settings. The relationship between Jesus and his disciples, whom he calls “brothers,” is intimate and familiar.

5. The leader and his opponents

(Matt 11:2–25:46)

Ancient biographies often describe both the appreciation and rejection of the protagonist by friends, opponents, crowds, and leaders, and thus outline the effects of the career of the protagonist, as noted in the previous chapter. When Isocrates, in the middle part of his biography, discusses the military success of Evagoras and Conon in the war against Sparta, he points out that the king of Persia was not pleased, “but the greater and more merits they achieved, the more he feared them” (57). The biographer underlines that the Persian king was threatened by Isocrates and thus started a war against him (59–60).¹

In the first part of his public career (4:12–11:1), Jesus has been presented to the reader as a popular leader with willing followers. From chapter 11, the author begins to focus more on the opposition against the new leader. Frances Gench rightly observes that from 11:2 “the atmosphere changes as Matthew develops the theme of repudiation.”² When Jesus ministers to Israel, some of the people accept his leadership and some do not accept it. As seen in the previous chapter, the author clearly distinguishes between the crowds who receive Jesus, and the religious leaders of Israel who oppose him.³ The latter group’s opposition is caused by the ministry of Jesus and his popularity among the crowds.⁴

Central to the plot of Matthew’s story is a conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders concerning the influence over the people (cf. 27.18), as Repschinski notes:

¹ For opposition of the leader in Philo’s *Moses*, see 1.193–95.

² Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 162. See also Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 1.

³ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 59, suggests that 4:17–11:1 describes the ministry of Jesus to Israel, while 11:2–16:20 tells about Israel’s rejection of Jesus. Cf. Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 295; Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 162. While it is correct that the latter section focuses more on the rejection of Jesus, it is misleading to refer to “Israel’s” rejection, since great crowds surround Jesus. See further 4.3.1. Cf. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 76; Weren, “The Macrostructure of Matthew’s Gospel,” 180.

⁴ See e.g. Minear, *Matthew*, 80; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*, 162; Viviano, “Gospel According to Matthew,” 654. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 88, also notices that the structure of the career of Jesus is related to causation. In the first part, 4:17–11:1, Jesus (and his disciples) begins to minister to Israel. This is the cause to the following part of Jesus’ career, which tells about some of the effects of the ministry. Bauer, however, suggests that the second part consists of 11:2–16:20, and that it shows the positive and negative response. As seen in the previous chapter, the positive response is highlighted already in the first part of Jesus’ career.

“The conflict between Jesus and his adversaries is a conflict over rightful leadership of the people of Israel.”⁵ In the second phase of Jesus’ career the conflict is deepening and the opposition is increasing. Jesus continues to teach his disciples and to minister to the crowds, but the conflict with the opponents now takes up more discourse time in the narrative than before. The adversaries not only play an important role in the plot of the story, they also have a significant function in the characterization of Jesus. As noted in the previous chapters, some of the character traits of Jesus are highlighted through contrast with other leaders. By contrasting other leaders with Jesus, the author gives the reader a richer and clearer portrait of the true leader. In this section of the story (11:2–25:46), which continues the middle part of the biography, the reader gets more information about both the main traits of the leader and his relationship to the people.

5.1 A wise and humble leader (11:2–16:12)

When John the Baptist gets information about “the deeds of the Messiah” he sends his disciples to get clarification of the identity of Jesus (11:2–3). The beginning of the eleventh chapter (11:2–6), with the question from John and the answer of Jesus, is one of the kernel events in the story.⁶ Here the reader gets confirmation of the messianic identity of Jesus, and also indications that not all Israel will receive Jesus as Messiah. The following narrative material gives more information about the character traits of the leader and the features of his leadership. Jesus is presented as a wise and humble leader, whose leadership is beneficial to the people.

5.1.1 Jesus and wisdom

The incarnation of Wisdom?

In chapter 11, two references to wisdom (11:19 and 11:25) are made. Jesus says, after describing the criticism of his and John’s lifestyles, that “wisdom (ἡ σοφία) is justified by her deeds” (11:19). Some scholars propose that this statement identifies Jesus with Wisdom.⁷ The statement, however, relates to the ministries of both Jesus

⁵ Repschinski, *Controversy Stories*, 319. Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, 190, likewise points out: “Matthew’s ideal King has not been accepted by the current leadership who perceive in Jesus a threat to their position as leaders of the people.” See also Powell, “Religious Leaders,” 101, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 475. See further pp. 272–74.

⁶ Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” 244; Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks,” 477.

⁷ Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law*, 33, regards this verse as an “unmistakably clear instance of the personification of Wisdom.” For a similar view, see e.g. B. Rod Doyle, “Matthew’s Wisdom: A Redaction-Critical Study of Matthew 11.1–14.13A” (PhD diss., University of Melbourne,

and John. The reader already knows that these ministries are closely related and thus understands the statement in 11:19 as a reference to them both.⁸ In their ministries, regardless the differences, the righteousness related to wisdom is revealed.⁹ “Wisdom” thus refers to the wisdom of God, which is the usual sense, and relates to the actions and lifestyles of John and Jesus.¹⁰

Jesus also refers to wisdom in 11:25. Here he thanks the Father who has “hidden these things from the wise (σοφῶν) and the intelligent (συνετῶν) and has revealed them to little children (νηπίοις).”¹¹ Jesus further declares that he is the One with intimate knowledge about the Father and reveals understanding to disciples, saying “no one knows the Father except the Son and those whom the Son wants to reveal (ἀποκαλύψαι) him to” (11:27). The knowledge of Jesus is thus revelatory and not that kind which originates from human understanding of life.¹²

Most scholars understand the following invitation in 11:28–30 from the passage in Sirach 51:23–27,¹³ and thus conclude that 11:25–30 presents Jesus as the true Revealer or incarnation of Wisdom.¹⁴ This conclusion is doubtful, even if Jesus is

1984), 121–25; Celia Deutsch, “Wisdom in Matthew: Transformation of a Symbol,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 13–47 (33–36); Luz, *Matthew*, 2:149.

⁸ See pp. 145–46.

⁹ See e.g. Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 180, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 435.

¹⁰ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 419; Carson, “Matthew,” 314.

¹¹ Several scholars propose that “the wise and the intelligent” refer to the religious leaders and “little children” to the disciples (see e.g. S. Bacchiocchi, “Matt 11:28–30: Jesus’ rest and the Sabbath,” *AUSS* 22 (1984): 289–316 (292), and Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 167 n. 25). But the similar theme in the kingdom discourse (13:1–23), which concerns the understanding of the crowds, indicates that the reference is broader. Cf. Carson, “Matthew,” 318. The words “these things” in 11:25 probably refer to the identity of Jesus the Messiah, which has been in focus since 11:2. See e.g. Cousland, *The Crowds*, 160–61, and Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 218 n. 261.

¹² Witherington, *Matthew*, 237. The characterization of Jesus as a man of wisdom who reveals knowledge is also picked up and developed in the next teaching discourse where it is stated that Jesus fulfills the prophetic words by speaking in parables and uttering hidden things (13:35).

¹³ See e.g. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law*, 95–96, and Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 349. Cf. Celia Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom, Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11.25–30*, JSNTSup 18 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 137, who points to both Sir 6:18–37 and 51:13–30 as the closest parallels, and Witherington, *Matthew*, 239, who sees Sir 6:23–31 as the main influence. For a different view, see e.g. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 366–71; Blaine Charette, “‘To proclaim Liberty to the Captives’: Matt 11.28–30 in the Light of OT Prophetic Expectation,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 290–97 (297); Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 103; Jon Laansma, ‘I Will Give You Rest’: *The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4*, WUNT 98 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 196–200. Gundry, *Matthew*, 220, rightly points out that there is a difference between the Sirach text, where the scribe himself finds rest, and Matthew, where Jesus offers rest to others. See further Laansma, ‘I Will Give You Rest,’ 195–200, for differences between Sir 51 and Matt 11.

¹⁴ See e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:283–86 (cf. Dale C. Allison, “Two Notes on a Key text: Matthew 11:25–30,” *JTS* 39 [1988]: 477–85), who suggest that Jesus is presented in a way that is reminiscent of Moses, the Revealer par excellence (Exod 33:12–14). At the same time, they point out that Wisdom Christology is not a prominent category for the understanding of the Gospel of Matthew (2:295). Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:149 n. 45. The statement in 23:34 is also understood by

the revealer of the Father (11:27). In 11:27 Jesus declares that “all things have been handed over (παρεδόθη) to me by my Father.” This refers to his authority, rather than revelation or wisdom.¹⁵ The declaration thus corresponds to the saying in 28:18,¹⁶ and points to the “universal lordship” of Jesus.¹⁷ The following statement about “the Son” as corresponding to “the Father” implies a very high position of Jesus, a divine identity. The understanding of 11:27 as highlighting the authority of Jesus and not his revelation, also makes sense of the following statements about the yoke and the highlighted humility of Jesus, as will be seen below.¹⁸ The reference to the Messiah (11:2) and the emphasis on the authority of Jesus (11:27) imply that “[it] is not Sophia who addresses the people so much as their servant-king,” as Cousland points out.¹⁹ The statements in 11:19 and 11:27 nonetheless present Jesus as a wise man to the reader.²⁰

The wise leader

Though Jesus is not presented as the incarnation of Wisdom, his wisdom is definitely underlined in the biography. Later in this section of the narrative, in 12:42, the reader learns that Jesus represents something greater than “the wisdom (τὴν σοφίαν) of Solomon.” In the OT, wisdom is especially associated with king Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5–14).²¹ It was also a characteristic of the coming ideal king, the Messiah (Isa 11:2).²² When Jesus visits his hometown and teaches in the synagogue the author writes that the people were “astonished” (ἐκπλήσσεσθαι) by his wisdom

some scholars as a reference to Jesus as Wisdom. See Deutsch, “Wisdom in Matthew,” 46, and Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law*, 59–60.

¹⁵ See e.g. Versepunt, *Rejection of the Humble*, 141; Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 112; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 292. Cf. John 3:35–36. Contra e.g. A. M. Hunter, “Crux Criticorum—Matt. Xi. 25–30—A Re-Appraisal,” *NTS* 8 (1962): 241–49 (246), and Doyle, “Matthew’s Wisdom,” 182.

¹⁶ Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1264. See also Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 283–85; Leim, *Matthew’s Theological Grammar*, 84. Cf. Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 76.

¹⁷ Leim, *Matthew’s Theological Grammar*, 83.

¹⁸ The primary, explicit characterization of Jesus in chapter 11–12 is the humility of Jesus. See e.g. Versepunt, *Rejection of the Humble*, 139; Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 372; Laansma, ‘I Will Give You Rest,’ 223. Cf. Huub van de Sandt, “Matthew 11.28–30: Compassionate Law Interpretation in Wisdom Language,” in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, ed. Donald Senior, BETL 243 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 313–37 (327), who notices that the emphasis on humility “stands in sharp contrast to Wisdom theology.” He also admits that the clause in 11:29 “fits awkwardly with the parallel passage in Sirach” (p. 331).

¹⁹ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 162.

²⁰ Cf. Laansma, ‘I Will Give You Rest,’ 206, who points out that “wisdom themes are strong in Mt 11–12.” Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 119, likewise recognizes wisdom motifs in the text but does not see a “Wisdom Christology.”

²¹ Cf. Doyle, “Matthew’s Wisdom,” 332: “Solomon symbolizes wisdom in the OT as its pre-eminent possessor.”

²² Jürgen Goetzmann, “σοφία,” *NIDNTT* 3:1026–33 (1029).

(σοφία) and power (13:54). The discourse about the kingdom of heaven (13:1–53) also implies that Jesus is presented as a teacher of wisdom. This is seen in the way he teaches, since he makes use of parables, riddles, and aphorisms.²³ The overall content of the teaching of Jesus in the story, with beatitudes and wisdom discourses, also point to this conclusion.²⁴ Moreover, Jesus repeatedly encourages his disciples to be wise (7:24, 10:16, 24:45, 25:2) in his teaching discourses.

When the author narrates the challenge from the religious leaders' different questions, and the counter question from Jesus, he exemplifies the wisdom of the latter.²⁵ Those who heard Jesus' answer to the critical question of paying tax (22:15–22) “were amazed (ἐθαύμασαν)” (22:22). Similarly, the following question about the resurrection (22:23–33) also highlights the wisdom of Jesus, since the crowds who heard his answer “were astonished (ἐξεπλήσσοντο) at his teaching” (22:33). After three challenging questions, Jesus then takes the initiative and asks the Pharisees a question (22:41–46). But no one could give him an answer and no one dared to ask him anything more (22:46). Hagner rightly concludes: “The wisdom of Jesus the teacher has been vindicated.”²⁶

The meaning of “wisdom” (σοφία) changed over time in the Greek world. In the classic period, “wisdom” was often limited to theoretical aspects such as knowledge and intelligence. Later in Hellenistic times, practical aspects were included in the ideals of the wise man.²⁷ In the biblical writings, “wisdom” is also a wide-ranging concept, as Fred Burnett explains: “Wisdom can mean simply the practical skills and qualities which humans can acquire in order to live successfully, or wisdom can refer to God's knowledge and creative power which transcend human scrutiny.”²⁸ The usage of σοφία in Matthew is primarily related to the usage of the word in the OT and the Jewish literature, and thus expresses the overall approach to life which is shaped by the participation of the covenant with God.²⁹ The portrait of Jesus as a wise leader includes both the practical aspect of how to live one's life and the revelation of the knowledge of God.

²³ Witherington, *Matthew*, 125, 209. Witherington suggests that Jesus is presented as a “sage.” In a similar way Doyle, “Matthew's Wisdom,” 350–51, proposes that Jesus is presented in chapter 13 as a wisdom teacher who trains his disciples to become sages/scribes.

²⁴ Witherington, *Jesus the Sage*, 345. Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 246–47, likewise speaks about “Matthew's general portrayal of Jesus as a messianic teacher of wisdom.”

²⁵ Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 118: “Whether answering questions or deflecting criticisms, a wise and prudent person never lacked the right words to defend himself in conflict.”

²⁶ Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:651.

²⁷ Ulrich Wilckens, “σοφία,” *TDNT* 7:465–476 (467).

²⁸ Fred W. Burnett, “Wisdom,” *DJGFE* 873–77 (874).

²⁹ Goetzmann, *NIDNTT* 5:1026–33 (1030). Cf. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 419: “Wisdom is the application of knowledge to life in such a way that a person's activities are a concrete example of a life lived well in God's presence.”

Even if wisdom is not a central category for the identity of Jesus in Matthew, it is underlined as one of the main traits of the leader. Jesus is presented as a wisdom teacher with an intimate knowledge of the will of God who teaches his followers to live wisely.

5.1.2 A benevolent ruler

The meaning of the yoke metaphor

In 11:29 Jesus refers to his “yoke” when he exhorts the people: “Take my yoke upon you (ἄρατε τὸν ζυγόν μου ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς) and learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart.” How does the reader understand the yoke metaphor and the exhortation of Jesus?

The metaphor was used to describe the relationship between master and slave, owner and owned, king and subject.³⁰ In the ancient Near East it was widely used to talk about dominions of foreign kings.³¹ The yoke is likewise a metaphor for social or political submission in the OT and thus often has a negative implication (see e.g. 2 Chr 10:4, Deut 28:48, Jer 27:8).³² There is, however, also a usage of the metaphor as a reference to the covenant with God and God’s reign (see e.g. Jer 2:20, 5:5).³³ When the people of God bear the yoke of God they live in obedience, but when they rebel and follow other gods, they break the yoke of God.³⁴ Matthew Mitchell describes the yoke as “a biblical and ancient Near Eastern symbol of servitude and subservience.”³⁵ In rabbinic literature the metaphor refers to both the

³⁰ Charles L. Tyer, “Yoke,” *ABD* 6:1026–28 (1026).

³¹ See Moshe Anbar, “To Put One’s Neck under the Yoke,” in *Essays on Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na’aman*, ed. by Yairah Amit et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 17–19.

³² See further Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2001), 122–25. This meaning is also seen in later Jewish literature. See 1 Macc 8:31, *1 En.* 103.11–12.

³³ See Charette, “‘To proclaim Liberty,’” 291–93, and Matthew W. Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy, but What of Its Meaning? A Methodological Reflection Masquerading as a Philological Discussion of Matthew 11:30,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 321–40 (336).

³⁴ Tyer, *ABD* 6:1026. Later Jewish literature also uses the word in a positive sense as a metaphor for the subordination to the will of God which a Jew accepted willingly. See Karl H. Rengstorff, “ζυγός,” *TDNT* 2:898–901 (900–01), for its usage in the rabbinic literature.

³⁵ Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy,” 339. See also Johannes B. Bauer, “Das Milde Joch und die Ruhe, Matth. 11,28–30,” *TZ* 17 (1961): 99–106 (100), and Tyer, *ABD* 6:1026, who points out that the expression to “wear the yoke” “symbolized one’s subjugation to one’s political or economic ruler.” Cf. the humiliating Roman ritual *sub iugum missio* (“passing under the yoke”), which was used in ancient Rome when the Romans were triumphant over their enemies. See H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 132–63, especially p. 150.

kingdom of God and to the Torah.³⁶ It is generally closely related to “kingship” or “lordship” in Jewish literature.³⁷ According to the OT and the Jewish literature there is no option to live without a yoke, so the question is which yoke one lives under.³⁸ Concerning the usage of “yoke” in the NT, Leon Morris points out that it is “signifies bondage or submission to authority of some kind.”³⁹

How then is the reader to understand the metaphor in the present context in Matthew? Several suggestions have been presented.⁴⁰ Some scholars propose that the yoke is Jesus’ teaching.⁴¹ It has also been suggested that the yoke refers more specifically to a messianic Torah.⁴² The yoke metaphor is thus closely related to discipleship.⁴³ Many scholars understand the saying in light of the passage in Sirach 51:23–30, as noted above, and thus underline the wisdom of Jesus.⁴⁴

³⁶ See e.g. *m. Abot* 3:5; *m. Ber* 2:2 (text uncertain). I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, vol 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 9, concludes: “The main types of the phrase, positively applied, where two: the yoke of the kingdom or kingship of Heaven and the yoke of the commandments.” Cf. M. Maher, “‘Take my yoke upon you’ (Matt xi.29),” *NTS* 22 (1975): 97–103 (99).

³⁷ Van de Sandt, “Matthew 11.28–30,” 332 n. 62, proposes that “[i]n Second Temple and tannaitic literature the image of a ‘yoke’ represents Torah or wisdom.” Though the metaphor sometimes is related to wisdom (cf. Sir 51:26) and Torah, its usage is wider than that. See Adolf Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century*, JCP 11 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 36–118, especially pp. 36–41 and 92–94. He points out that “the yoke of God was the sign and symbol of His rule over Israel, so that עֲבָדָא means not a slave, but, as in Lev 25:42, 55 and in the Bible generally, the subject of a king to whose rule and authority he has submitted. Nothing in the statements indicates or implies that the yoke was made up by the sum total of the commandments or even by the Decalogue only.” (p. 38). Bücher, interestingly, refers to “Sirach’s peculiar imagery of the yoke,” which he find repeated in Matt 11 (pp. 71–72). April D. De Conick, “The Yoke Saying in the ‘Gospel of Thomas 90,’” *VC* 44 (1990): 280–94 (287), notes that in the Targums “yoke” and “lordship” seems to be synonymous. She concludes that “throughout Jewish literature, the terminology of ‘yoke’ is dependent upon the concept of ‘kingship’ or ‘lordship.’” Cf. Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 122, who points out that the identification of yoke with wisdom and Torah is rare in the LXX.

³⁸ Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 204.

³⁹ Morris, *Matthew*, 296. See also e.g. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 476, and Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 348. In Acts 15:10 the term is used in reference to the commandments of the OT law. In Gal 5:1 and 1 Tim 6:1 it is related to slavery. The term is also used in Rev 6:5 to describe a scale.

⁴⁰ See Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy,” 322–23.

⁴¹ E.g. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law*, 102; Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 42; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 292. Cf. Did. 6.1–2 where the expression “the yoke of the Lord (τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ κυρίου)” is used as a reference to the teaching of Jesus. Justin, *Dial.* 53.1, likewise refers to the “the yoke of his word (τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ λόγου αὐτοῦ).” Cf. Barn. 2.6.

⁴² Deutsch, “Wisdom in Matthew,” 38. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:324; Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 114; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 449.

⁴³ See e.g. Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 43; Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 375; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 424.

⁴⁴ See e.g. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 170, who suggests that the invitation has the character of “advertisement for a school,” and that Jesus here makes use of the language normally used by the sages. Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 135, likewise writes that Jesus “invites persons to enroll in his

A number of reasons, however, make it more probable that the yoke metaphor refers to the authority or rule of Jesus, in agreement with the most common usage in ancient literature. The context of the passage, with its concern for the identity of the Messiah (11:2), the Davidic King, and the emphasis on the divine authority of Jesus (11:27) need to be noted. In the Psalms of Solomon the yoke metaphor is used for the rule of the coming Davidic king who will “have the heathen nations to serve him under his yoke (ὑπὸ τὸν ζυγὸν αὐτοῦ)” (17:30).⁴⁵ In 11:30 Jesus declares that his yoke is *χρηστός*. This term, which characterizes the yoke of Jesus, is often used in the descriptions of rulers or reigns.⁴⁶ The rest motif in Matthew should probably not be understood in the light of the Sirach passage, but as a reference to the eschatological blessing which is related to the Davidic shepherd (Ezek 34:15, 23).⁴⁷ The yoke metaphor thus seems to refer to the rule or lordship of Jesus. This interpretation has support in the parallel in the Gospel of Thomas (90) where Jesus says that “my yoke is easy and my *lordship* is meek” [Gathercole].⁴⁸ Versepunt thus seems right when he points out that “Jesus’ call to ‘take my yoke upon you’ becomes a plea for submission to his authority and servitude under his sovereign rule.”⁴⁹

The yoke does then not refer to the teaching of Jesus, but to his rule or lordship.⁵⁰ This implies that the emphasis in the passage is primarily on the character of Jesus as a ruler, not on the characteristics of his teaching.⁵¹ To keep the commandments of Jesus and follow his teaching is, however, a main consequence of accepting the yoke. As seen in the previous chapter, the teaching of Jesus is not of the common

school of Wisdom where he is both the teacher and the core curriculum.” Cf. Deutsch, “Wisdom in Matthew,” 37.

⁴⁵ Cf. Joel Willits, “Matthew and Psalms of Solomon’s Messianism: A Comparative Study in First-Century Messianology,” *BBR* 22 (2012): 27–50 (37–39), who also notices the parallel between Pss. Sol. and Matt, but differently underlines the Wisdom motif in Matt 11:25–30 and the political sovereignty of Jesus. Cf. 1 Kgs 12:4, 9, where the yoke metaphor is used for the reign of Solomon.

⁴⁶ Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy,” 334, surprisingly notices the connection between “yoke” and the reign of Solomon that is *χρηστός* (Josephus, *Ant.* 8.213) but does not regard it as a helpful parallel.

⁴⁷ See further below.

⁴⁸ Bauer, “Das Milde Joch,” 103, suggests that the corresponding Greek term to the Coptic is *κυριότης*. Simon Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Language and Influences*, SNTSMS 151 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 94, points out that “the interchangeability of ‘yoke’ and ‘lordship’ is very unsurprising ... The metaphorical use of ‘yoke’ presupposes a relationship between a *κύριος*/δεσπότης/βασιλεύς or similar on the one hand, and a *δοῦλος* on the other.”

⁴⁹ Versepunt, *Rejection of the Humble*, 147. See also Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission*, 113: “Just as two draught animals would get a yoke placed on their necks, Jesus wished the disciples to fully come under his authority and leadership.” Cf. Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 7; Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 125.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul*, 75–76. The lordship of Jesus is also underlined in Matthew. See 7:21–22, 10:24–25, 12:8, 21:3.

⁵¹ Cf. Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*, TENT 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 532, who concludes about the saying of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas: “What is clear, here ... is that there is an emphasis on the person of Jesus and his character, and his ability to provide salvation in the shape of rest.”

sort, but it is a kind of law.⁵² In the same way as obedience to the Torah is a practical consequence of the submission to God's kingdom in the rabbinic thinking,⁵³ obedience to the teaching/law of Jesus is a practical consequence of the submission to his rule and authority.⁵⁴

As noted in the previous chapter, Jesus' roles as king and teacher are intertwined in Matthew's portrayal. In this passage the role of the teacher is also present in the words, "learn from me" (μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ) in 11:29. Here the people are exhorted to learn from the humility that Jesus models. The statement that "the burden (τὸ φορτίον)" of Jesus is "light" (ἐλαφρόν) in 11:30 likewise seems to be a reference to his law, since it contrasts with "heavy burdens (φορτία βαρέα)" of the religious leaders (cf. 11:28). At the end of the biography, the integration of Jesus' roles as king and teacher becomes clear to the reader when Jesus, who has all authority, sends his apostles to disciple the nations and teach them his commandments (28:18–20). A central feature of Matthew's Christology is thus the portrayal of Jesus as a king who rules and leads through his authoritative teaching. The rule of Jesus is transmitted through his law. The portrayal of Jesus as a king/ruler with authoritative teaching and commands, who is also a model for the people, resembles the widespread idea in the ideology of Hellenistic kingship that the king should be an animate law through his life.⁵⁵

A good and beneficial leadership

In verses 11:28–30, Jesus is making an open invitation in which he himself is once again clearly presented as a leader for the people. He not only invites people to come to him, but also to learn from him and to willingly accept his authority and rule. The invitation in 11:28 is similar to the call narratives in 4:18–22 since Jesus uses the word "come" (δεῦτε) and is presented as a model (μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ). But this time the invitation is more open and directed to the people, and not to specific individuals. While the former invitation called fishermen to apprentice, the present invitation calls people generally to accept the superiority of Jesus and receive him as

⁵² See pp. 184–86.

⁵³ See *m.Ber* 2:2: "So that one may first accept upon himself the yoke [text uncertain] of the kingdom of heaven and afterwards may accept the yoke of the commandments" [Neusner]. See further Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 187–88, for the relationship between the kingdom of God and the obedience of his commandments in Jewish literature. Cf. Büchler, *Sin and Atonement*, 118, who concludes: "His yoke does not mean the laws, but God's Mastery over every Israelite, and the acceptance of the yoke or the Kingship is manifested especially by his ready obedience to unintelligible laws as God's royal decrees." See also p. 94 where he describes the proselyte to Judaism in this way: "What he takes upon him are not the individual commandments, nor the sum total of the positive and negative precepts, but he acknowledges the true God as his King and undertakes the obligation to obey His orders, the Torah."

⁵⁴ Cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 220, and Willits, "Matthew and Psalms of Solomon's Messianism," 39.

⁵⁵ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:711; Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 145.

Messiah.⁵⁶ The invitation also reveals to the reader that Jesus is a merciful and beneficial ruler. Jesus is presented as a ruler, but his reign is different from other rulers, as Gerd Theissen points out: “Wenn Jesus wie ein Herrscher dazu aufruft, sein Joch auf sich zu nehmen, so betont er durch dies Bild, wie anders seine Herrschaft ist.”⁵⁷

Jesus addresses all who are “weary” and “carrying heavy burdens” (11:28), which seems to be a general reference to the people he ministers to.⁵⁸ The terms remind the reader about the needy and leaderless crowds.⁵⁹ It is probable that the “burdened” people implies a reference to the teaching of the religious leaders (cf. 23:4), and thus points to a contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders.⁶⁰ The way of the religious leaders will result in toil and heavy burdens, while the leadership of Jesus will result in rest.

The result of coming under the rule of Jesus and learning from him is “rest (ἀνάπαυσιν)” for the soul (11:29). From his survey of the rest motif in the OT Jon Laansma concludes that this tradition is a redemptive concept that is salient in the OT.⁶¹ This motif is sometimes related to the Davidic shepherd (cf. Ezek 34:15, 23).⁶² Laansma thus suggests that Matt 11–12 presents Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, who comes with the fulfillment of the eschatological hope of rest and Sabbath.⁶³ The many allusions to Ezek 34 in Matthew makes this suggestion probable. The rest of the soul refers to an inward peace resulting from a good relationship with God and his will.⁶⁴ Cousland helpfully explains that Jesus, as their

⁵⁶ It should be noted that Jesus gives this invitation in a context where the rejection of him is narrated (cf. 11:16–20).

⁵⁷ Gerd Theissen, “Vom Davidssohn zum Weltherrscher: Pagane und Jüdische Endzeiterwartungen im Spiegel des Matthäusevangeliums,” in *Das Ende der Tage und die Gegenwart des Heils: Begegnungen mit dem Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift für Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Becker and Wolfgang Fenske (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 145–64 (162).

⁵⁸ Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 210–11. Contra Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 374, who suggests that these terms refer to the discipleship with its costs. Cf. Gench, *Wisdom in the Christology*, 113–14.

⁵⁹ Charette, “‘To proclaim Liberty,’” 294; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 422. Cf. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 219.

⁶⁰ See e.g. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 219. For a different view, see Charette, “‘To proclaim Liberty,’” 294–95, who suggests that the burdened people alludes to the motif of captives in OT prophetic literature. Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 113–18, proposes that the phrase refers to those who live under the Roman rule.

⁶¹ Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 75.

⁶² See further Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 223–29, for the relationship between the rest motif and the Davidic king in the OT.

⁶³ Laansma, ‘*I Will Give You Rest*,’ 229, 234. He thus points out that Jesus (in 11:28–30) speaks not as a sage, with an allusion to Sir 51, but as the Son of David, the king (pp. 250–51). Cf. Charette, “‘To proclaim Liberty,’” 296–97. Bauer, “Das Milde Joch,” 100–01, has also noticed, in Babylonian context, the connection between “rest” and the regime of a ruler.

⁶⁴ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:324, defines it as “a realization of a deep existential peace, a *shalom*, or sense of ultimate well-being with regard to one’s relationship to God and his commandments.” See also

king, invites the crowds “to come to him so that he might assuage their need and shepherd them into the messianic age.”⁶⁵

The invitation of Jesus to the people ends with a description of his yoke and burden: “For my yoke is kind and my burden is light (ὁ γὰρ ζυγὸς μου χρηστὸς καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἐλαφρόν ἐστιν)” (11:30). The designation of the yoke, *χρηστὸς*, is usually translated with “easy.”⁶⁶ Scholars thus often comment on why the yoke is “easy.”⁶⁷ But the term has a wide range of meanings and the translation “easy” is not adequate, as Mitchell points out.⁶⁸

In the Greek world the term, which originally meant “usefulness,” had no precise meaning. When it was used to describe one person’s relationship to another, e.g. the relationship between a master and slave, it had the connotations of “kind,” “gentle,” and “friendly.” It was also used for rulers to express their “clemency,” “mildness,” or “magnanimity.”⁶⁹ Dio Chrysostom uses the term in the beginning of his first discourse on kingship, saying that he is going to describe “the good king (τοῦ χρηστοῦ βασιλέως)” (1 *Regn.* 11). Philo characterizes Moses as a merciful leader when he does not seek revenge on his enemies. In this way he shows the quality of *χρηστότητα*, which here is closely related to *φιλανθρωπία* (“benevolence”) (1.249).⁷⁰ In the LXX *χρηστὸς* is commonly used in an ethical sense to express “kind” behavior. Sometimes it characterizes a regime or a ruler. In 1 Macc 6:11 Antiochus Epiphanes describes himself as “kind and beloved in my government (*χρηστὸς καὶ ἀγαπώμενος ἤμην ἐν τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ μου*).”⁷¹ Josephus uses both the term *χρηστὸς* and *ζυγός* when he retells 1 Kgs 12:1–11 (*Ant.* 8.213). In the NT *χρηστὸς* often has the meaning of “good” or “kind.”⁷²

The context of the usage of *χρηστὸς* in 11:30 suggests that it is a description of Jesus’ rule. The rule and authority of Jesus, symbolized by his yoke, is kind and good.⁷³ The portrayal of Jesus in 11:28–30 thus confirms the presentation of him as

Hunter, “Crux Criticorum,” 248–49; Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 148; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 449.

⁶⁵ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 172–73.

⁶⁶ E.g. NRSV, ESV, NIV.

⁶⁷ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:291–92, for different suggestions.

⁶⁸ Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy,” 325–26. See also Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 261.

⁶⁹ Konrad Weiss, “*χρηστὸς, χρηστότης*,” *TDNT* 9:483–91 (483–84). Weiss points out that “[t]he *χρηστὸς* is a man who makes ‘benevolent’ use of the superior position he enjoys in virtue of rank, standing, power, wealth etc.” (p. 485).

⁷⁰ The term *χρηστότης* is used in a similar way as *χρηστὸς* in the characterization of rulers. See Weiss, *TDNT* 9:489–90. Cf. Isocrates, *Evag.* 76.

⁷¹ Cf. *Esth* 8:12.

⁷² Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy,” 325–26. See e.g. *Luk* 6:35, *Rom* 2:4, 1 *Pet* 2:3.

⁷³ Weiss, *TDNT* 9:487, proposes that the *χρηστὸς* of Jesus in *Matt* 11:30 “contains the fullness of the kindness and friendliness of God manifested in His person and work.” Some scholars also suggest that the term should be translated as “kind” in this passage. See Hunter, “Crux Criticorum,” 248; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:324; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 450. Cf. Erich

a kind and benevolent leader, which is also seen in his ministry to the crowds and his genuine care for the people.⁷⁴ To accept the yoke of Jesus implies obedience to him. At the same time, the kind of ruler one has to serve makes the difference, as France points out: “So the beneficial effect of Jesus’ yoke derives from the character of the one who offers it.”⁷⁵

The statements in 11:28–30 are not isolated references to the kindness of Jesus. The following events in 12:1–14 illustrate the contrast between the burdens of the legalistic Jewish leaders and the merciful appearance of Jesus that confirms the kindness of his yoke. In the first instance, the neglected mercy of the religious leaders is clearly emphasized (12:7). Jesus is then presented as a merciful healer who is doing “good” (καλῶς) (12:12), while the religious leaders are conspiring about how to destroy him (12:9–14). The opposition of the religious leaders functions as a literary foil in order to present Jesus as a kind and compassionate leader.⁷⁶

The benevolence of Jesus is also underlined in the feeding miracles in 14:13–21 and 15:32–39. The first feeding miracle, which follows after the description of *king* Herod’s (14:9) execution of John the Baptist, clearly points to a contrast between two very different kings. Caprido helpfully outlines the contrast: “Depicted as whimsical, cruel and cowardly, Herod is the epitome of an immoral ruler who stands in contrast to Jesus who is wise and compassionate and who, as the succeeding episodes will show, is a shepherd-like leader who provides nourishment and who defends.”⁷⁷

The invitation to take the yoke of Jesus upon oneself is to submit willingly to his rule and authority and to follow and obey his teaching and commandments. To accept his rule will be beneficial since he leads people into rest and since he is a kind and merciful leader. In his relationship to the people, Jesus is thus presented as a merciful and kind benefactor.

Beyreuther, “χρηστός,” *NIDNTT* 2:105–106 (106); Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 125–26. Mitchell, “The Yoke is Easy,” 339, concludes that “beneficial,” “useful,” “good,” or “kind” are appropriate translations.

⁷⁴ See 4.3.2.

⁷⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 450.

⁷⁶ Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 153, points out that “Matthew focuses attention to upon the essence of that yoke by contrasting the compassionate character and instruction of Jesus with the unyielding demand of the Pharisees.” Cf. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law*, 107; Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 140; Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom*, 45.

⁷⁷ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 185.

5.1.3 The humble leader

A model of humility

The exhortation to “learn” from Jesus is followed by an explanatory statement: “for I am meek (πραῦς) and humble (ταπεινός) in heart” (11:29).⁷⁸ What is then implied in the presentation of Jesus as πραῦς and ταπεινός?

Deirdre Good understands the term πραῦς according to the Hellenistic ideal of a good leader.⁷⁹ Here it is a virtue related to compassionate, benevolent, and kind behavior.⁸⁰ The gentle leader, according to the common ancient Greek ideal, shows “compassionate forbearance for subjects rather than despotism or anger.”⁸¹ This virtue is thus closely related to moderation, self-control, and freedom from passions.⁸² Xenophon, for example, tells about the military victories of Agesilaus, but also mentions that he “cared not only for the conquering of the opponents by force, but also to bring them over to his side by gentleness (πραότητι)” (1.20).⁸³

In LXX, however, πραῦς is used with a wide range of meanings to describe one who is poor, oppressed without rights, and defenseless. But sometimes it is used to express a commendable virtue.⁸⁴ It is then related to “humility” and used as a synonym to ταπεινός (e.g. Isa 26:6, Sir 10:14–15, cf. Prov 16:19). It is never a characteristic of God.⁸⁵ According to Spicq, it involves “radical submission to God and modesty in dealings with other people.”⁸⁶ Besides Matthew, πραῦς is only used in the NT in 1 Pet 3:4. Here it characterizes the spirit of a submissive and pious woman together with “quiet” (ἡσύχιος). The term πραῦτης, however, is used more frequently. In most instances, it is not clear if it is used in the sense of “humble” or

⁷⁸ Some scholars suggest that ὅτι should be understood in an explicative sense as “that I am gentle and humble in heart.” In this case it is an exhortation to get to know who Jesus is and not to learn from some of his character traits. See e.g. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 174; Luz, *Matthew*, 2:156 n. 3; van de Sandt, “Matthew 11.28–30,” 331. Cf. Acts 23:27 and Eph 4:20. The use of the preposition ἀπό makes it, however, more probable to understand the phrase as an exhortation to learn from Jesus.

⁷⁹ Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 5–7. See also Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 128–29.

⁸⁰ See also Friedrich Hauck and Seigfried Schulz, “πραῦς, πραῦτης,” *TDNT* 6:645–51 (646), who point out that “the gentleness of leading citizens is constantly extolled in encomiums and it has a prominent place in depictions of rulers.”

⁸¹ Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 14.

⁸² Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 66. See also Ceslaq Spicq, “πραῦπάθεια, πραῦς, πραῦτης,” *TLNT* 3:160–71 (160–66).

⁸³ See also Philo, *Mos.* 1.331, who likewise relates the term to compassion and benevolence. Plutarch uses the term to underline the gentleness of Numa (6.3, 20.3).

⁸⁴ Wolfgang Bauder, “Humility, Meekness,” *NIDNTT* 2:256–59 (257–58).

⁸⁵ Spicq, *TLNT* 3:166.

⁸⁶ Spicq, *TLNT* 3:167.

“kind,” but in Jam 1:21 it clearly refers to “humility.” In both Col 3:12 and Eph 4:2 it is used together with ταπεινοφροσύνη.⁸⁷

The other two uses of πραῦς in Matthew (5:5, 21:5) are strongly influenced by the LXX (Ps 37:11, Zech 9:9) and thus not very helpful for the understanding of the term in 11:29. The following term in 11:29, ταπεινός, however, gives clarification about the sense of πραῦς in the same context. In the case of ταπεινός there is a noticeable difference in the general understanding of the term in the Greek thinking and the usage in the OT and the NT. In the Greek world it is often a negative term which describes a shameful condition of a low social position.⁸⁸ This lowly position leads to a lowly disposition with flattery and disobedience.⁸⁹ There are however some exceptions. Sometimes ταπεινός can be used in a positive way as a description of someone who is modest and free from pride and conceit.⁹⁰ This is seen in Xenophon’s portrayal of Agesilaus when he points out that he was “more humble (ταπεινότερος) than common men” (11.11). Xenophon relates his humility to his simple and self-controlled lifestyle, unassumingness, and generosity towards others (11.11).⁹¹

In the biblical writings, ταπεινός is often a positive term that expresses a right relationship to God and other people. In the LXX it is used foremost in reference to God’s actions in which proud people are brought down and the humiliated are chosen and rescued. In Proverbs it is used as a virtue.⁹² In 1 Pet 5:5–6 and Jam 4:6–7 the term is used in reference to submission to God and as a contrast to “the proud” (ὑπερήφανος).⁹³ In Phil 2:3–4 “humility” is contrasted with selfish ambition and

⁸⁷ In 1 Clem 30:8 πραῦτης is likewise used together with ταπεινοφροσύνη as a contrast to audacity and arrogance (cf. 61:2 where it is used with reference to political leaders). Ragnar Leivestad, “Meekness and Gentleness of Christ’ II Cor. X. 1,” *NTS* 13 (1965/66): 156–64 (159), concludes that πραῦτης in biblical literature, in contrast to common Greek usage, denotes “the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself in particular in a patient submissiveness to offence, free from malice and desire for revenge.” According to BDAG, “πραῦς,” the term refers to “not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance” and is translated to “gentle,” “humble,” “considerate,” and “meek.”

⁸⁸ See Klaus Wengst, *Humility: Solidarity of the Humiliated. The transformation of an attitude and its social relevance in Greco-Roman, Old Testament-Jewish and Early Christian tradition*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1988), 4–15, for the use of the term in the Greco-Roman world. See e.g. Isocrates, *Evag.* 27.

⁸⁹ Wengst, *Humility*, 5. Walter Grundmann, “ταπεινός, ταπεινώω, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 8:1–26 (4–5), however, shows that ταπεινός sometimes is used in a positive sense as “obedience.”

⁹⁰ Wengst, *Humility*, 14–15. Cf. Hans-Helmut Esser, “Humility, Meekness,” *NIDNTT* 2:259–64 (259–60).

⁹¹ Cf. Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 184: “Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, we see a clear and unambiguous example of ‘humility’ distinguishing a leader.”

⁹² Esser, *NIDNTT* 2:260–61. Grundmann, *TDNT* 8:11–12, explains that the positive usage of the term in the Bible relates to man’s duty to listen to and obey God, and stand in a right relationship to him.

⁹³ Cf. *Let. Aris.* 1.257.

seeking one's own interests. Here it is also closely related to obedience (2:8). This is also the case in 1 Clement.⁹⁴

In Matthew the verb *ταπεινοῦν* is used twice as a positive virtue in the teaching of Jesus. In 18:4 it is used in reference to a child as a contrast to seek the greatest position in the kingdom of heaven. At the other occasion, in 23:12, it is used in the context of serving as a contrast to exalting oneself. This teaching shows that the virtue relates to one who rejects status or is unconcerned with status.⁹⁵ In light of the observations above, Hans-Helmut Esser appropriately suggests that *πραῦς* and *ταπεινός* in 11:29 “show that Jesus was submissive before God, completely dependent on him, and devoted to him, and at the same time humble before men whose servant and helper he had become.”⁹⁶

It is therefore probable that the term *πραῦς* in 11:29 should be understood in a similar way as *ταπεινός*, and not according to the Hellenistic idea of a kind ruler.⁹⁷ Though Good rightly points out that Jesus is presented as a ruler/king, it is not likely that *πραῦς* here should be understood in accordance with the Hellenistic ideal of kindness and self-control. Nonetheless, Jesus is presented as a kind ruler, since his yoke is characterized as *χρηστός*, as seen above.

The emphasis on humility clearly makes sense in the context. The exhortation to learn from the humility and submissive attitude of Jesus follows logically from the call to take up his yoke and submit to his authority. Jesus himself, as the Son (11:27), is obedient and submits to the will of his Father (cf. 20:28, 26:39).⁹⁸ With his life Jesus models humility and submission. The follower of Jesus can thus learn from Jesus' life when he submits to his authority.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ 2:1, 13:3, 19:1, 56:1. In 13:4 *ταπεινός* is also used as an equivalent to *πραῦς*. See also Barn 19:4. Wengst, *Humility*, 58, surprisingly proposes that “‘humility’ in the sense of obedient subservience emerges only at the periphery of earliest Christianity, in 1 Clement.” As seen above, the close relationship between humility and obedience/submission is seen already in Phil 2:8, 1 Pet 5:5–6, and Jam 4:6–7.

⁹⁵ See Theissen, *Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, 71–76, who emphasizes that “humility” concerns renunciation of status. Cf. BDAG, “*ταπεινός*.”

⁹⁶ Esser, *NIDNTT* 2:262. See also Grundmann, *TDNT* 8:20, and Moisés Silva, ed. “*ταπεινός*, *ταπεινώω*, *κτλ.*,” *NIDNTE* 4:448–55 (453): “This self-description suggests both his submissiveness before the Father and his humility before human beings, whom he has come to serve.” Cf. Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 195 n. 177. For the dual humble relationship (towards God and men), see 1 Clem. 62.2.

⁹⁷ See Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 149: “Consequently, *πραῦς* and *ταπεινός* τῇ καρδίᾳ are roughly synonymous, indicating one who walks humbly, who is unassuming before men and submissive before God.” Cf. Hauck and Schulz, *TDNT* 6:649; Bauder, *NIDNTT* 2:258; Wengst, *Humility*, 39.

⁹⁸ See further p. 151. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 450, rightly remarks that “in the kingdom of heaven meekness is not incompatible with authority.”

⁹⁹ The saying in 11:29 thus is a close parallel to Phil 2:5–8, where Paul exhorts the believers to follow the path of Jesus who “being in the form of God ... humbled (*ἐταπείνωσεν*) himself by becoming obedient (*ὑπήκοος*) until death.” In a similar way the author of Hebrews describes how Christ, “although he was a Son ... learned obedience (*τὴν ὑπακοήν*) from what he suffered, and

The self-presentation of Jesus in 11:29 underlines that he is a humble leader. Though he is the Son with great authority, he submits to the will of his Father and obeys him. His life models humility and thus he exhorts the people to learn from him when they submit to his rule and obey his teaching.

A king with humility

The statement in 11:29 is not the only reference to humility in Matthew's story. Barth rightly underlines that "the lowliness of Jesus was in the forefront of Matthew's interest."¹⁰⁰ The character trait is underlined in 21:5, with the use of a quotation from Zech 9:9. Since the author omits *δίκαιος καὶ σώζων αὐτός* from the LXX, the humility of the king is emphasized. In this way Jesus, the one who is to come in power and glory as the eschatological judge, is clearly presented as *βασιλεὺς πραῦς*, a humble and obedient king.¹⁰¹ Contrary to the common Jewish expectation of a politically triumphant Messiah who conquers his opponents, Jesus is presented as a humble servant who has compassion for the needy people.¹⁰² At the same time it should be noted that Jesus confronts the religious leadership when he enters Jerusalem,¹⁰³ and that he will judge his opponents in the future (11:20–24, 12:20,

having been made perfect ... became the cause of eternal salvation for all who obey him (τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ)" (5:8–9). Cf. John 3:35–36, 2 Cor 10:1. The same pattern is also seen in 1 Clem 16 where the author first underlines the authority and majesty of Jesus (16.1), then narrates his humble deeds by quoting OT prophecies, and finally concludes with an explicit statement about Jesus as a model of humility: "You see, beloved brothers, the example (ὁ ὑπογραμμός) that has been given to us; for if the Lord so humbled (ἐταπεινοφρόνησεν) himself, what are we going to do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace (οἱ ὑπὸ τὸν ζυγὸν τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ ἐλθόντες)?" (16.17).

¹⁰⁰ Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," 129. See pp. 125–37 for his discussion of this character trait of Jesus in Matthew. See also Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 28, who notices that "throughout the pages of the First Gospel we meet a humble, compassionate Jesus." For the presentation of Jesus as a humble king in Matthew, see also Christopher Rowland, "Christ in the New Testament," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 474–96 (476–79). Cf. Mogens Müller, "The Theological Interpretation of the Figure of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: Some Principal Features in Matthean Christology," *NTS* 45 (1999): 157–73 (167–68). He points out that the emphasis on humility in Matthew's portrait of Jesus is noticed already by Irenaeus (see *Haer.* 3.11.8).

¹⁰¹ Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," 130. See also e.g. Clay A. Ham, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd: Matthew's Reading of Zechariah's Messianic Hope*, NTMon 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 46. Hare, *Matthew*, 238, proposes that *πραῦς* in 21:5 should be translated as "gentle" and not as "humble," since the quotation underlines "the fact that the gentle king arrives in his capital with no sword in hand." See also Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 205. Cf. Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, 85–87. Even if the deed shows the reader that Jesus is gentle and peaceful, it is probable that the term primarily expresses the humility of Jesus, since this has been emphasized in 11:29.

¹⁰² Verseput, *Rejection of the Humble*, 132. See also p. 150.

¹⁰³ See 5.3.1.

25:31–32). Beaton rightly points out that “Matthew’s portrait of Jesus as meek and humble does not mean weak or feeble.”¹⁰⁴

Jesus is also indirectly characterized as a humble man through his deeds and words. In 12:16 the reader is told that Jesus forbade the people to make him known. The author explains this instruction through the quotation from Isa 42:1–4 (12:18–21), where the humility of God’s Servant is underlined. According to Versepūt, this is the culmination of the author’s presentation of the humble Messiah.¹⁰⁵ The question about temple tax also shows the humility of Jesus, since he pays the tax though he is the Son of the Father’s house (17:24–27).¹⁰⁶

Jesus is not only presented as a model of humility to imitate. He also, repeatedly, teaches his followers to be humble (5:5, 18:4, 23:6–12; cf. 20:25–27). Just as humility characterizes Jesus, the King, it should also be a characteristic of his disciples, the future leaders of the community.¹⁰⁷ The theme of humility is developed by Jesus in chapter 23. When the pride of the religious leaders has been described at the beginning of the discourse (23:6–12), Jesus declares: “All who exalt themselves will be humbled (ταπεινωθήσεται), and those who humble (ταπεινώσει) themselves will be exalted” (23:12). The discourse in chapter 23 gives teaching to the disciples and the crowds, and judgment to the religious leaders, but it also reveals a contrast between the latter and Jesus. Hagner helpfully describes this contrast:

Many of the latter [the Pharisees] exhibited an extraordinary pride, loving places of honor, special titles, and in general the authority they exercised over others ... In contrast, despite the overwhelming significance of his person and his mission, Jesus comes meekly and humbly as a servant.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, 186.

¹⁰⁵ Versepūt, *Rejection of the Humble*, 203.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 226. Cf. Kari Syreeni, “Peter as Character and Symbol in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, JSNTSup 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 135.

¹⁰⁷ Lincoln, “Story for Teachers,” 118, points out that in this way the authoritative teaching role of the disciples giving in the end of the narrative (28:16–29), is balanced by the emphasis of lowliness and humbleness in the teaching of Jesus. See also Theissen, *Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, 75–76, who underlines that humility in the synoptic tradition is a virtue for those in power.

¹⁰⁸ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:324.

5.2 The leader and his community (16:13–20:34)

In the following section of the story, 16:13–20:34, there is a clear focus on the community of the leader.¹⁰⁹ Twice (16:16, 18:17) Jesus speaks about the community (ἐκκλησία). He also gives a discourse about the corporate life in this community (18:1–19:1).¹¹⁰ The section concludes by teaching about status and leadership (20:20–28). The following will outline how Jesus is characterized in this section and how he prepares his disciples for their coming leadership roles in his community.

According to Burridge, ancient biographies often include a “farewell speech” from the hero before his death. This speech could include “predictions about the future, his own death and the troubles ahead for his friends, exhortations to virtue, the establishment of a successor and warnings about imposters.”¹¹¹ He suggests that the farewell speeches in Matthew are found in chapter 18 and 23–25.¹¹² But since it is clearly stated in 16:21 that a new phase is beginning in the ministry of Jesus, when he begins to speak about his coming passion, death and resurrection, it is reasonable to include parts of chapter 16 to the “farewell speeches” in Matthew. Three times in this section (16:21, 17:22–23, 20:17–19) Jesus makes predictions about his coming suffering and vindication. It is thus not surprising that in the same section he begins to speak about the future of his community and gives instructions about its leadership.¹¹³ It is, however, more appropriate to speak about “farewell themes” than “farewell speech” in Matthew, since there are no clearly defined speeches that only address these questions.

5.2.1 The founder of a new community

The new community

From the beginning of his career (4:18–22), Jesus has been presented as a man with close followers around him. In the beginning of the story, not much information is

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:378, who describes the section of 16:21–20:34 as the activity of Jesus in the church and as “the community section.” Wilkins, *Matthew*, 611, likewise pays attention to the theme of community life throughout chapters 16–20. Senior, *Matthew*, 188, also refers to 16:13–20:34 as a section of the story.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:421, and Matthias Konradt, “‘Whoever humbles himself like this child...’: The Ethical Instruction in Matthew’s Community Discourse (Matt 18) and Its Narrative Setting,” in *Moral Language in the New Testament: The Interrelatedness of Language and Ethics in Early Christian Writings*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Jan G. van der Watt in cooperation with Susanne Luther, CNTE II (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 105–38, who describe this teaching discourse as “the community discourse.”

¹¹¹ Burridge, *Four Gospels*, 127. Cf. Philo, *Mos.* 2.288.

¹¹² Burridge, *Four Gospels*, 127.

¹¹³ Cf. Turner, *Matthew*, 431, who suggests that from 13:54 Jesus begins to prepare his disciples “to function as his community in his absence.”

given about their interrelationships and their organization. In 9:15 the reader gets only an indication that after the death of Jesus, the followers will continue to be a separate group.¹¹⁴ But as the story unfolds, Jesus is successively organizing his group of followers. The mission discourse, where the disciples are sent out as his under-shepherds, entitled “apostles” (10:2), and described as “his household (οἰκιακοὺς αὐτοῦ)” (10:25), is the first main step in this direction.¹¹⁵ In 12:46–50 Jesus also describes the disciples as a family, united by doing the will of the Father (12:50, cf. 7:21).

In the present section of the story, a second main step towards structure and organization of a specific group is taken when Jesus speaks about his community, its leadership, and about relationships within it. With the statements about “his community” and the affirmation and preparation of his disciples as the coming leaders of the community, Jesus is presented as a founder of a new community.

As a response to Peter’s declaration about Jesus’ identity as Messiah and Son of God, Jesus makes a declaration about Peter and his role in the community of Jesus: “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my community (οικοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν)” (16:18). The scene in 16:13–28 is one of the kernel events in the story, an event of major importance for the development of the story. Besides the clarification of the identity of Jesus and that his mission includes passion, death, and resurrection, new motifs are introduced in the story: the community of Jesus and the authority of his disciple. These are reasons to consider 16:13–28 as a kernel event.¹¹⁶ The scene in the passage is clearly directed to the future. At the same time as Jesus begins to speak about his death and resurrection (16:21), he also begins to clarify the organization of his movement and to prepare his disciples for their coming roles as leaders.

The term ἐκκλησία should not be understood as the later Christian concept of the “church,” but according to its Greek usage and especially in the Hellenistic Jewish usage.¹¹⁷ Here it denotes a community of people and never a physical structure.¹¹⁸ The term is used commonly in the Greek world for all kinds of assemblies. Primarily it is a political term referring to “any assembly of citizens duly summoned by the

¹¹⁴ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 673.

¹¹⁵ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 370: “With the formal recognition of the Twelve as Jesus’ immediate entourage, his renewal movement takes its first steps toward becoming a structured group.”

¹¹⁶ See Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” 245. Cf. Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks,” 472, who does not regard 16:13–20 as a kernel, though he recognizes “a significant development,” and Richard J. Cassidy, *Four Times Peter: Portrayals of Peter in the Four Gospels and at Philippi* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 61.

¹¹⁷ Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 116. Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 624, who suggests that the term ἐκκλησία “conveys nothing of the formal, hierarchical structures which our word ‘ecclesiastical’ now suggests.”

¹¹⁸ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 623.

herald.”¹¹⁹ But it also denotes, together with, for example, συναγωγή (synagogue), an assembly and various Greek voluntary associations.¹²⁰ The term is also used to denote the Jewish synagogue.¹²¹ The use of the term in Matthew thus suggests that Jesus puts his followers together in “an identifiable, formal group.”¹²²

Scholars have vividly discussed the complex relationship between the community of Jesus and the people of Israel. In the LXX, ἐκκλησία is also used in reference to the people of God. Keener suggests that Jesus “depicts his community as the true, faithful remnant of Israel in continuity with the Old Testament covenant community.”¹²³ Though there definitely is a close relationship between Israel and the community of Jesus, the latter is a different kind of community since it includes people from all nations (28:19). Konradt helpfully explains that “the ecclesia is the part of Israel (and of the rest of the world) that has recognized the Christ event ... as the eschatological salvific act of Israel’s God and has allowed itself be called to discipleship and follow Christ.”¹²⁴ That the community of Jesus is “new” does not imply that it designates the new people of God instead of the people of Israel.¹²⁵

The emphatic “my community” (16:18) shows, however, that the foundational identity of this new community is not the nation of Israel, but the Messiah.¹²⁶ Jesus, who is King and Messiah, for both Jews and gentiles, builds a new community. Richard Cassidy also points out that the emphasis on “I” and “my” (16:18) “attest to the highly personal quality of the initiative he is undertaking. Jesus himself is

¹¹⁹ Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 116.

¹²⁰ Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 116–18. See also Ascough, “Matthew and Community Formation,” 104–07.

¹²¹ Anders Runesson, “The Historical Jesus, the Gospels, and First-Century Jewish Society: The Importance of the Synagogue for Understanding the New Testament,” in *A City Set on a Hill: Essays in Honor of James F. Strange*, ed. Daniel A. Warner and Donald D. Binder (Mountain Home: BorderStone, 2014), 265–97 (268).

¹²² Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 118. Cf. Scot McKnight, “A Loyal Critic: Matthew’s Polemic with Judaism in Theological Perspective,” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 55–79 (69), who states that “it remains a fact that Matthew envisages the followers of Jesus forming a distinct group with organization.” Morris, *Matthew*, 4, even proposes that “throughout the Gospel there is clearly an interest in the church as an organization.”

¹²³ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 428. See also France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 623.

¹²⁴ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 336. Konradt further points out that “Jesus’ people (ὁ λαὸς αὐτοῦ) and his Church (μὴν ἐκκλησία) are not identical ... Israel and ecclesia are situated on different soteriological levels: Israel appears as the *addressee* or *recipient* of God’s salvific act in Jesus Christ ... and remains so, even after Easter. The ecclesia, in contrast, is the community that emerged in the course of the diverging reactions to Jesus in Israel (pp. 344–45).” Italics his. Cf. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 264 n. 138, 268. See further pp. 134–35 in chapter three.

¹²⁵ Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 352.

¹²⁶ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 623–24.

initiating something new.”¹²⁷ *In his role as Messiah, the true King and Leader of Israel and the nations, Jesus builds a new community, which has the character of an identifiable group.*

The leadership role of Peter and the other disciples

A common understanding of the described community in Matthew is that it lacks hierarchy and leaders. Edgar Krentz proposes that “Matthew’s ideal is an egalitarian church in which all members bear equal responsibility for leadership, edification, and service.”¹²⁸ Similarly, Warren Carter suggests that Jesus’ community is egalitarian in its character and lacks hierarchical structures.¹²⁹ According to Rollin Grams, discipleship does not include any kind of “leadership.” On the contrary, the disciples are to be “little ones” and serve others in the footsteps of Jesus.¹³⁰ But is this really how Jesus’ community is presented in the story? The portrayal of the twelve disciples in general and Peter in particular give reasons for a different view.

In Matthew’s story the disciples are generally presented as a united, nameless collective. There is, however, one exception in the story; Peter gets a prominent place.¹³¹ Unlike the other disciples, Peter is characterized in a complex and multifaceted way. He is presented in the story as a round character, which implies that his individuality is underlined.¹³² The words of Jesus in 16:17–19 have caused much scholarly debate.¹³³ When Peter has declared the true identity of Jesus (16:16),

¹²⁷ Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 61.

¹²⁸ Edgar Krentz, “Community and Character: Matthew’s Vision of the Church,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 26 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1987), 565–73 (572).

¹²⁹ Warren Carter, *Households and Discipleship: A Study of Matthew 19–20*, JSNTSup 103 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 53–54. Carter proposes that Jesus is presented as “an anti-structure person” (p. 206). See also Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 106. Cf. Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 317, 356–57. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 323–24, interprets 23:8–12 as “resistance to hierarchically structured roles and emphasis on equality.” Somewhat confusingly he speaks both about “the community’s own leaders” and “Matthew’s model of egalitarian communal leadership.” Duling, “‘Egalitarian’ Ideology,” 128, proposes that Matthew presents a limited egalitarian ideology. However, he admits that, for example, the authority/status of Peter and the apostles in the story “does not easily harmonize” with this egalitarian ideology (p. 131).

¹³⁰ Rollin G. Grams, “Not ‘Leaders’ but ‘Little Ones’ in the Father’s Kingdom: The Character of Discipleship in Matthew’s Gospel,” *TF* 21 (2004): 114–25. A problem with Grams’ study is that he does not provide a definition of leadership, though it seems that he connects it with hierarchical structures and authority.

¹³¹ Wilkins, “Named and Unnamed,” 423–24.

¹³² Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 251. See further Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction,” 20–23.

¹³³ For an overview of different interpretations, see Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 185–98.

Jesus turns to Peter (Πέτρος) and declares his identity as “rock” (πέτρα) and his future role (16:18–19).¹³⁴

The designation of Peter as “rock” does not refer to his character (cf. 16:22–23), but to his leadership role.¹³⁵ This is confirmed by the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (16:19) given to Peter, which imply authority and responsibility.¹³⁶ The “keys” should probably be understood in light of the authoritative teaching of the rabbis, which included interpretation of legitimate and illegitimate things.¹³⁷ This authority is related to the identification of sin and the determination of the relevance of scriptural instructions for situations in the present.¹³⁸ Jesus’ harsh criticism of the teaching of the religious leaders (16:12, 23:13) makes this interpretation of the keys likely. Instead of confirming their authority to teach, Jesus extends this

¹³⁴ Most scholars understand “rock” as a reference to Peter. See e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:627; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 620–21; Marcus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 74. For a different view, see Chrys C. Caragounis, *Peter and the Rock*, BZNW 58 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), who suggests that “rock” refers to Peter’s confession. Caragounis rightly points out that Jesus’ identity as Messiah is the main focus in 16:13–20. This does not, however, imply that the text is not concerned with Peter and his role (p. 87). The great authority given to Peter (the keys of the kingdom) in v. 19, which according to Caragounis is a part of the “appendix” in the passage (p. 86), appears unexpected if “rock” is not a reference to Peter (cf. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 249–50). Robert H. Gundry, *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate according to Saint Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 18–21, proposes that “rock” alludes to 7:24 and refers to the words of Jesus. But it is unlikely that the words “this rock” should be a reference to something that is outside the present context.

¹³⁵ Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:471. For another view, see Kingsbury, “Figure of Peter,” 76, who proposes that Peter is a “rock” since he is the one among the disciples who was first called.

¹³⁶ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 625, who concludes that “Jesus declares Peter to be the steward (chief administrative officer) in the kingdom of heaven.” See also Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 175; Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 76. Cf. 2 Bar. 10:18.

¹³⁷ See e.g. Günther Bornkamm, “The Authority to ‘Bind’ and ‘Loose’ in the Church in Matthew’s Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed., Graham Stanton, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995 [1970]), 101–14 (104), and J. D. M. Derrett, “Binding and Loosing (Matt 16:19; 18:18, John 29:23),” *JBL* 102 (1983): 112–17 (115). Cf. Luke 11:52 where Jesus uses the expression “key of knowledge (τὴν κλεῖδα τῆς γνώσεως),” and Josephus, *J. W.* 1.110–12, who uses the terms λύειν and δεσμεῖν in his description of the authoritative interpretation and governance of the Pharisees. For a different view, see e.g. Michael P. Barber, “Jesus as the Davidic Temple Builder and Peter’s Priestly Role in Matthew 16:16–19,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 935–53, who proposes that Peter is given a priestly leadership role.

¹³⁸ Mark A. Powell, “Binding and Loosing: A Paradigm for Ethical Discernment from the Gospel of Matthew,” *CurTM* 30 (2003): 438–45 (438). Powell points out that this is what Jesus, not the religious leaders, has been doing earlier in the narrative (p. 441). Related to this task may also be the ability to make decisions about the exclusion or inclusion of a person in relation to the community (cf. 18:18, 23:13). See e.g. Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 76. The context of the parallel saying in 18:18 implies further that “binding” and “loosing” also relate to the forgiveness of sins. See Hans Kvalbein, “The Authorization of Peter in Matthew 16:17–19: A Reconsideration of the Power to Bind and Loose,” in *The Formation of the Early Church*, ed. Jostein Ådna, WUNT 183 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 145–74 (161–63). Kvalbein, however, polarizes in an unnecessary way between teaching authority and authority to forgive sins.

authority to Peter.¹³⁹ The disciple is thus presented as an authoritative teacher with a similar function as the scribes.¹⁴⁰ When Jesus now approaches his death (cf. 16:21), he appoints Peter to carry the authority further.¹⁴¹ Wilkins correctly summarizes: “The leadership role he was beginning to assume at time of the confession is recognized by Jesus and is promised to be extended in the laying of the foundation of the church.”¹⁴²

What then is the relationship between Peter and the other disciples? Is Peter given a position above the other eleven? When the author presents the apostles in chapter 10, Peter is not only mentioned first, but it is explicitly stated: “first (πρῶτος) Simon, who is called Peter” (10:2). Probably this does not imply a privileged status, but a leadership role within the group.¹⁴³ When Jesus communicates with his disciples, Peter is presented in a way that suggests that he is the spokesperson of the disciples. Peter is the one who asks Jesus questions, talks with him, and the one who answers his questions.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes Jesus only addresses Peter (26:40). The leadership role of Peter among the disciples is also seen in the story about Jesus and the temple tax, where the tax collectors ask Peter about the view of Jesus (17:24).¹⁴⁵ It thus seems reasonable to conclude that Peter is presented as the leader among the disciples.

At the same time, there are several indications in the text that limit the role of Peter. The twelve disciples together are appointed as “apostles” (10:2–4) and as new shepherds for Israel.¹⁴⁶ The discourse about community life is not addressed to Peter alone, but to the disciples as a group (18:1). This discourse addresses issues concerning greatness, responsibility, shepherding, and relationships, which indicate that it is given to the future leaders of the community.¹⁴⁷ In this discourse, Jesus further extends the use of the keys to all the disciples (18:18).¹⁴⁸ As noted in the

¹³⁹ See e.g. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 249, and Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 75–76.

¹⁴⁰ Some scholars even describe Peter as a “supreme Rabbi.” See e.g. Bornkamm, “Authority to ‘Bind’ and ‘Loose,’” 94.

¹⁴¹ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 246. Cf. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel*, 139–40, who suggests that Jesus transfers authority to Peter as a successor.

¹⁴² Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 192. See also Nolland, *Matthew*, 670.

¹⁴³ See e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:154, and Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 72.

¹⁴⁴ See 14:28; 15:15; 16:15–16, 22; 17:4; 18:21; 19:27.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Syreeni, “Peter as Character,” 136: “As usual (as the reader has learned by now), Peter is more than eager to accept the leader’s role.”

¹⁴⁶ See pp. 203–04.

¹⁴⁷ See e.g. Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 207, 216; Joachim Jeremias, “κλείς,” *TDNT* 3:744–53 (752); Minear, *Matthew*, 100–03. Contra e.g. William G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Mt. 17,22–18,35*, *AnBib* 44 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 71, 247.

¹⁴⁸ In Matthew's story “the disciples” refer to the twelve. The keys are thus given to all the apostles, and not to the whole community. See e.g. Jeremias, *TDNT* 3:752. Contra e.g. Powell, “Binding and Loosing,” 445. The reader, who was recently told about the keys of the kingdom given to Peter (16:19), understands the passage from the viewpoint of the descriptions in chapter 16, and thus concludes that a similar authority given to Peter is given to all the disciples. See e.g.

previous chapter, all the disciples are presented as teachers and scribes in the story.¹⁴⁹ When Jesus speaks about his return in glory he declares that the disciples will “sit on twelve thrones, judging (κρίνοντες) the twelve tribes of Israel” (19:28). The use of κρίνειν in this context probably implies ruling.¹⁵⁰ Jesus thus declares that the twelve will have positions of authority in the future.¹⁵¹ The statement in 23:8–10 and the avoidance of titles to all followers (not only Peter) also refutes the idea that Peter is presented as a supreme rabbi, who has a separate office from the other disciples.¹⁵² This passage should not be understood as a denial of teachers and leaders in Jesus’ community, but as an exhortation to avoid honorific titles, since there is only one who is worthy of it, Jesus.¹⁵³ Jesus underlines the importance of equality among his followers concerning status, not concerning roles and authority.¹⁵⁴

The characterization of Peter is not only positive, since he is sometimes presented in a negative way.¹⁵⁵ It can thus be concluded that though Peter is the spokesman of

Jeremias, *TDNT* 3:752; Senior, *Matthew*, 191–92, 210. For a different view, see e.g. Konradt, “Whoever humbles himself,” 127.

¹⁴⁹ See pp. 175–77.

¹⁵⁰ See Ps 2:10, 1 Macc 9:73, Ps. Sol. 17:26, Wis 3:8. Cf. the parallel saying in Luke 22:28–30. See also Stephen H. Travis, “Judgment,” *DJGFE* 408–11 (409); Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:55–56; BDAG, “κρίνω.”

¹⁵¹ Cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:565: “The disciples, who have given up everything now and appear insignificant, can expect in the future to become powerful figures of rule and authority.” Contra Luz, *Matthew*, 2:517, and Carter, *Households and Discipleship*, 125–126. In order to uphold his anti-hierarchical view of Jesus’ community, Carter suggests that the twelve are presented as representatives of the disciples who are going to be vindicated in the judgment. See further Carter for opinions of different scholars.

¹⁵² Kingsbury, “Figure of Peter,” 81; Hare, *Matthew*, 192.

¹⁵³ See e.g. Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel*, 46–47; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:661; Fihavango, *Jesus and Leadership*, 161–62. For a different view, see Saldarini, “Delegitimation of Leaders,” 671, who suggests that Jesus forbids both the use of honorific titles and the “exercise of highly authoritative roles.”

¹⁵⁴ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 863.

¹⁵⁵ See Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 264 (appendix 1), and the illuminating chronological graph of Peter as presented positively and negatively in the story. Though Peter is the first who really understands Jesus’ identity and is consequently commended by Jesus (16:16–17), he does not understand Jesus’ mission and is thus harshly criticized by his master (16:21–23). In the end of the narrative, Peter is characterized as one who fails to hold his words and be faithful and instead denies his master, the Messiah (26:33–35, 40, 69–75). After this scene, Peter is not mentioned again and his personal character is thus not restored. See Syreeni, “Peter as Character,” 146–47; Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 83. In his redaction-critical study, *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate according to Saint Matthew*, Gundry even proposes that Peter is portrayed as a disciple who fails and publicly apostatizes his master. Gundry, however, neglects that Peter is included among the eleven disciples who are called “brothers” by the risen Jesus (28:10) and who are commissioned by him in the end of the story and thus given leadership roles (28:16–20). The words to Peter in 16:18–19 are to be understood as an external prolepsis which also makes clear the continuing leadership role of Peter after the resurrection of Jesus. Cf. Lincoln, “Story for Teachers,” 112, and Cassidy, *Four Times Peter*, 76.

the disciples and a leader, he is also portrayed, together with the other disciples, as an apprentice in training and development.¹⁵⁶ That Jesus trains his disciples for leadership is seen in the close relationship between his own character traits and leadership and his teaching to them. The apprentices of the Master, as future shepherds of the community, are to be humble (18:1–5) and compassionate (18:12–14) just as the true shepherd of Israel is humble (11:29, 21:5) and compassionate (2:6, 9:36). The leadership approach of Jesus should also be imitated by his apprentices. Like the Servant of God (12:18, 20:28), the future leaders need to serve the people (20:25–27).

It thus seems proper to conclude that Peter's leadership role is given within the group of the disciples and he is thus not placed in a position above the other disciples.¹⁵⁷ When Jesus founds a new community, he builds it through the work of the apostles, among whom Peter is the leader.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, Peter is the leader in the group of leaders. The portrayal of the disciples implies, as McKnight notes, that "commitment to a functional leadership and hierarchy" can be seen in Matthew's story.¹⁵⁹ The establishment of a new community and the appointment of future leaders clearly suggest that Jesus is presented as the founder of the community.¹⁶⁰

Jesus is presented as a leader who establishes a new community and lays its organizational foundation. He declares that he will build his new community through the work of his apostles whom he prepares for leadership roles.

The leader's concern for his entire community

The teaching in the community discourse (18:1–35), with its emphasis on humility, responsibility, and unity, shows the importance of leadership in the community of Jesus. At the same time it also plays a role in the characterization of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus reveals his ideals and concerns.

In the serious warning to the apostles not to cause the fall of "one of these little ones who believe in me" (18:5), Jesus clearly underlines his concern for all individuals in the community. The meaning of the verb *σκανδαλίζειν*, which is used in 18:5, is "to pervert" or "to mislead."¹⁶¹ In verses 10 and 14 the care of "the little ones" is repeated, which shows the importance of the theme in the discourse. When

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 521.

¹⁵⁷ See e.g. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 189, and Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 84.

¹⁵⁸ Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:471.

¹⁵⁹ McKnight, "A Loyal Critic," 69.

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. Hays, *Moral Vision*, 97: "Unmistakably, Matthew depicts Jesus as the founder of the church." See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:602, and Zarate, "Leadership Approach of Jesus," 143. For a different view, see Ascough, "Matthew and Community Formation," 104–05, who suggests that Jesus is presented as the divine patron of the community, while Peter is the human founder.

¹⁶¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:762.

Jesus instructs his apostles on how they should relate to the little ones he tells them the parable of the shepherd who searches for the lost sheep (18:12–14). The image of the shepherd is here used to describe the caring leadership of the disciples.¹⁶² The reason why the sheep had become “lost” is that it has been “led astray (πλανηθῆναι)” (18:12). This verb, *πλανᾶν*, is used several times in the story with reference to misleading (24:4, 5, 11, 24, cf. 22:29). The disciples, the under-shepherds of Jesus, should have the same attitude as the Father, which is expressed by the shepherd metaphor. As the shepherd knows his sheep individually, the leader needs to know and try to restore every single follower of Jesus.¹⁶³ Cabrido rightly points out that the teaching in 18:10–14, together with the judgment scene in 25:31–46, underlines the universal shepherd role of Jesus and “provide insight into the individual-oriented dimension of his pastoral care.”¹⁶⁴

The second part of the teaching discourse shows the leader’s concern for unity and harmony in the community. In 18:15–20 Jesus instructs his disciples how they, as leaders, should exercise discipline in the congregation.¹⁶⁵ The purpose of the instructions, to bring reconciliation (cf. 18:15), should not be overlooked.¹⁶⁶ The discourse ends with a parable that strongly emphasizes the necessity of forgiving others in the community (18:23–35), which relates to its unity.¹⁶⁷ Jesus thus gives his disciples both general exhortations about humility and compassion, and detailed instructions how they can avoid lasting conflicts and restore relationships. In this way the future leaders are to protect the harmony and unity of the community.¹⁶⁸ In this way Jesus is here presented as one who effects harmony, one of the characteristics of the ideal king in antiquity.¹⁶⁹ The author further shows Jesus’ concern for unity among his followers in the scene where the mother of the sons of the Zebedee makes a request for the best places in the kingdom (20:20–28). When the other ten were informed about this they reacted and “were indignant (ἡγανάκτησαν)” (20:24). Jesus immediately wants to solve the conflict and calls them together (20:25) and gives them teaching about leadership and status in the

¹⁶² See e.g. Minear, “Disciples and Crowds,” 36, and Martin, “The Image of Shepherd,” 284. Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 704, points out that this is confirmed by the allusion to Ezek 34:16 there also the three verbs *ζητεῖν*, *πλανᾶν*, and *ἀπολλύναι* are used.

¹⁶³ Green, *Message of Matthew*, 193–94.

¹⁶⁴ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 228. Cabrido also states: “A striking characteristic of Jesus as Shepherd is the care he has for the least and the marginalized” (p. 471).

¹⁶⁵ Minear, *Matthew*, 101–02.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Turner, *Matthew*, 446–47.

¹⁶⁷ Huntzinger, “End of Exile,” 213.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 208: “His aim throughout [the discourse] is to insure beforehand that the community to be called after His name shall be indeed a holy, loving, united society.”

¹⁶⁹ Talbert, *Matthew*, 69. Cf. Plutarch, *Num.* 20.8. See further pp. 123–24.

kingdom of heaven. John Chrysostom comments insightfully: “By this very unifying act he calms the passion of the two and the ten.”¹⁷⁰

The fourth teaching discourse, with its emphasis on the responsibility of the leaders and the importance of the little ones, shows Jesus’ concern for his entire community. The teaching of Jesus about good relationships, through reconciliation and forgiveness, and his actions when conflict arises also presents him as a leader who creates unity and harmony in the community.

5.2.2 The servant leader

Jesus the Servant

When Jesus holds his lesson to his disciples about greatness in the kingdom of heaven (20:25–28) he ends with the saying that “the Son of Man has not come to be served (διακονηθῆναι), but to serve (διακονῆσαι) and to give his life as a ransom for many” (20:28). He thus clearly presents himself as a servant of the people. This statement is not an isolated reference to the characterization of Jesus as a servant.

In chapter 16, after Jesus’ identity as the Messiah has been confirmed and the lasting presence of his community has been underlined (16:16–18), Jesus begins to focus on his suffering and servanthood (16:21). The phrase “from that time Jesus began” (Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς) in 16:21 signals an important turning point in the story.¹⁷¹ The new phase in the ministry of Jesus is that he now begins to “show” (δεικνύειν) his disciples that he must suffer, die, and be raised from the dead in Jerusalem. Three times in this section Jesus foretells his coming suffering and vindication.¹⁷² The use of δεικνύειν implies, however, that he will make use of both words and deeds. When the disciples have understood Jesus’ identity as Messiah, they also need to follow him to Jerusalem, to understand the nature of his mission.¹⁷³ Moreover, the master will show them, with his life, that suffering and servanthood is an essential part of his followers’ lives in this world (cf. 16:24–26).¹⁷⁴

The close relationship between suffering and service is explicitly stated in 20:28 from the mouth of Jesus.¹⁷⁵ The remaining part of the story, which gives much attention to the suffering and death of Jesus, thus highlights servanthood as a

¹⁷⁰ Chrysostom, *Matt. Hom.* 65.4. Cited by Simonetti, *Matthew*, 2:117.

¹⁷¹ See p. 159 n. 1.

¹⁷² 16:21, 17:22–23, 20:18–19.

¹⁷³ It should be noted that when Peter, the representative of the disciples who is characterized as the “rock” (τῇ πέτρᾳ) in 16:18, fails to understand the necessity of the suffering of the Messiah he is said to be a “stumbling block” (σκάνδαλον) (16:23).

¹⁷⁴ Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 139–40; Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 104.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Alfons Weiser, “διακονέω,” *EDNT* 1:302–04 (303), who speaks about the early Christian interpretation of Jesus’ “total work and death as *servanthood*.” Italics his.

characteristic of Jesus.¹⁷⁶ The wisdom, power, and glory of Jesus are not aimed to serve and glorify himself, but are used in his mission to serve and to give his life for others.¹⁷⁷

The service motif is not limited to the last part of the story. It has already been noted that the verb *θεραπεύειν*, which describes one of the main tasks of the ministry of Jesus, has still some of its primitive meaning of serving in Matthew's story.¹⁷⁸ Gerhardsson, who emphasizes that servanthood is related to the overall portrait of Jesus, notices that Jesus thus is presented as the Servant of the common people.¹⁷⁹ The quotation from Isa 42:1–3 also informs the reader that Jesus is the Servant (*παῖς*) of God (12:18). This citation and other references to the servant motif of Isaiah (3:15, 8:17, 20:28) imply that the servant motif is important in Matthew's presentation of Jesus.¹⁸⁰

Jesus' own words also underline the importance of serving others. His repeated emphasis on loving the neighbour as a primary demand of God (7:12, 19:19, 22:39), is clearly related to unselfish service (cf. 5:43–48).¹⁸¹ Jesus' willingness to serve is further seen when he, on his way to suffering and death in Jerusalem, hears the blind men's call for mercy and stops and asks them: "What do you want me to do for you?" (20:32). In contrast to the way of the religious leaders, Jesus teaches his followers to be leaders who humbly serve (23:5–12). In the eschatological discourse he also, with great seriousness, underlines the necessity to serve others (25:44).

The passage in 20:25–28, however, gives the clearest presentation of Jesus as a serving leader. He is not only teaching his disciples that a leader should be a "servant" (*διακονός*) (20:26), but he is also saying that he himself "came not to be served (*διακονηθῆναι*) but to serve (*διακονῆσαι*)" (20:28). Davies and Allison point out that Jesus is here presented, like Philo's Moses, as "the true king whose one aim is to benefit his subjects."¹⁸² At the same time, the use of the word *ὥσπερ* ("just as") in 20:28 shows that the service of Jesus is exemplary.¹⁸³ Jesus thus presents himself

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Chouinard, "Literary Study," 318: "Throughout this section Jesus' role as God's obedient servant committed to fulfill the Father's purpose in all things dominates the narrator's christological concerns."

¹⁷⁷ Birger Gerhardsson, "Utlämnad och övergiven: Till förståelsen av passionshistorien i Matteusevangeliet," *SEA* 32 (1967): 92–120 (100).

¹⁷⁸ See pp. 192–93.

¹⁷⁹ Birger Gerhardsson, "Gottes Sohn als Diener Gottes: Messias, Agape und Himmelsherrschaft nach dem Matthäusevangelium," *ST* 27 (1973): 73–106 (86).

¹⁸⁰ See David Hill, "Son and Servant: An Essay on Matthean Christology," *JSNT* 6 (1980): 2–16; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:325. Cf. Byrskog, "Didactic Identity," 107–09. Byrskog proposes that the servant songs of Isaiah, with its didactic themes (e.g. 42:1–4, 50:4), paved the way for the fusion of the teaching and healing ministries of Jesus in Matthew's story.

¹⁸¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:329.

¹⁸² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:94.

¹⁸³ Hill, "Son and Servant," 13; Chouinard, "Literary Study," 345.

as a model of servanthood for his disciples to imitate.¹⁸⁴ As noted above, Jesus' presentation of himself as servant relates to the training of his disciples. Before they are ready for their coming teaching role (28:19–20), they have to see and understand that Jesus is the “lowly Servant” who has to go through death and resurrection.¹⁸⁵ The commission of the disciples to the nations (28:19) can, moreover, be understood as an extension of Jesus' ministry to the nations as the Servant of God (12:18).¹⁸⁶

Servant leadership

What is then implied in the servant leadership that Jesus teaches his disciples and models himself? The context of the saying in 20:25–28 is the request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee for high positions for her sons in the future kingdom (20:20–21), which may have been raised by the recent promise of twelve thrones for the disciples (19:28). This request makes Jesus teach his disciples about leadership by contrasting two different ways:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles (οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν ἐθνῶν) lord it over them (κατακυριεύουσιν) and their great ones (οἱ μεγάλοι) oppress (κατεξουσιάζουσιν) them. It shall not be like this among you, but whoever wants to be great among you shall be a servant (διάκονος) of the others and whoever wants to be first among you shall be a slave (δοῦλος) for the others (20:25–27).

Some scholars propose that the characterization of the leadership of the Gentiles¹⁸⁷ is not oppressive or tyrannical, but only describing their use of authority over other people. K. W. Clark suggests that the term κατακυριεύειν is interchangeable with κυριεύειν and has no intensification. According to him, “there is here no suggestion of arrogance and oppression on the part of Gentile rulers.”¹⁸⁸ The term should thus not be translated as “lord it over,”¹⁸⁹ but has the meaning of “ruling over,” “to be lord of,” and “to have dominion over.”¹⁹⁰ The implication of the statement of Jesus is thus a rejection of all kind of authority. This is how Luz understands the saying

¹⁸⁴ See e.g. Gerhardtsson, “Utlämnad och övergiven,” 119; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 308; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 760.

¹⁸⁵ Lincoln, “Story for Teachers,” 123.

¹⁸⁶ Byrskog, “Didactic Identity,” 108.

¹⁸⁷ Scholars understand “Gentiles” in different ways. Carter, “Matthew and the Gentiles,” 280–81, and Carson, “Matthew,” 488, for example, suggest that it refers to the Romans. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 759, proposes that “Gentiles” is used as an example of the natural human way to rule in contrast to the people of God.

¹⁸⁸ K. W. Clark, “The Meaning of [KATA] KYRIEYEIN,” in *Studies in New Testament Language and Text. Essays in Honour of George D. Kilpatrick on the Occasion of his sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. J. K. Elliot (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 100–05 (103–04). See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:93 n. 55.

¹⁸⁹ E.g. NRSV, NIV, ESV.

¹⁹⁰ Clark, “Meaning of [KATA] KYRIEYEIN,” 105. Cf. Louw-Nida, “κυριεύω, κατακυριεύω.”

when he suggests that there is a contrast between “the world’s authority structure and the church’s service structure.”¹⁹¹ This understanding of the passage is, however, unlikely. The term *κατακυριεύειν* can be used in a neutral way, but this is not always the case. In the NT it is also used in Acts 19:16 and 1 Pet 5:3, where it clearly has a pejorative sense.¹⁹² In the LXX *κατακυριεύειν* is sometimes used in the context where someone subdues the enemy or uses force to rule over subjects who are unwilling.¹⁹³ Consequently, the context of the term is crucial in the understanding of its meaning.

In Matthew, the two verbs that are used as a description of the Gentile way, *κατακυριεύειν* and *κατεξουσιάζειν*, are both compounds with *κατα-* (“down”). The use of *κατα* in both words is significant, implies a negative sense, and suggests that the rulers exercise their authority for their own benefit.¹⁹⁴ The pejorative understanding of *κατακυριεύειν* and *κατεξουσιάζειν* as one who exercises authority for his own benefit is confirmed by the contrast of the altruistic example of Jesus who has not come “to be served, but to serve” (20:28). In the other passage in Matthew, where Jesus explicitly teaches about leadership, 23:1–12, servanthood is again underlined. Here the exhortation of the great one to be a servant is repeated (23:11) and contrasted to exalting oneself (23:12). In addition, the portrayal of Jesus as a humble servant in the story does not exclude that he is a leader who exercises authority and gives commands (e.g. 28:19).¹⁹⁵ It thus seems that Clark overstates his case and that Jesus actually criticizes rulers who “lord it over” and “oppress” their people.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Luz, *Matthew*, 2:544. See also Carter, *Households and Discipleship*, 170–72; Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 234.

¹⁹² See e.g. Werner Foerster, “κατακυριεύω,” *TDNT* 3:1098; Peter K. Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship: A Study of Luke 22:24–30*, SBLDS 138 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 149 n. 120; Reinhard Feldmeier, *Power, Service, Humility: A New Testament Ethic*, trans. Brian McNeil (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 42.

¹⁹³ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC 49 (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 285. See e.g. Num 21:24; 32:22, 29; 1 Macc 15:30. The term is, however, also used about the lordship of God (e.g. Ps 71:8, 109:2 LXX; Jer 3:14) and about the authority of man over earth (Gen 1:28 and 9:1). Cf. LSJ, “κατακυριεύω”; BDAG, “κατακυριεύω,” and Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 212: “In the heathen world, the great ones were those who could best bend the wills of others to conform to their own.”

¹⁹⁴ Foerster, *TDNT* 3:1098. See also Oda Wischmeyer, “Herrschen als Dienen – Mk 10,41–45,” *ZNW* 90 (1999): 28–44 (29); Hans Bietenhard, “Lord, Master,” *NIDNTT* 2:508–19 (519); B. Rod Doyle, “Positions of Leadership: Some Reflections from Matthew’s Gospel,” *Pacifica* 9 (1996): 135–44 (137–38); Fihavango, *Jesus and Leadership*, 138.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Nelson, *Leadership and Discipleship*, 240, and Carson, “Matthew,” 535.

¹⁹⁶ See Blomberg, *Matthew*, 307–08, who describes the leadership of the gentiles as “rule by domination and authoritarianism,” and Feldmeier, *Power, Service, Humility*, 85. Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 822.

Consequently, Jesus is not against authority as such, but the issue here is how it is exercised.¹⁹⁷ Jesus does not contrast authority and service, but different ways to use authority. David Seeley thus aptly speaks about “rulership in tandem with service.”¹⁹⁸ Jesus is not rejecting hierarchies in order to create an egalitarian community, as seen above.¹⁹⁹ On the contrary, he is transforming the concept of ruling and leadership and the role of the leader. Reinhard Feldmeier gives a good summary of the implications of the teaching of Jesus:

Jesus does not preach the ideal of a fellowship in which there is no rule. Rather, he recognizes the necessity of superior and lower positions, of command and obedience. But he offers an inverse justification of hierarchy. Among those who follow him, those at the top are not the ones who compel the others to obey them but those who act in the interest of the others and thus realize something of God’s caring rule.²⁰⁰

What are then the implications of “service”? How does the reader understand the teaching that the leader should be a “διακονός (servant)” and a “δοῦλος (slave)” (20:26)? The verb διακονεῖν has traditionally been understood to have a basic meaning of “waiting at the table,” and the more general sense of “serving” another in a personal way.²⁰¹ It has also been the view that while Greek literature outside the Bible uses the term only in a positive sense as a reference to a free man related to serving the state or a god,²⁰² the NT texts use the term widely with a positive sense even if it has servile connotations.²⁰³ John Collins has challenged this view and suggests: “If the words denote actions or positions of ‘inferior value,’ there is at the same time often the connotation of something special ... the words do not

¹⁹⁷ See e.g. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 759; Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 102; Fihavango, *Jesus and Leadership*, 137. Cf. John C. Hutchison, “Servanthood: Jesus’ Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders,” *BSac* 166 (2009): 53–69 (69).

¹⁹⁸ David Seeley, “Rulership and Service in Mark 10:41–45,” *NovT* 35 (1993): 234–50 (234).

¹⁹⁹ See 5.2.1.

²⁰⁰ Feldmeier, *Power, Service, Humility*, 42. Cf. Bernd Wannenwetsch, “The Fourfold Pattern of Christian Moral Reasoning according to the New Testament,” in *Scripture’s Doctrine and Theology’s Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Alan J. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 177–90 (182): “Jesus’ claim ‘not so with you’ is not in an egalitarian fashion doing away with the notion of authority and greatness altogether; rather, it aims at a *reconceptualization* of what it means to be great: from my striving to excel over others, which aims to let them appear smaller in my presence, toward a notion of service or ministry that marks out a greatness that makes others grow rather than diminish in my presence.” Italics his.

²⁰¹ See Hermann Beyer, “διακονέω,” *TDNT* 2:81–87 (82). Cf. Moisés Silva, ed. “διακονέω, διακονία, κτλ,” *NIDNTE* 1:701–04 (701).

²⁰² See e.g. Klaus Hess, “διακονέω,” *NIDNTT* 3:544–49 (545). Cf. Plutarch, *Num.* 6.2.

²⁰³ See e.g. Beyer, *TDNT* 2:84–86. See further Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 61–65, for the different views among scholars.

necessarily involve the idea of ‘humble activity’ at all.”²⁰⁴ He proposes that the term *διακονός* relates to representation and acting in the name of another.²⁰⁵

Though Collins rightly points out that this is a possible interpretation in some NT texts, it is not an adequate understanding of the term in Matthew.²⁰⁶ Here it is used according to the common meaning of serving at the table (8:15, 27:55).²⁰⁷ But the usage is wider, since it is also used by the author to denote meeting the needs of a stranger or a naked, sick, and imprisoned person (25:44). In 20:26 it is used together with *δοῦλος*, which implies serving in a general sense.²⁰⁸

While *διακονεῖν* emphasizes service towards another, *δουλεύειν* denotes the slave’s submission to and dependence on the master.²⁰⁹ The term *δοῦλος* is often used in a pejorative sense in Hellenistic writings, since the Greeks valued personal autonomy and freedom from subjection of one’s will.²¹⁰ Philo expresses a common view when he states that “no one is willingly a slave (*δοῦλος γὰρ ἐκὼν οὐδεὶς*)” (*Prob.* 36).

The positive use of the word groups of *διακονεῖν* and *δουλεύειν* in the NT is, however, influenced by the LXX and the positive understanding of servanthood as an ideal for leaders in the OT.²¹¹ The verb *διακονεῖν* is absent in LXX and the noun *διάκονος* is mainly related to court servants.²¹² But *δοῦλος* is sometimes used as an honorable designation, which signifies a person who promotes the interest and benefit of one who is greater (a ruler or God).²¹³ In the OT good leaders are often titled as “servant of the Lord,” and Moses and David especially personify the idea of the leader as a servant of God.²¹⁴

The saying in Matthew is nonetheless different, since Jesus exhorts the leaders to serve other people and not only God. A closer parallel is thus the elders’ advice to the new ruler Rehoboam “to be a servant (*δοῦλος*) to the people and to serve them

²⁰⁴ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 194.

²⁰⁵ Collins, *Diakonia*, 194.

²⁰⁶ See discussion in Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 65–66.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Luke 22:27.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 66 n. 95, 100. Collins, *Diakonia*, 245, also admits that *διακονία/διακονεῖν* in the gospels “mainly designate menial attendance of one kind or another.”

²⁰⁹ Weiser, *EDNT* 1:302.

²¹⁰ Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 11. See also Karl H. Rengstorff, “*δοῦλος, σύνδουλος, κτλ.*,” *TDNT* 2: 261–80 (261). For an example, see Isocrates, *Evag.* 28. Hutchinson, “Servanthood,” 67, points out that in the first-century Palestine with its importance of honor, most people would find it dishonoring to take the role of a slave. Cf. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 486.

²¹¹ Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 11.

²¹² Hess, *NIDNTT* 3:545.

²¹³ Rudolf Teunte, “*δοῦλος*,” *NIDNTT* 3:592–98 (594). See also Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 7–8.

²¹⁴ Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 7.

(δουλεύσης)” (1 Kgs 12:7). This advice is presented as a wise one which Rehoboam, according to the narrator, should have listened to.²¹⁵ Here, however, the motive to serve the people is related to the purpose of gaining the loyalty of the people through a merciful rule and thus some kind of self-interest.

When Jesus teaches his disciples, the future leaders, to be servants and slaves, he exhorts them to serve other people and willingly do even the simplest tasks in their care for the people. To serve in the way Jesus models is to put aside selfish interests and to give one’s life for the benefit of others (20:28). It is to willingly adopt lower status and to show greatness through serving.²¹⁶ The followers of Jesus, with the words of Hare, “are not to claim a superior status but to manifest the humility of a slave.”²¹⁷

Matthew presents Jesus as the Servant of God who serves the people. This is clarified to the reader through Jesus’ own teaching, the use of the verb θεραπεύειν, the fulfilment of prophetic words, and his suffering and death for sake of the people. Jesus also models and teaches his disciples to embrace a servant leadership and use their positions of authority not for the sake of their own benefit and status, but in order to humbly serve the interests of others.

5.3 The true leader and the false leaders (21:1–25:46)

In the last section of the middle part of the biography, chapter 21–25,²¹⁸ leadership is in the forefront. The conflict between Jesus and his adversaries escalates in chapter 21–23, and harsh confrontations are described. Through both parables (21:28–22:14) and a lengthy discourse (23:13–36) Jesus confronts the present religious leadership and pronounces judgment over them. At the same time he teaches his disciples about leadership (especially 23:1–12). In addition to this, he also presents himself as the Leader *par excellence* (23:10). Intertwined with the criticism and teaching is a presentation of Jesus as the good leader, and the judgment

²¹⁵ Stevens, *Leadership roles*, 97.

²¹⁶ Fihavango, *Jesus and Leadership*, 139. A similar idea is underlined in 18:1–4 where Jesus presents a child, who lacked status in the ancient world, as a model for greatness in the kingdom of heaven. See pp. 194–95. Cf. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 760: “If there is to be ambition in the service of God ... it must be the ambition to serve others.” Carter, *Households and Discipleship*, 189–90, takes the statement too far when he proposes that Jesus calls his disciples to embrace the identity and liminal lifestyles of slaves.

²¹⁷ Hare, *Matthew*, 234.

²¹⁸ Alistair I. Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen? A Study of Jesus as Judge in Matthew 21–25* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), 69, notes that this section is framed by references to the coming of the king (21:1–11 and 25:31–46), which points to the coherence of the unity. The two references to the Mount of Olives (21:1 and 24:3) also hold together this section.

on the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23 is at the same time a “leadership discourse.”

Throughout the whole section the author underlines the contrast between false and true leadership.²¹⁹ The characterization of the religious leaders here plays an important role in the presentation of Jesus as leader. The character traits of these leaders do not only explain the reason for their failure and the coming judgment upon Israel. They also reveal the character of Jesus, since the religious leaders are used as a foil to Jesus. The author does not only portray the religious leaders as hypocrites but also presents Jesus as a leader with integrity. The followers of Jesus, the disciples and the crowds, are to avoid the influence and the example of the religious leaders and instead follow the true Leader, Jesus.²²⁰

5.3.1 The confronting leader

The escalation of the conflict

The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders has been serious since the Sabbath controversies (12:1–14). Already at this point the reader learns that the religious leaders plotted to get rid of Jesus (12:14). But when Jesus became aware of this he “withdrew” (ἀνεχώρησεν) from them (12:15). Though Jesus later confronts the religious leaders (cf. 12:34, 41–42) he repeatedly withdraws from his opponents in this part of the story (14:13, 15:21, 16:4). France thus rightly points out that Jesus’ withdrawal from confrontation is a “significant Matthean motif.”²²¹

In chapter 21 the story takes a new turn.²²² The previous controversies have been initiated by the religious leaders (cf. 12:23–24, 15:1–2, 16:1). Now Jesus himself takes the initiative in both actions and words that seriously provoke the leaders and thus deepens the conflict, which is taken to another level. The public entrance into the city and the following acts are provocative and escalate the conflict.²²³

The structure of the first part of this section can be outlined in the following way: After three provocative actions by Jesus (21:1–22), there is a questioning by the religious leaders (21:23–27), which lead up to three provocative parables by Jesus

²¹⁹ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 768.

²²⁰ Cf. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 61: “Matthew again and again accuses the leaders of the Jewish community of misleading the people, threatens them with judgment, and urges the people to follow a true leader, Jesus.”

²²¹ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 560. Cf. Donald J. Verseput, “The Faith of the Reader and the Narrative of Matthew 13.53–16.20,” *JSNT* 46 (1992): 3–24 (6); Luz, *Matthew*, 2:177.

²²² Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem (and his first actions there) is one of the kernel events in the story. See Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” 245; Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks,” 478–79.

²²³ Stendahl, “Matthew,” 790, rightly points out that “Jesus comes out into the open and the tone of chs. 21–3 is quite provocative.” See also Wiggin, “Leadership Lessons,” 212; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 774. Cf. Kingsbury, “The Plot of Matthew’s Story,” 353.

(21:28–22:14). The religious leaders respond by three challenges (22:15–41), which are countered by a question from Jesus (22:41–46) that puts an end to the debate (22:46). Both parties to the conflict are thus active, respond, and take initiative.²²⁴

In this section Jesus is thus presented as confrontational.²²⁵ But what can be said about Jesus, in regard to this matter, in the biography as a whole? In his study of Jesus' conflicts in Matthew, Frank Wiggin proposes that Jesus is not a passive and innocent person, but the one who most often initiates conflicts, and one who frequently makes comments in a way that escalates the conflict.²²⁶ According to Wiggin, "Jesus was unafraid to stimulate conflict. He never avoided it, and always controlled it on his terms—even—when the statements that would stir conflicts were severe."²²⁷ Though Wiggin rightly notices the confrontational side of Jesus, he clearly overstates his case. He does not pay attention to the repeated comment by the author that Jesus "withdrew" from opposition. At the same time, he downplays the religious leaders' active role in the conflicts in a number of ways.²²⁸ Nonetheless, Wiggin is right to point out that Jesus sometimes escalates the conflict, even when he himself has not initiated it.²²⁹ Commenting on the conflict story in 12:9–13 he also correctly states: "This type of in-your-face confrontation was to become a mark of Jesus' style and would be repeated again and again in the course of his ministry."²³⁰

The confrontational approach of Jesus is seen throughout the story and is related to both his prophetic ministry²³¹ and his role as king and judge, which will be shown

²²⁴ See further Powell, "Religious Leaders," 110–20, who underlines that the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is mutual and shows how it develops. See also Kingsbury, "The Plot of Matthew's Story," 353.

²²⁵ Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 767, who denotes the section in 21:1–25:46 as "Jerusalem: The Messiah in confrontation with the religious authorities."

²²⁶ Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 280–82.

²²⁷ Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 242. He also states that "Jesus was an expert at contending, a stranger to retreat" (p. 287).

²²⁸ In several of the conflict stories, where he suggests that Jesus takes the initiative to the conflict, Jesus clearly responds to some kind of opposition and it is thus doubtful if he is the initiator. This is the case with the following stories: 9:1–8, 9:9–12, 12:1–8, 12:38–42, 13:54–58, 16:1–4, 22:15–22. Cf. Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel*, 181, who concludes that "Matthew appears very careful not to depict Jesus as the initiator of the conflict with the Pharisees." When Wiggin comments on 12:24, he describes the accusation of the religious leaders as a "the *suggestion* of the Pharisees that his power could be attributed to demonic forces" (p. 137, cf. p. 149, 179). Italics mine. Moreover, Wiggin does not consider the repeated statement that the religious leaders intentionally "tested" (πειράζειν) Jesus (16:1; 19:3; 22:16–18, 35), a term which is also used about Satan (4:1).

²²⁹ 12:9–13, 22–37. See further Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 129, 186.

²³⁰ Wiggin, "Leadership Lessons," 129. Cf. Zuck, *Teaching as Jesus Taught*, 154–55, who points out that "he did not hesitate to differ with his opponents, pointing out their wrong views and practices. He was deeply disturbed by false beliefs and improper conduct." See also Ford, *Transforming Leadership*, 267.

²³¹ See 4.2.2.

below. At the same time, Jesus is not portrayed as a man who seeks conflicts or always challenges opponents. The author also characterizes Jesus as a man who does not confront when the issue is related to his own privilege. This is clearly the case with the question about the temple tax (17:24–27).²³² *Jesus is presented as a confrontational leader, but there is a narrative development and a change in the story from chapter 21 and his arrival in Jerusalem.*

The confrontational Messiah

When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, he is announced by the crowds as the son of David (21:9, cf. 20:30–31), which points to his royalty. The reader is already informed that Jerusalem is “the city of the great king” (5:35), and the quotation from Zech 9:9 confirms that Jesus enters the city as its king. The entrance into Jerusalem in a way that resembles this prophecy implies that Jesus is “deliberately presenting himself before Jerusalem as its messianic king.”²³³ This is confirmed to the reader in 22:41–45, where he himself brings up the question of the identity of the Messiah.²³⁴ The judgment scene in 25:31–46 also underlines the kingship of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus explicitly refers to himself as “the king” (ὁ βασιλεύς) (25:34, 40). The kingdom of the Son of Man, which already has been hinted to the reader earlier in the story (13:41, 16:28, 19:28, 20:21), now becomes explicit.²³⁵ These chapters thus clearly present Jesus as the Messiah and the legitimate King of Israel.

Closely related to the role of the king is the role of the judge, since judgment is one of the tasks of the king.²³⁶ This becomes clear in the judgment scene (25:31–46), where it is explicitly stated that Jesus is the king (25:34, 40).²³⁷ Wilson thus rightly underlines Jesus’ authority to judge as king:

The coming of a king would mean that he was coming either to bring blessing or to bring judgment. It is his authority as king that enables him not only to pronounce judgment but also to enact judgment, both in the context of his earthly ministry

²³² France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 667, observes that “where it is his own personal privilege that is at stake, he has no problem with accommodating himself to what is expected of him, and in this way identifying himself with the traditions of his people.”

²³³ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 775. See also e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:595; Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 89; Ham, *Coming King*, 47.

²³⁴ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 848.

²³⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 960, points out that “this is the culmination of the process throughout this gospel whereby the kingdom of God/heaven becomes embodied in the kingship of the Son of Man.”

²³⁶ See Stevens, *Leadership Roles of the Old Testament*, 18. In the OT, for example 1 Kgs 3:9, Ps 72:1–2, and Ps 96:10, God’s/Messiah’s role as king is closely related to his judgment. See also Rev 11:17–18. Cf. Diotogenes, *On Kingship* (ap. Stobaeus. 4.7.61).

²³⁷ For the close relationship between kingship and judgment, see also 19:28 and 22:1–14.

(chapters 21–23), in the immediate future (i.e. in the fall of Jerusalem, 24:4–35) and in the final universal judgement (25:31–46).²³⁸

The theme of judgment is underlined throughout Matthew's story.²³⁹ At several times in the story, Jesus has been portrayed as one who will have a judgment role in the future (7:21–23, 10:32–33, 16:27, 19:28, cf. 12:18). In the present section, however, the theme of judgment is at the forefront.²⁴⁰ The symbolic actions after the entrance points to a coming judgment.²⁴¹ In chapter 23 Jesus pronounces judgment upon the religious leadership, which is seen by the repeated use of the term “woe” (οὐαί).²⁴² The most detailed presentation of Jesus as judge is, however, the judgment scene in 25:31–46, which relates to the future. Here the shepherd imagery is again used in reference to Jesus, who will separate the peoples “as the shepherd (ὁ ποιμήν) separates the sheep from the goats” (25:32). The present section thus underlines the authority Jesus is given by the Father to judge (cf. 11:27, 28:18–20), both in his earthly ministry and in his heavenly rule.²⁴³

Wilkins proposes that Jesus is also presented as a priest in this section. The priesthood was closely related to the temple and forgiveness of sins, so when Jesus acts in the temple he acts as a priest, Wilkins suggests. He also sees the priestly role in the death of Jesus, which results in the tearing of the curtain veil.²⁴⁴ The repeated references to Jesus as Messiah and King in this section, however, suggest that Jesus is portrayed as a king and not as a priest.²⁴⁵ Though Jesus is also presented as “prophet” in this section (21:11, 46), and acts in a way that resembles the OT

²³⁸ Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 79. Though he points out the close relationship between kingship and judgment, Wilson surprisingly underlines Jesus' roles as prophet and sage in relation to his judgment.

²³⁹ See Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 72–73, and Luz, *Matthew*, 3:285.

²⁴⁰ Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 66, points out that Matthew 21–25 “contains a coherent portrayal of Jesus as agent of judgment.” Cf. Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 473.

²⁴¹ Jesus' saying that they have made the temple to “a den of robbers” (21:13), is harsh polemic against its leadership. See Wiggin, “Leadership Lessons,” 209. Possibly, Wilkins *Matthew*, 692, is correct when he describes the event as “a symbolic act of judgment against the religious leadership of Israel.” The incident with the fig tree, which withers by the words of Jesus, should probably be understood as a symbolic act in which he pronounces judgment over the present leadership since fruit is missing (cf. 22:43). See e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:605–06; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 791–93; Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 238.

²⁴² See below, p. 251 n. 258.

²⁴³ Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 208.

²⁴⁴ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 702–03.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Green, *Message of Matthew*, 218, who titles Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in the following way: “The King comes in judgment to his capital.”

prophets,²⁴⁶ his authority exceeds the authority of a prophet.²⁴⁷ *Jesus confronts the leadership of Jerusalem as the King and the Judge.*

The failed leadership

The provocative acts of Jesus in the temple lead to the question from the religious leaders about his authority (21:23). Through Jesus' counter question the reader's focus shifts from Jesus' authority to the ignorant and incompetent religious leaders, who only say "we don't know" (21:27).²⁴⁸ This implicit showing of the incompetence of the religious leadership is followed by teaching of Jesus, which explicitly underlines their failure (21:28–45) and explains it in detail (chapter 23). The reason to the confrontation of Jesus, through both actions and speech in Jerusalem, is its fallen leadership.

After three provocative acts, Jesus tells the religious leaders three provocative parables, which underline the failure.²⁴⁹ The parable of the two sons (21:28–32) highlights the difference between the religious leaders, who do not receive God's messengers, and the people who receive the message and repents.²⁵⁰ The failure to recognize the messengers of God is a main critique in all the three parables.²⁵¹ The parable of tenants of the vineyard (21:33–44), an allegorical designation of Israel (cf. Isa 5:1–7), implies that the religious leaders ("the tenants") should be replaced (21:43–45).²⁵² Like the OT prophets (cf. Jer 23:1–4; Ezek 34:9–10, 23–24), Jesus

²⁴⁶ See e.g. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 370.

²⁴⁷ See Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 97, who rightly points out that though the title "prophet" is adequate for Jesus, he "consistently went beyond the position of a prophet (i.e., one who bears witness to judgment, or who proclaims the judgment pronouncing words of another), taking on himself the role of the agent of judgment" (see also p. 102). Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel*, 184, likewise underlines Jesus' royal authority in this passage.

²⁴⁸ See Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:610. Cf. David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, NovTSup 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 30; Stanley P. Saunders, "'No one dared ask him anything more': Contextual Readings of the Controversy Stories in Matthew" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990), 339.

²⁴⁹ See e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:188–89; Repschinski, *Controversy Stories*, 318; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 800. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 183, points out that "the parable trilogy is part of a purposefully formed composition that brings the conflict between Jesus and the authorities to a head and, in so doing, emphasizes the distinction between the (Jerusalem) leadership and the people." The polemic in the parables is obvious since Jesus addresses the religious leaders. See e.g. Luz, *Matthew*, 3:20; France, "Matthew and Jerusalem," 118.

²⁵⁰ See e.g. Viviano, "Gospel according to Matthew," 664–65, and Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet*, 2:377. Similarly, 21:46 underlines the contrast between the religious leaders, who want to arrest Jesus, and the people, who regard him as a prophet.

²⁵¹ Hare, *Matthew*, 247; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:189.

²⁵² See e.g. David L. Turner, "Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel," *BSac* 159 (2002): 46–61 (53–56). Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 61, pays attention to the parallel in Isa 3:13–14, where the vineyard metaphor is used and the leaders of the people are judged. Consequently, 21:43 does not refer to the Jewish people, but to a group of new leaders. See further Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 185–93. For a different view, see e.g.

pronounces replacement of the current leaders for the sake of the people. The religious leaders will be replaced by “a people (ἔθνος) who will produce its fruit” (21:43). The word ἔθνος should here not be understood in an ethnic sense, but as a group which is constituted by its ethical standard.²⁵³ The new group of leaders who will be in charge in Israel is most probably the apostles of Jesus, since they are clearly presented as future leaders of Israel in the story.²⁵⁴

The three parables give some information about the failure of the leadership, which prepares the reader for a more thorough discourse on the matter in chapter 23, where the failures of the leadership are outlined by Jesus “in painful detail.”²⁵⁵ In this discourse, the scribes and Pharisees stand as a symbol for the entire religious leadership.²⁵⁶ That the religious authorities are criticized as *leaders* of the people is made clear by the repeated description of them as “blind leaders (ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοί)” (23:16, 24). The term ὁδηγός designates one who guides another person literally (“guide”) or metaphorically (“leader”).²⁵⁷ The discourse in chapter 23, when the messianic King judges the leaders and Jerusalem, outlines the failure of the spiritual guides of Israel and its tragic consequences for the nation.²⁵⁸

The judgment of the Messiah strikes the religious leadership and Jerusalem (23:37–39, cf. 27:25), not the nation as a whole, even if all Israel is affected since

Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 153, who proposes that the use of ἔθνος implies that the replacement is not only about new leaders but a new community.

²⁵³ Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 223; Turner, “Matthew 21:43,” 58–59; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 180–83.

²⁵⁴ Cf. e.g. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 876; Talbert, *Matthew*, 252; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 185–92. For a different view, see Saldarini, “Reading Matthew without Anti-Semitism,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of Willam G. Thompson, S.J.*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 166–84 (173), who suggests that the new group of leaders is Matthew and his community.

²⁵⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 853.

²⁵⁶ Garland, *Intention of Matthew* 23, 46; Camp, “Woe to you,” 199; France, “Matthew and Jerusalem,” 118.

²⁵⁷ See p. 70.

²⁵⁸ Luke T. Johnson, “New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 419–41, proposes that the discourse in chapter 23 should be understood from the Hellenistic topos of slander, used by philosophical schools in order to primarily instruct one’s own school. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:258–61; McKnight, “A Loyal Critic,” 56, 77. Though the discourse in chapter 23 also serves to educate the followers of Jesus, it is not adequate to describe it as “slander.” The polemic against the religious leaders begins with seven “woes” (ὠαί) (23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29). Garland, *Intention of Matthew* 23, 70–72, has convincingly shown that they imply judgment in this context. Specific reasons for the woes with the use of the conjunction ὅτι are given and there is also an explicit reference to judgment in the end of the discourse (23:38–39). Garland concludes that ὠαί in chapter 23 “connotes a powerful and denunciatory judgment akin to a curse ... a pronouncement of judgment by the son of God” (p. 87, cf. 89–90). See also e.g. Luz, *Matthew*, 3:115, and Mary Marshall, *The Portrayals of the Pharisees in the Gospels and Acts*, FRLANT 254 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 121–22.

the judgment results in the destruction of the temple (23:38, 24:1–2).²⁵⁹ The reference to “this generation” in 23:36 is similar to 12:39 and 16:4, where it is used about the religious leaders, and should thus be understood as a reference to them, not to the people as a whole.²⁶⁰ Nolland thus rightly emphasizes the role of the leadership in the story:

In a manner which replicates the role of bad leaders in the earlier history of Israel, it is ultimately because of a failure of leadership that the Jewish people have been led away from that which should have represented the culmination of all their hopes. As a result, disaster is in store for Jerusalem. Bad leaders have resulted in exile previously, and bad leaders will do so again.²⁶¹

The emphasis on the *responsibility* of leadership confirms this clearly to the reader. The leadership discourse begins with the notion that the scribes and the Pharisees “sit on Moses’ seat” (23:2), a position of authority.²⁶² The following exhortation to “do and observe all what they say” (23:3) points to their stewardship of the word of God.²⁶³ The accusation in the first woe (23:13), that they “shut the kingdom of heaven” implies that God has entrusted them with the keys of the kingdom which also underlines their responsibility as leaders.²⁶⁴ This verse shows that the leaders influence people in a disastrous way, since they prevent others “to enjoy the rule of God.”²⁶⁵ Likewise, the second woe (23:15) underlines the bad influence of the leaders. Here they are criticized, not primarily for their missionary activity, but for the outcome of the convert.²⁶⁶

The responsibility of the religious leaders is underlined in several instances in the biography. In the parable of the wicked tenants (21:33–44) they are described as

²⁵⁹ See France, “Matthew and Jerusalem,” 119. Cf. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 231: “In sum, we may conclude that with regard to Jewish leaders in the public sphere of society there is a distinct focus on Judea and Jerusalem as far as divine judgment is concerned” (see also p. 317). For a different view, see e.g. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 247, who suggests that 23:35–36 implies judgment on all Israel.

²⁶⁰ See Senior, *Matthew*, 263, Camp, “Woe to you,” 237, and further Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 232 (cf. pp. 222–25). Konradt shows that γενεά “does not always designate the entirety of a tribe or all contemporaries ... it can also refer to a certain group of people” (p. 209). Italics his.

²⁶¹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 42 (cf. p. 1174). See also Saldarini, “Reading Matthew without Anti-Semitism,” 167.

²⁶² “The seat of Moses” can be understood both literally and metaphorically. In both cases, the statement that they “sit” (ἐκάθισαν) expresses some kind of authority (cf. 19:28, 20:21). See Krentz, “Community and Character,” 568. Cf. Camp, “Woe to you,” 199.

²⁶³ Mark A. Powell, “Do and Keep what Moses says (Matthew 23:2–7),” *JBL* 114 (1995): 419–35, has convincingly shown that the followers of Jesus are not to observe the teaching of the religious leaders but the word of God.

²⁶⁴ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 547.

²⁶⁵ Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:668.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen?*, 105–06; Marshall, *Portrayals of the Pharisees*, 80.

“tenants” (γεωργοῖς) (21:33), entrusted with the vineyard, the people of Israel, God’s own people (cf. Isa 5:1–7). Since the vineyard is “leased” (ἐξέδετο) to the farmer tenants (21:33), they are responsible for its condition.²⁶⁷ In 15:14 Jesus does not only characterize the Pharisees as “blind leaders” (ὁδηγοί), he also points out the danger of being led by a blind leader: “And if one blind person leads (ὁδηγῇ) another, both will fall into a pit.” A blind person is totally dependent on his guide and for this reason the responsibility of the guide is great.²⁶⁸ In the eschatological discourse, Jesus also underlines the responsibility of leaders and warns his disciples that unfaithful leaders in his community can meet the same fate as the religious leaders (24:45–51).²⁶⁹

Jesus’ judgment upon the religious leaders is thus related to their bad influence upon the people. This is clearly seen in 16:5–12 where Jesus warns his disciples for their teaching by referring to it as “yeast” (16:6). D. A. Carson clarifies that this metaphor expresses “the idea that a little of it could have a far-reaching and insidious effect.”²⁷⁰ The harsh confrontation of Jesus against the religious leaders in Matthew resembles Xenophon’s portrayal of Agesilaus, where the biographer points out: “The failures of common men (τῶν ἰδιωτῶν) he endured compassionately, but the failures of rulers (τῶν ἀρχόντων) he treated seriously, judging the former to have little negative (κακῶς) impact, but the latter to have much more negative impact” (11.6).

Jesus primarily confronts and judges the religious leaders. Their great responsibility, based on their positions as God’s stewards and spiritual guides and their great influence upon the people, make them accountable in a special way. Their failure as leaders compels Jesus, the King, to confront and to judge them.

²⁶⁷ See Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:620; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 871; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 511.

²⁶⁸ Marshall, *Portrayals of the Pharisees*, 81.

²⁶⁹ Hare, *Matthew*, 283–84, speaks about “[t]he consensus that the parable is directed at religious leaders ... Those appointed to spiritual leadership in the church must treat their responsibility with the greatest seriousness.” See also Luz, *Matthew*, 3:225. The importance of stewardship for leaders is elsewhere underlined in the NT. See 1 Cor 4:1, 9:17; Eph 3:2; Titus 1:7 (cf. Ign. *Eph.* 6.1). Cf. Ritva H. Williams, *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers of the Word: Leadership in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 63. Faithfulness (πιστός) in the sense of “reliable” and “trustworthy,” which is one of the characteristics of the slave (24:45), is also a common ideal of the leader in the NT. See 1 Cor 4:17, Eph 6:21, Col 1:7. In 1 Cor 4:1–2 Paul brings together the idea of stewardship and faithfulness.

²⁷⁰ Carson, “Matthew,” 413. See also Marshall, *Portrayals of the Pharisees*, 82.

5.3.2 A leader with integrity

The purposes of the discourse in chapter 23

In Matthew 21–23 the religious leaders are central characters, and their failure in leadership results in the confrontation and judgment by Jesus, which culminates in the discourse in chapter 23. The polemic against the religious leaders is not, however, the only purpose of this chapter. This discourse is in fact explicitly addressed to the disciples and the crowds (23:1).²⁷¹ In his care for the people, Jesus outlines the failure of the religious leaders and makes it clear that they are not good leaders to follow. He thus warns the crowds of their negative influence.

Another purpose of the discourse is to provide teaching about leadership for the community of Jesus, which is made clear in 23:8–12 where Jesus' followers are directly addressed. Jesus especially talks to his disciples about leadership issues and warns them of the consequences of failings in their responsibility.²⁷² Here Jesus confirms his “new model of leadership,” which he introduced already in the previous section (20:25–28).²⁷³ The purpose of the discourse is thus also to define true leadership. Since the disciples are authorized by Jesus to teach the community (cf. 23:34), they need to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors.²⁷⁴

Several scholars point out that the religious leaders are presented as negative examples of leaders that the followers of Jesus should avoid.²⁷⁵ Tilborg even suggests that the religious leaders are portrayed by the author as “the antithesis of the disciple of Jesus.”²⁷⁶ But the biographical genre of Matthew, with its focus on Jesus, implies that the presentation of Jesus as leader is central in the passage.²⁷⁷ Chouinard thus rightly points out that “the discourse is not merely a denunciation of the Pharisees, but also a dramatic disclosure of his own person.”²⁷⁸ The religious leaders function as a foil to Jesus, the true leader, and the presentation of Jesus as

²⁷¹ Cf. Garland, *Intention of Matthew* 23, 120, who emphasizes that the discourse is addressed to the crowds and the disciples, “with their benefit in mind.”

²⁷² Minear, “Disciples and Crowds,” 36–37; Garland, *Intention of Matthew* 23, 37–41.

²⁷³ Saldarini, “Delegitimation of Leaders,” 670.

²⁷⁴ Garland, *Intention of Matthew* 23, 162; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 750. Cf. Hannan, *Sovereign Rule of God*, 189.

²⁷⁵ According to Garland, *Intention of Matthew* 23, 118, the religious leaders are used as foils for Christian leadership. See also e.g. Krentz, “Community and Character,” 568; Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 323; Saldarini, “Delegitimation of Leaders,” 669–70.

²⁷⁶ Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 26.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Lorenzo Scornaiench, “The Controversy Dialogues and the Polemic in Mark and Matthew,” in *Mark and Matthew I. Comparative Readings: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in their First-Century Settings*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson, WUNT 271 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 309–21 (315–16), who points out that controversy stories have a function in the biographical presentation of a person.

²⁷⁸ Chouinard, “Literary Study,” 357.

leader is made by the sharp contrast to the failed leaders.²⁷⁹ Clifton Black correctly states: “Indeed, practically all of the leaders’ traits ... are exactly antithetic to those of Jesus in Matthew ... Matthew’s characterization of the religious leaders is, therefore, commensurate with that of Jesus: each rather flatly inverts the other.”²⁸⁰ In order to understand the presentation of Jesus as leader, one thus has to pay attention to the characterization of the religious leaders. In contrast to the hypocritical false leaders there is one true leader in Israel with integrity: Jesus.

The hypocritical leaders

In this section of the biography, 21:1–25:46, the religious leaders show up frequently and all the different groups are mentioned: the chief priest and the scribes (21:15), the elders (21:23), the Pharisees (21:45), the Herodians (22:16), and the Sadducees (22:23). The close relationship between the different kinds of leaders is evident in this section, where they succeed each other in the confrontation with Jesus (22:15–40), and the following passion narrative (26:57; 27:41, 62). France helpfully points out: “It seems that Matthew wants us to recognize a wide ‘coalition’ of different groups, who on other matters would not see eye to eye, coming together to oppose this northern preacher who in different ways threatened each of their positions of power and influence.”²⁸¹

The religious leaders are the ones, besides Jesus, who mostly influence the plot of the story. Their characterization is determined by their opposition to Jesus. As the main antagonists they have a “flat” character, and their characterization is thus predictable.²⁸² Beaton points out that besides Jesus, “[t]here is not a single example of a good Jewish leader in the Gospel.”²⁸³ The stylization of the religious leaders is made by a repeated use of negative characteristics, such as “hypocrites,” “blind,”

²⁷⁹ Cf. Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, 180–81, who concludes that “it seems that lying behind Matthew’s portrayals of Jesus and the Pharisees is an attempt to contrast leadership styles in order to demonstrate that Jesus is the ideal leader, the servant of God *par excellence*.” See also e.g. Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 324; C. Clifton Black II, “Depth of Characterization and Degrees of Faith in Matthew,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 28 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989): 604–23 (616); David R. Bauer, “The Major Characters of Matthew’s Story: Their Function and Significance,” *Int* 46 (1992): 357–67 (366); Camp, “Woe to you,” 10 n. 1.

²⁸⁰ Black, “Depth of Characterization,” 617.

²⁸¹ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 769. Cf. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 318–19.

²⁸² Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 17–18. The first major appearance of the religious leaders, where they are a sharply criticized (3:7–12), clearly shows how the author wants the reader to understand them in the story. This negative portrayal continues throughout Matthew’s story. See Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 57, 64; Kingsbury, “The Plot of Matthew’s Story,” 348.

²⁸³ Beaton, “Messiah and Justice,” 15. It should be noted, however, that even John the Baptist and the disciples are presented as men of Israel who have a good influence on the people.

and “evil.”²⁸⁴ The trait of the leaders that is most described is hypocrisy.²⁸⁵ Six times in the discourse in chapter 23 the leaders are characterized as “hypocrites” (ὕποκριτής). With exception of 7:5 this term is only used in the story with reference to the religious leaders.

In modern language, the “hypocrite” is someone who intentionally deceives others pretending to be better than one is.²⁸⁶ In the ancient world, where hypocrisy was a common feature in polemic,²⁸⁷ the term had a wider meaning. In Hellenistic times the term was used in the theater and referred to an actor who played the role of another in front of an audience.²⁸⁸ Joel Green explains that “[h]ypocrisy is a pattern of thinking, believing, feeling, and behaving that conceals what is true.”²⁸⁹ In the NT the term can be used to denote both the discrepancy between one’s claims and one’s actual life, as well as an unconscious blindness and misunderstanding of God’s ways.²⁹⁰

What then is the meaning of “hypocrisy” in Matthew? Rhoads helpfully outlines different types of hypocrisy in the Gospel of Matthew.²⁹¹ *In the first case there is a contradiction between the inner motives and the outer behavior.* This kind of hypocrisy is seen in 6:1–21 (cf. 23:5–7), where the word describes the behavior of an actor, according to the Hellenistic usage.²⁹² Here the religious leaders are criticized for being more interested in their own public image and the views of others than in true piety and commitment to God. This kind of hypocrisy is related to a

²⁸⁴ Cousland, *The Crowds*, 47.

²⁸⁵ Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 8.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Eva F. Kittay, “Hypocrisy,” *EE* 819–24 (819): “Hypocrisy, a form of deception, is a morally blameworthy imposture whereby the dissembler poses as being better (in some morally relevant sense) than he or she really is.”

²⁸⁷ See Johnson, “New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander,” 432, for examples.

²⁸⁸ Richard A. Batey, “Jesus and the Theatre,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 563–74 (563). Ulrich Wilckens, “ὕποκρίνομαι, συνυποκρίνομαι, κτλ,” *TDNT* 8:559–70 (559), points out that the original meaning of the verb ὑποκρίνομαι was “to explain,” “to interpret,” and “to answer.” The noun ὑποκριτής often had the meaning of “actor,” based upon the sense of “to interpret.” He also proposes that the terms had no negative ethical connotation prior to the usage in Christian literature (p. 563). Cf. Howard I. Marshall, “Who Is a Hypocrite?,” *BSac* 159 (2002): 131–50 (150), who suggests that the use of the word group in the NT relates to “the development in the Greek world of the contrast between the true self and the role of the actor.”

²⁸⁹ Joel B. Green, “Hypocrisy,” *DSE* 390–91 (390).

²⁹⁰ Green, “Hypocrisy,” 390–391. Cf. Marshall, “Who Is a Hypocrite?,” 133, who separates between “deliberate misrepresentation” and “inconsistency.” David A. Spieler, “Hypocrisy: An Exploration of a ‘Third Type,’” *AUSS* 13 (1975): 273–79, also proposes a third type of hypocrisy that combines “pure egoism” on the inside with “a veneer of altruism and benevolence” on the outside (p. 275).

²⁹¹ David Rhoads, “The Gospel of Matthew. The Two Ways: Hypocrisy or Righteousness,” *CurTM* 19 (1992): 453–61 (456–57).

²⁹² Batey, “Jesus and the Theatre,” 563.

deception about the true intention of the behavior.²⁹³ It is thus an expression of hypocrisy in the modern sense, where one claims one thing but does another.²⁹⁴ This kind of hypocrisy is also seen when the religious leaders approach Jesus with the question about tax to the emperor (22:15–18).²⁹⁵ A general inconsistency in the speech of the religious leaders can further be seen in the story, since they have a much more positive attitude when they speak *to* Jesus than when they speak *about* him. Their real evaluation of him is only expressed when they speak about him with other characters. The reader thus understands them to be duplicitous.²⁹⁶ Jesus also confronts them with an inconsistency between words and deeds (cf. 21:28–32).²⁹⁷

A second kind of hypocrisy is *an opposition between the evil attitudes of the inner man and an outward righteous appearance*. This is the essence of Jesus' accusation of the religious leaders in 23:25–28. These verses show that hypocrisy is related to lawlessness and godless behavior.²⁹⁸ The hypocritical person has an outward appearance of righteousness, but the inward reality is wickedness.²⁹⁹ The criticism of lawlessness is ironic, since it is the opposite of how the religious leaders perceive themselves.³⁰⁰ The repeated characterization of the religious leaders as “blind” people (23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26) indicates that this kind of hypocrisy is not an intentional deception of others, but self-deception.³⁰¹ Dan Via, who emphatically underlines this view,³⁰² points out that the hypocritical leaders are primarily blind to the importance of integrity and of being pure both inwardly and outwardly in order to fulfill God's requirement. The religious leaders do not intend to deceive

²⁹³ Cf. Kittay, “Hypocrisy,” 819.

²⁹⁴ Gundry, *Matthew*, 642–43; Marshall, “Who Is a Hypocrite?,” 137; Green, “Hypocrisy,” 390.

²⁹⁵ Powell, “Religious Leaders,” 189. Cf. 12:10, 16:1, 19:3, 22:35.

²⁹⁶ Powell, “Characterization on the Phraseological Plane,” 173–76.

²⁹⁷ Merritt, *In Word and Deed*, 115 n. 10, proposes that in the statement in 23:3 “we observe the antithetical formulation of the phrase *in word and deed* as the primary means of alleging moral inconsistency—even hypocrisy.” This statement, however, is not a general accusation of hypocrisy, but is related to their failure in doing and teaching the word of God. See further p. 252. Cf. Marshall, *Portrayals of the Pharisees*, 118. Garland, *Intention of Matthew 23*, 112, proposes that hypocrisy in Matthew is used in the same way as in the Qumran literature and thus relates both to the deficiency of the character and to the interpretation and teaching of the religious leaders (cf. 15:1–7). The charge of hypocrisy is thus closely related to their leadership role and their responsibility to guide the people (cf. 24:45–51). Garland thus concludes: “Hypocrisy is not laid to just anyone. It is an accusation lodged against those with greatest responsibility ... it is always someone who should know better who is rebuked” (p. 116–17).

²⁹⁸ See Garland, *Intention of Matthew 23*, 102; Ivor J. W. Oakley, “‘Hypocrisy’ in Matthew,” *IBS* 7 (1985): 118–38 (132); Marshall, “Who Is a Hypocrite?,” 148.

²⁹⁹ In this way the author follows the usage of word in the LXX. See Wilckens, *TDNT* 8:564.

³⁰⁰ Garland, *Intention of Matthew 23*, 159; Saldarini, “Delegitimation of Leaders,” 679.

³⁰¹ Garland, *Intention of Matthew 23*, 102–03. Cf. Marshall, “Who Is a Hypocrite?,” 142. For a different view, see Gundry, *Matthew*, 641–47; Lanfranco M. Fedrigotti, “The Multi-Layered Meaning of ‘Hypocrisy’ in the Gospels,” *ThA* 25 (2004): 87–127 (111–14).

³⁰² Dan O. Via, *Self-Deception and Wholeness in Paul and Matthew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 92–98.

others, but are deceived themselves. They are, however, still responsible since they lack the required integrity.³⁰³

A third type of hypocrisy is *to be inconsistent in moral behavior*. An example of this is seen in 23:23–24 where the religious leaders are said to “stain out a gnat and swallow a camel,” when they observe some commandments in detail while ignoring fundamental matters in the law completely.³⁰⁴ In the religion of these leaders, the form is more important than the substance.³⁰⁵

When the concept of “hypocrisy” is examined in Matthew one can agree with Eva Kittay that “hypocrisy itself takes on many faces.”³⁰⁶ It is a complex term that relates to both intentional deception and unconscious evilness.³⁰⁷ Rhoads points out that the common denominator of the different kinds of hypocrisy is an inner fault: “The interior motivation, the inner disposition, the limited commitment to goodness are signs that the inside is warped and flawed.”³⁰⁸

The integrity of Jesus

In contrast to the false, hypocritical leaders, Jesus is a true leader with integrity. The truthfulness of Jesus is not only seen through the contrasting portrayal of other leaders, but in a number of ways. Most clearly, the flattery words of the religious leaders, when they want to undermine his authority as teacher with the question of paying tax, underline this quality (22:16):

Teacher, we know that you are true (ἀληθής) and teach God’s way truthfully (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ) and do not care about [the opinion of] anyone (οὐ μέλει σοι περὶ οὐδενός). For you do not see to the faces of men (οὐ γὰρ βλέπεις εἰς πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπων).

Though these words are hypocritical flattery from the point of view of the religious leaders, which Jesus himself recognizes (22:18), they also play a role in the presentation of Jesus. Already in the beginning of the story, the author makes use of irony when he introduces Jesus as the leader of Israel with words coming from the religious leaders (2:6).³⁰⁹ In a similar way, the integrity of the leader is underlined

³⁰³ Via, *Self-Deception and Wholeness*, 94–95.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Marshall, “Who Is a Hypocrite?,” 140.

³⁰⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 855.

³⁰⁶ Kittay, “Hypocrisy,” 823.

³⁰⁷ Rhoads, “Hypocrisy or Righteousness,” 457, also proposes a fourth type of hypocrisy which relates to behavior towards people which is not consistent with the relationship with God. But the examples he gives on this type are not explicitly related to hypocrisy. Since he underlines the contrast between righteousness and hypocrisy, the latter term seems to include all kind of behavior which is not righteous. In this way his definition of “hypocrisy” gets too wide.

³⁰⁸ Rhoads, “Hypocrisy or Righteousness,” 457.

³⁰⁹ See p. 139. Irony is also used in the end of the story, in in order to present Jesus as Messiah, Son of God, and King of Israel (e.g. 26:63, 27:27–29).

in this passage, through the mouths of the religious leaders.³¹⁰ The reader who has paid attention to the characterization of Jesus so far in the story recognizes that the statement about Jesus is correct, since it corresponds to the way Jesus acts, even if the religious leaders do not mean what they say.³¹¹

How is then Jesus characterized in this scene? Spicq describes the meaning of ἀληθής as something which is “not concealed, a fact or condition that can be seen or expressed as it really is.”³¹² The character of the “true” person is thus the very opposite of the hypocrite, who conceals the truth.³¹³ The trait ἀληθής describes an authentic and reliable man.³¹⁴ Jesus is not false, deceptive, or concealing anything, but honest.³¹⁵ That Jesus is ἀληθής implies that he is a man of integrity, whose words are trustworthy.³¹⁶ The trustworthiness of the words of Jesus is explicitly stated in the resurrection narrative, where the angel declares that Jesus has risen “as he said” (28:6).³¹⁷ The integrity of Jesus is explained by the fact that he does care about anyone (οὐ μέλει σοι περὶ οὐδενός). Jesus is not afraid to confront people with uncomfortable truth and does not adjust his message to the opinions of his audience.³¹⁸ The next phrase, οὐ γὰρ βλέπεις εἰς πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπων, probably means that Jesus does not show partiality to people (cf. Deut 16:19).³¹⁹

³¹⁰ Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 86: “Matthew is very skillful in using an irony in 22:16 to announce Jesus as a sincere and truthful teacher of God’s will by the mouth of his opponents. There he also contrasts his sincerity and truthfulness to the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of his rival teachers of the law.” See also e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:213; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 895; Witherington, *Matthew*, 411.

³¹¹ Camp, “Woe to you,” 166; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 720; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:65; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 832.

³¹² Spicq, “ἀλήθεια, ἀληθεύω, κτλ.,” *TLNT* 1:66–86 (66). Cf. Philo, *Mos.* 1.48, where the term is used to make clear a real condition in contrast to a mere appearance. In Matt 26:73 the adverb ἀληθῶς is used in this sense.

³¹³ Cf. *T. Benj.* 6.5, where ὑπόκρισις and ἀλήθεια are placed as opposites.

³¹⁴ Spicq, *TLNT* 1:83. See also Hans Hübner, “ἀλήθεια, ἀληθεύω, κτλ.,” *EDNT* 1:57–60 (58), who explains that a person who is ἀληθής is “true in the sense of *dependable, constant, real, genuine, and faithful*.” Italics his.

³¹⁵ Silva, ed. *NIDNTE* 1:230–31. Cf. 2 Cor 6:8.

³¹⁶ Viviano, “Gospel According to Matthew,” 665; Moisés Silva, ed. “ἀλήθεια, ἀληθής, κτλ.,” *NIDNTE* 1:222–41 (230). Cf. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 895.

³¹⁷ Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 90. Reeves also points out that the commission scene in Galilee (28:16) shows the reliability of Jesus, since he has foretold the meeting there (26:32). Similarly, the notion that Jesus is “handed over” (παρέδωκαν) by the religious leaders to Pilate in 27:2 fulfills his own words in 20:19 where he predicts that the religious leaders will “hand him over (παραδώσουσιν) to the Gentiles.” See also Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 100.

³¹⁸ Cf. Morris, *Matthew*, 555, who points out that Jesus “tells the truth regardless of what people think and regardless of whether what he says pleases them or not.” See also Blomberg, *Matthew*, 330, and Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 895. Saunders, “No one dared,” 389, translates the phrase to “you do not allow yourself to be influenced by people.”

³¹⁹ Saunders, “No one dared,” 389; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:213–14; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 896.

The flattery words of the hypocritical leaders which aim to destroy the reputation of Jesus as teacher and leader is thus, in an ironic twist, used by the author to establish Jesus' authority as a teacher and to present him as a true leader with integrity. The passage underlines the hypocrisy of the religious leaders and the integrity of Jesus. This portrayal of Jesus as a true leader is reinforced with the self-presentation of Jesus in 23:8–10, as the leader and teacher par excellence, in the middle of the discourse which exposes the failure of the untrue, hypocritical leaders. Rhoads, who rightly underlines that Matthew contrasts hypocrisy and integrity, helpfully describes “integrity” as “people whose hearts, words, and actions are in harmony.”³²⁰ The trustworthiness of Jesus becomes also clear to the reader by the contrast with the political leaders (king Herod, Herod the tetrarch, and Pilate) in the story. The inner lives of these leaders are described in a way that highlights both a discrepancy between thoughts, speech, and actions, and a concern for public reputation and sensitivity to others opinions.³²¹ In contrast to the political leaders, Jesus is presented as a leader who can resist temptation of earthly superiority (4:8–10) and who is coherent in his intentions, speech, and actions.³²²

The words of Jesus himself in his teaching emphasize a concern for honesty and agreement between the inward and the outward life. Jesus teaches his disciples to be straightforward and honest in their speech (5:33–37). In his first serious conflict with the religious leaders, he underlines the close relationship between the inner character of man and the speech (12:34–37, cf. 15:18–20).³²³ An examination on the phraseological plane of the characterization of Jesus confirms that Jesus himself is honest in his speech. Since he mainly says the same thing *to* the religious leaders as he says *about* them, Powell concludes: “In this way, Matthew underscores his presentation of Jesus as a person of integrity.”³²⁴ In his teaching Jesus further underlines righteousness (e.g. 5:6, 6:33), completeness (τέλειος) (5:48, 19:21), and wholeness (22:37–40), opposites to hypocrisy that express integrity.³²⁵ His concern for integrity is also seen in the use of the tree and fruit metaphor (7:15–20, 12:33, 21:43). The statement “for the tree is known by the fruit” (12:33; cf. 7:16, 20)

³²⁰ Rhoads, “Hypocrisy or Righteousness,” 458. Cf. Philo, *Mos.* 1.29, 2.140. Rhoads also describes Matthew's theology as a “theology of character” (p. 461). See also Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 145, 152–53.

³²¹ See Lawrence, *An Ethnography*, 120–28. Lawrence concludes: “All political leaders surveyed put most importance on external appearances of power and honour precedence” (p. 128).

³²² Lawrence, *An Ethnography*, 129.

³²³ See Paul S. Minear, “Yes or No: The Demand for Honesty in the Early Church,” *NovT* 13 (1971): 1–13 (8), who points out that “speech is a test of inner integrity.” According to Minear, the requirements of honesty in speech in the NT relate primarily to apostles and teachers (p. 9).

³²⁴ Powell, “Characterization on the Phraseological Plane,” 169.

³²⁵ Robert H. Smith, “Hypocrite,” *DJGFE* 351–53 (353). Carter, *Matthew*, 200 n. 16, also points out that when Jesus exhorts his disciples to be τέλειος (5:48) he encourages them to live with integrity or wholeness.

underlines the coherence of the inner life with the outer deeds. This principle also relates to the life of himself.³²⁶

The integrity of Jesus is thus not primarily seen in his teaching but in the correspondence between his words and deeds, his teaching and his life. Several examples can be given which show that Jesus “walks his talk.”³²⁷ He is not only teaching about meekness (5:5), he himself is meek (21:1–9). Jesus does not only encourage other to be merciful (5:7), but shows mercy himself (9:27–30, 20:30–32). The integrity of Jesus is perhaps most clearly shown to the reader in the passion narrative, when Jesus, in the middle of opposition, persecution, and suffering, continues to practice what he has taught his followers.³²⁸ Here he does not respond with revenge when he is slapped and stripped of his clothes (26:67, 27:28–30), just as he has taught his disciples (5:39–40).³²⁹ Stanley Saunders thus rightly claims that one of the major motifs in Matthew is “the integrity of Jesus’ words and works.”³³⁰ He even proposes that this concern in the characterization of Jesus is “one of the clearest explicit themes that runs throughout the Gospel.”³³¹ The structure of the biographical story, with the combination of discourse and narrative, further points to the integrity of Jesus.³³² In agreement with the common ideal of coherence between word and deed in ancient Greek literature,³³³ and the portrayal of good

³²⁶ See Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 12, who states that Jesus is characterized as a man with integrity in relationship to himself, according to the principle of the fruit of the tree: “When Jesus is judged by this principle, no discrepancy is found between what he says and what he does.” Cf. Gerhardsson, “An Ihren Früchten,” 120.

³²⁷ Cabrido, “A Mark of the Shepherd,” 165.

³²⁸ See Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 29, and David M. Crump, “Truth,” *DJGFE* 859–62 (860): “Jesus’ criticism of the Jewish leaders’ hypocrisy ... as well as the personal consistency between his own words and actions—eventually culminating in the cross—makes Jesus’ concern in the Synoptics for honesty and integrity clear.”

³²⁹ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:715–16, for more examples. See also Powell, “Characterization on the Phraseological Plane,” 167.

³³⁰ Saunders, “No one dared,” 94. See also Birger Gerhardsson, “Det hermeneutiska programmet i Matt. 22:37–40,” *SEÅ* 40 (1975): 66–89 (86), and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:717, who conclude that “[t]he first Evangelist did seek to show that Jesus embodied his speech, that the Lord lived as he spoke and spoke as he lived.”

³³¹ Saunders, “No one dared,” 97. He rightly points out that this theme is crucial to the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders, since “the fit between word and work is essential to Matthew’s image of Jesus as an authoritative master, and that the lack of integrity of word and work is grounds for rejection of Jesus’ opponents” (p. 97–98).

³³² Yieh, *One Teacher*, 28–29, 35.

³³³ See Merritt, *In Word and Deed*, 9–101. Merritt points out that the phrase “in word and deed” (λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ) is common in both Hellenistic philosophy and Hellenistic Jewish writings. “The sage, the lawgiver, the ideal philosopher, the ideal king, and the ideal religious leader are prominent classes in which it is used with great facility” (p. 4). Cf. Betz, “Portrait of Jesus,” 175. The phrase “in word and deed” is also found in the NT. See Luke 24:19, Acts 7:22, Rom 15:18, 2 Cor 10:11.

leaders in ancient biographies,³³⁴ Jesus is presented as a leader who lives as he teaches.

In multiple ways, the reader is shown that Jesus is a leader with integrity. In contrast to the hypocritical religious leaders and the political leaders who are sensitive to others' opinions, Jesus is a trustworthy and authentic leader who does not adjust his words for the sake of people. The teaching of Jesus further underlines the importance of honesty and agreement between inner life and speech or deeds. Jesus himself shows consistency between his words and his deeds and the way he practices what he teaches. Jesus is thus, through these different means, forcefully portrayed as a leader with integrity.

A bad role model?

Some scholars propose that Jesus actually fails to practice his own teaching. The reason for this view is especially due to the words of Jesus against the religious leaders in the discourse in chapter 23 and the presentation of him in the eschatological discourse in chapters 24–25. David Sim, most clearly, contests the view of Matthew's Jesus as a good role model.³³⁵ Sim points out two examples where he finds a discrepancy between Jesus' words and deeds.³³⁶ Firstly, he suggests that the harsh words against the religious leaders in chapter 23 are contradictory to the ethics in the Sermon of the Mount: "We find in this vitriolic speech no mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation or love of enemy, but plenty of anger, negative judgements, retaliation, and insulting and abusive language."³³⁷ Secondly, and most importantly according to Sim, is the portrayal of Jesus in 25:31–46 "as a figure of brutality and vengeance with no forgiveness or compassion" which clashes with the moral teaching of Jesus.³³⁸ Sim proposes that "the eschatological Jesus," who in a violent way punishes the wicked and unrighteous ones, does not act in agreement with the life and teaching of Jesus in the past.³³⁹ He thus concludes that Jesus "fails to provide the perfect role model for his readers."³⁴⁰

³³⁴ In addition to the analysis in chapter two, see Talbert, "Gospel Genre," 61. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:711.

³³⁵ David C. Sim, "Jesus as Role Model in the Gospel of Matthew: Does the Matthean Jesus Practice What He Preaches?," *AEJT* 16 (2010): 1–21.

³³⁶ Sim, "Jesus as Role Model," 3, nonetheless admits that "it is unquestionably true that there is a large measure of consistency between Jesus' moral demands and his own actions."

³³⁷ Sim, "Jesus as Role Model," 10. For a similar view, see also Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul*, 99–100; Saldarini, "Reading Matthew without Anti-Semitism," 174; Nel, "Not Peace but a Sword," 239; Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 260.

³³⁸ Sim, "Jesus as Role Model," 3.

³³⁹ Sim, "Jesus as Role Model," 17. For a similar view, see David J. Neville, "Toward a Teleology of Peace: Contesting Matthew's Violent Eschatology," *JSNT* 30 (2007): 131–61 (especially p. 153).

³⁴⁰ Sim, "Jesus as Role Model," 20.

Even if Sim rightly pays attention to the difference between the teaching of Jesus to his followers and his own behavior at different occasions in this section (chapter 21–25), he fails to recognize the reason to the difference. Sim views the polemic against the religious leaders in chapter 23 as a retaliation against the earlier polemic of the religious leaders.³⁴¹ However, the polemic in this discourse is not slander or retaliation, but judgment pronouncements upon the religious readers, as shown above.³⁴² Jesus speaks, unwillingly (23:37), as the Judge in this discourse. This also explains the “brutal” behavior of Jesus at his arrival in the future. As the King and Judge Jesus needs to behave in this way.³⁴³ It seems that his concern for justice necessitates harsh behavior (cf. 12:20).³⁴⁴ Jesus’ role as Judge explains why he does not show mercy or forgiveness in this case.

The portrayal of Jesus in the passion narrative, where he clearly avoids violence and retaliation against his opponents, confirms that it is his coming role as Judge that necessitates a violent behavior. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to his followers, who do not have this role. There is an essential difference between human and divine violence in Matthew’s story. While Jesus’ teaching in the first teaching discourse (5–7) concerns how disciples are to behave in this age, the violence of God/the Son of Man in other passages (e.g. 25:31–46) relates to God’s judgment in the coming age. Humans are not to operate in the role of the judge.³⁴⁵ When commenting on Jesus’ judgment upon Judas (26:24–25) Robert Gundry thus correctly points out that this is not contradictory to the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (5:22, 7:1–2) since Jesus has “the judgmental authority to do so.”³⁴⁶ That there is no contradiction between the first teaching discourse and the

³⁴¹ Sim, “Jesus as Role Model,” 20.

³⁴² See p. 251 n. 258.

³⁴³ See above, p. 248–49. Some scholars propose that the reason for the behavior of Jesus is his role as prophet. See e.g. Scornaienchi, “Controversy Dialogues,” 320. Cf. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 247–48. The problem with this explanation is that the disciples of Jesus also have a prophetic role, as Sim points out (pp. 11–12).

³⁴⁴ Cf. Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, 164–65, who suggests that the quotation of Isa 42:1–4 in 12:18–21 underlines Jesus’ messianic role as the establisher of universal justice. This concern for justice is not only related to Jesus’ second coming, but also to his ministry to Israel prior to his death. Beaton does not relate Jesus’ just rule explicitly to his judgments, but argues that “the status of Jesus as God’s Son and the centrality of justice to his mission warrant conflict with the established religious and political elite.” See also Beaton, “Messiah and Justice,” 13, where he points out that in messianic texts generally, “the arrival of messiah and the resulting messianic age was thought to be characterized by judgment upon the ungodly, and the establishment of justice for the righteous.”

³⁴⁵ Reid, “Violent Endings in Matthew’s Parables,” 252–53. Cf. Warren Carter, “Constructions of Violence and Identities in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Violence in the New Testament*, ed. Shelly Matthews and E. Leigh Gibson (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 81–108 (102): “In resisting and redeeming the violence of the imperial status quo, the gospel also affirms that some violence, namely the violence of God ... and of God’s agent Jesus, is legitimate and necessary.”

³⁴⁶ Gundry, *Peter*, 4.

later ones is seen in the fact that Jesus is presented as the eschatological judge, not only in chapter 23–25, but also within the Sermon on the Mount (7:21–23)!³⁴⁷ What can appear as an inconsistency to some modern readers is not perceived as such by the author.³⁴⁸

Jesus' authority as the Judge explains the difference between his behavior in chapters 23–25 and his earlier words and deeds. He is still presented as a model, since his followers are not to act in the role of the Judge.

The Leader par excellence

In the leadership discourse, Jesus is not only teaching his followers about true leadership and pronouncing judgment upon the religious leaders. When he teaches his followers to avoid honorific titles, he also presents himself as the teacher and leader *par excellence*:

But you are not to be called 'Rabbi' (ῥαββί) for one is your teacher (ὁ διδάσκαλος) and you are all brothers ... neither are you to be called masters (καθηγηταί), for one is your Master (καθηγητής), the Messiah" (23:8–10).

Jesus here instructs his followers to be humble and to avoid three honorary titles.³⁴⁹ The reason is that all followers are equal and none of them should be concerned with their own status and privilege.³⁵⁰ "In this family no titles and self-aggrandisement are possible," as R. S. Barbour points out.³⁵¹ Simultaneously, Jesus also underlines his own role as teacher and leader of his followers.

The word *καθηγητής* occurs only here in the NT and the LXX. The term comes etymologically from the verb *κατηγέομαι*, "to lead down," and consequently refers to some kind of leader.³⁵² Plutarch uses the term to describe Aristotle's role for Alexander (*Mor.* 327F). Likewise, Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes use of it to describe Plato's role for Aristotle (*Thuc.* 3). The word has often the meaning of

³⁴⁷ Carson, "Matthew," 529.

³⁴⁸ Cf. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 248–49: "There is no indication from first-century Jewish or Christian texts that anybody back then perceived divine love and judgment as necessary antitheses." See also Neville, "Toward a Teleology," 153.

³⁴⁹ See e.g. Duling, "Matthean Brotherhood," 166, and Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew* 23, JSNTSup 117 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 95–96. Concerning the term "rabbi," France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 862, points out that at this time it "was apparently an honorary title, based on his reputation rather than his official status." See further Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 94, 287. For the usage of the term "father" as a honorary designation, see 1 Sam 24:12; 2 Kgs 2:12, 5:13, 6:21; Acts 7:2, 22:1 and the title of one of the tractate in Mishna, *Abot* ("the Fathers").

³⁵⁰ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 343.

³⁵¹ R. S. Barbour, "Uncomfortable Words VIII: Status and Titles," *ExpTim* 82 (1971): 137–42 (141).

³⁵² Benedict T. Viviano, "Social World and Community Leadership: the Case of Matthew 23.1–12, 34," *JSNT* 39 (1990): 3–21 (12); Wilkins, *Matthew*, 749; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 864.

“tutor,” “instructor,” or “mentor.”³⁵³ J. D. M. Derrett points out that the term “implies some intimacy, a personal responsibility, like an apprentice-master’s.”³⁵⁴ But it is also used in a general sense to designate a leader or guide.³⁵⁵ The term is a parallel to ὁδηγός, which refers to a “guide” or a “leader.”³⁵⁶ The meaning of καθηγητής should thus not be restricted to didactic categories. Since the term is often used with a connotation of honor,³⁵⁷ it can appropriately be translated to “Master.”³⁵⁸

Byrskog points out two implications of the usage of the term in the present context. Firstly, Jesus is presented as the leader of the disciples in a general sense and as their only normative teacher: “Jesus the teacher provides his disciples with more than mere information. He is also their guide and leader ... Jesus is as teacher the only legitimate leader.”³⁵⁹ Secondly, the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is personal, intimate, informal, and private. Jesus is presented as the disciples’ personal guide and leader.³⁶⁰ Byrskog here refers to Jesus as the disciples’ leader. It should be noted, however, that Jesus is presented as the leader of all his followers since the discourse is also addressed to the crowds (23:1).

The implications of the teaching of Jesus in 23:8–10 is that Jesus is presented as the Teacher and Leader par excellence. Even if Jesus trains and prepares his twelve disciples to be teachers and leaders in his community, he makes clear that his authority and dignity as leader is not comparable with that of his followers. Thus he will always remain the main Leader of the whole community, with a personal relationship to his followers, and is the only one who should be revered and honored.

³⁵³ J. D. M. Derrett, “Mt 23,8–10 a Midrash on Is 54,13 and Jer 31,33–34,” *Bib* 62 (1981): 372–86 (381); Bruce W. Winter, “The Messiah as the Tutor: The meaning of καθηγητής in Matthew 23:10,” *TynBul* 42 (1991): 152–57 (155). Cf. Spicq, “καθηγητής,” *TLNT* 2:233–35.

³⁵⁴ Derrett, “Mt 23,8–10 a Midrash,” 381. See also Winter, “Messiah as the Tutor,” 157, and Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 289–90.

³⁵⁵ Spicq *TLNT* 2:233; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 288; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:278.

³⁵⁶ Derrett, “Mt 23,8–10 a Midrash,” 380; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:106.

³⁵⁷ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 288. See e.g. Plutarch, *Alex.* 5.4.

³⁵⁸ See Stendahl, “Matthew,” 792; Spicq, *TLNT* 2:233; Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 319; Newport, *Sources and Sitz im Leben*, 96; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 749.

³⁵⁹ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 289. Cf. Spicq, *TLNT* 2:235: “there is only one Teacher who should be trusted, only one Guide for the spiritual life.”

³⁶⁰ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 289–90.

5.4 Summary

The theme of leadership

In the second part of the public career of Jesus the leadership theme is continued and emphasized in several ways. Jesus presents himself to the people as a leader when he invites the crowds to accept his rule and make him their model (11:28–29). When Jesus Messiah, the King of Israel and the nations, begins to clarify to his disciples his coming death in Jerusalem, he also founds a community and authorizes his disciples as leaders and teachers (16:18–19, 18:18). Their roles as under-shepherds are confirmed in the community discourse (18:12–14).

The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is intensified in this section and escalates at the end of it. The religious leaders, who are in the forefront in the last part of this section, are criticized and judged by Jesus as “blind leaders (ὄδῃγοί)” (23:16, 24; cf. 15:14) and “hypocrites.” The reason for Jesus’ confrontation and judgment is clearly related to their responsibility as spiritual leaders and their bad influence upon the people of God. The discourse in chapter 23 outlines the failure of the false leadership and defines true leadership. In this “leadership discourse” Jesus not only teaches about leadership. He also presents himself as the leader *par excellence* of his community, making use of the term *καθηγητής* (“Master”).

The character of the leader

In this section of the middle part of the biography the author clarifies more of the main moral character traits of the leader. The *wisdom* of Jesus, which is primarily recognized in his teaching ministry, is underlined both directly and indirectly to the reader. It is clearly seen in the amazement of the people who hear the words of Jesus and the silencing of his opponents. Jesus’ knowledge of the will of God and his usage of riddles and aphorisms also points to his wisdom. Jesus is a wise leader who gives his followers understanding and helps them to live wisely.

Another underlined trait is *humility*. Jesus himself underlines that he is a humble man and thus a model for others. The humility relates primarily to the willingness of Jesus to submit to his Father’s will and obey him. But it also shows that he is unassuming before others and gentle. The humility of Jesus is underlined by the contrast with the religious leaders, who seek honor and status from the people and exalt themselves. It is also clarified by the words of Jesus since he underlines the necessity of humility in his teaching to the disciples.

The reader also learns, in several ways, that Jesus is a leader with *integrity*. The teaching of Jesus, with emphasis on, for example, humility, compassion, and non-retaliation, is not inconsistent with his deeds. On the contrary, his deeds show that he lives the lifestyle he teaches. Through the mouth of the hypocritical leaders, Jesus is also presented as a true man, who does not adjust his words according to the opinions of men or fear their response. Instead he expresses his opinion of his

opponents both to others and to them directly. That the failed religious leadership is characterized as hypocritical and the political leadership as sensitive to people's opinions, makes the integrity of Jesus shine clear in the author's portrayal of him.

The relationship between the leader and the people

Some new aspects of the relationship between the leader and the people are also communicated to the reader in this section. Already in the first part of the biography, Jesus was introduced as a king. The present section underlines this leadership role and clarifies that a main function of it is judgment. Jesus is presented, through his symbolic acts, his condemning words to the failed leadership of Jerusalem, and his future role in his second coming, as a judge.

In the first part of his public career Jesus is presented as a role model for his apprentices, as seen in the previous chapter. The second part also shows that he is *a role model for the people*. When Jesus invites the burdened people to accept his rule and leadership, he presents himself as a model in humility. Jesus exhorts the people to learn to be humble and submissive by following the example he shows through his life.

The invitation of Jesus to the people also shows that he is a benevolent and kind ruler who *benefits his people* with rest for their souls. By accepting his rule and receiving him as the Messiah they are able to get peace which is related to their relationship with God and his will. Jesus is thus presented as the benefactor of the people. The fourth teaching discourse also presents him as a leader who creates unity and harmony in the community through his teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation.

The same discourse, with its emphasis on the responsibility of the leaders and the importance of the little ones, also highlights Jesus' care for all individuals in the community and thus underlines his *closeness to the people*. The closeness between the leader and the people is further seen in the description of Jesus as the "Master" (καθηγητής) of his followers, one who leads and guides them in a personal way.

The present section also shows that a main characteristic of Jesus' relationship to the people is *servanthood*. Through the usage of prophetic words Jesus is presented as the Servant of God in the story. The healing ministry, the usage of the verb θεραπεύειν, and Jesus' willingness to suffer and die for the sake of the people, show that he is the servant of the people. He does not think of his own interests, but serves his people. Jesus not only presents himself as the servant of the people, he also models servanthood for his disciples and underlines that servant leadership should be practiced in his community.

6. The lasting influence of the leader (Matt 26:1–28:20)

The transitional phrase in 26:1 shows that the eschatological discourse (24:1–25:46) is finished and that the narrative continues. Moreover, the notion that Jesus had finished “*all* these sayings” implies that the main teaching ministry of Jesus to his disciples has now come to an end. This phrase thus not only refers to the final discourse, but to all teaching in the ministry of Jesus, including the other four discourses.¹ The public career of the protagonist has thus been presented to the reader and the last part of the biography, with the death, resurrection, and the lasting influence of the leader, now begins.

The end part of biographies often includes serious conflicts with the protagonist, which lead up to death.² Often they describe clashes with other leader figures and concern the authority of the protagonist. These conflicts often begin in the middle part of the biography and are developed to their final crisis in the end part.³ In Matthew’s story, the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders, which partly relates to the influence of the people, is now reaching its climax through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The theme of leadership continues and develops in surprising ways. This section describes how Jesus is betrayed, suffers, and dies, but also how he is vindicated through his resurrection, and a declaration of his lasting significance closes the book.⁴

The end part of ancient biographies is important for the portrayal of the character of the protagonist. According to Greek ideas, the life of a person could only be evaluated after death, since the manner of death reveals the character of the person. Albrecht Dihle, discussing especially Plutarch’s *Lives*, points out:

¹ Yieh, *One Teacher*, 24–25.

² Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 303–04.

³ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 308–12.

⁴ Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 61.

As a rule the biographer also provides a lengthy narrative concerning the final phase of the life of the hero and of his death, since here there is occasion to sum up and to take stock of the moral modes of behavior which, good or bad, manifested themselves in the course of this life and which cannot now ever be changed.⁵

Opposition to the protagonist and his hardships especially reveal the inner quality of his character.⁶ The end part of Matthew, with its narration of Jesus' suffering and death, thus continues to reveal the character of the leader.

6.1 The death of the shepherd (26:1–27:66)

The passion and death of Jesus do not come as a surprise for the reader. Already in 12:14, the reader is told that the religious leaders intend to kill Jesus. Jesus himself has also, repeatedly, confirmed that this will be the case (16:21, 17:22–23, 20:18–19). The previous section, chapter 21–25, has also shown the escalation of the conflict. In the beginning of the end part of the biography, Jesus' own consciousness about a coming crucifixion (26:2) and the intention of the religious leaders to kill him (26:3–4) are now confirmed to the reader. In two long chapters (26–27) the author describes the events leading up to the cross and clarifies the nature of Jesus' death.

6.1.1 A leader's death

The stricken shepherd

After celebrating the Passover with his disciples, Jesus makes a prophetic statement, partly by making use of Zech 13:7:

All of you are going to fall because of me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd (ποιμένα), and the sheep of the flock (τὰ πρόβατα τῆς ποίμνης) will be scattered.' But after I am raised up I will go before (προάξω) you to Galilee (26:31–32).

For the third time in the story (2:6 and 9:36, cf. 25:32) the shepherd metaphor is used for Jesus, obviously in the sense of being a leader.⁷ This time it comes from

⁵ Dihle, "The Gospels and Greek Biography," 372. See also Burrige, *Four Gospels*, 60, who points out that "ancient biography usually gave detailed attention to the subject's death as a way of summing up his life." Cf. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus*, 165. Aune, "Greco-Roman Biography," 122–23, notices an increasing focus on the death of the protagonist in biographical literature from late Hellenistic time.

⁶ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 304.

⁷ Cf. Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:776.

the mouth of Jesus himself, which gives a confirmation to the earlier usage of leadership language. He is thus presented as conscious of his leadership role and that his death and disappearance will have great consequences for his followers.⁸ Jonathan Huntzinger rightly points out that the death of Jesus will be a great challenge for his community: “Without their shepherd, the disciples as a cohesive group of followers will break apart.”⁹

A common theme in the end part of biographies is the protagonist’s care for his people, even when he faces his own death.¹⁰ This is also the case in Matthew. The statement of Jesus in 26:32 reveals the Shepherd’s care for his flock.¹¹ The word “sheep” (πρόβατον) is often used in the gospel and signifies both the leaderless crowds (e.g. 9:36, 10:6) and the disciples (10:16). In this context, it does not refer to the people of Israel, as in 9:35 and 10:5, but to the followers of Jesus.¹² Though Jesus will be abandoned by his closest followers and face his opponents, he shows care for his disciples when he underlines that his community will prevail and that there will be a future for his apprentices.¹³ The shepherd motif is probably also seen in verse 32 where it is told that Jesus will “go before” (προάγειν) them to Galilee.¹⁴ The statement is thus a clarification that Jesus will continue to be their leader after his resurrection, as Morris points out:

The figure of the Palestinian shepherd who would go before his sheep while they followed him (cf. John 10:4) is thus very appropriate here. The Good Shepherd will die, and his sheep will be scattered, but in due course he will lead them again ... the word Jesus uses evokes thoughts of the care of the shepherd for his flock.¹⁵

The references to Zechariah in the passion narrative (27:9–10) further imply a typology between the religious leaders’ rejection of Jesus and the leaders’ rejection of the Shepherd in Zech 11:4–17. The reference to Zechariah thus underlines the

⁸ Cf. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 393: “Jesus obviously viewed himself as the shepherd and the disciples as his sheep.” See also Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 329–30.

⁹ Huntzinger, “End of Exile,” 238.

¹⁰ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 338.

¹¹ Cf. Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 706, who notices the resemblance between these verses and Ezek 34:12–13.

¹² Blomberg, “Matthew,” 92, proposes from the context of Zechariah that the quotation implies that Jesus is “the Good Shepherd, not merely as pastor of his flock, but as the ruler of his people.” In the present context in Matthew’s story, however, it primarily refers to his leadership of the disciples, which the following verse (26:32) makes clear. Cf. Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 147, Ham, *Coming King*, 83, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 998, who points out: “So for Jesus his disciples form the nucleus of the new people of God under the leadership of the Messiah.”

¹³ Cf. Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 72.

¹⁴ See e.g. Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 40; Chae, *Eschatological Davidic Shepherd*, 199–200; Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 156. For a different view, see e.g. Luz, *Matthew*, 3:388.

¹⁵ Morris, *Matthew*, 664–65.

leadership role of Jesus and the responsibility of the Jerusalem leadership in the death of Jesus.¹⁶

The threatening influence of Jesus

The desire of the religious leaders to see Jesus dead (26:4, 27:1), from their own points of view, is related to his claim of divine authority (26:63–66).¹⁷ But the author makes clear that the conflict with Jesus is not only a matter of religious opinion and judgment. A main reason for the conflict is also the followers of Jesus, his influence among the people, and the authority that the people of Israel give him.¹⁸ The beginning of the passion narrative, with the notion that the religious leaders do not want to arrest Jesus during the feast “so that there will not be a tumult (θόρυβος) among the people” (26:5), indicates this to the reader. Heil helpfully comments that the statement

subtly underlines the conflict that has been developing between Jesus and the Jewish authorities with regard to authentic leadership of the people. By his activities in the Jerusalem temple, especially his masterful teaching, Jesus clearly demonstrated his superior ability to lead the people in contrast to the inadequate leadership of the various groups of Jewish authorities, who he bested and subdued one after the other (21–23).¹⁹

That the conflict relates to the influence of the people is confirmed to the reader in 27:18. The author makes this clear by pointing out that envy is an issue in the conflict when he tells that Pilate “knew (ᾔδει) that it was out of envy (φθόνον) that they had handed him over.”²⁰ Other leaders’ envy of the protagonist is a common topic in the end part of ancient biographies.²¹ Anselm Hagedorn and Jerome Neyrey point out that the definition of “envy” is similar in the ancient and modern world: “Envy basically consists of pain or distress caused by another’s success.”²² A

¹⁶ Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 159–61.

¹⁷ Cf. Mark A. Powell, “The Plot to Kill Jesus from Three Different Perspectives: Point of View in Matthew,” *Society of Biblical Literature 1990 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 29 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 603–13 (604–06).

¹⁸ Powell, “Plot to Kill Jesus,” 606–07.

¹⁹ Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 25.

²⁰ Powell, “Plot to Kill Jesus,” 610, rightly notes that the point of view of Pilate, who gives the information in 27:18, is valid because of the use of the word “knew” in the context. This statement, moreover, implies that this also is the point of view of the narrator/author, which Powell seems to neglect.

²¹ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 310: “Der zu Konflikten führende Neid auf die Hauptperson war ein verbreiteter biographischer Topos.” See also Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 662 n. 160.

²² Anselm C. Hagedorn and Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘It was out of envy that they handed Jesus over’ (Mark 15.10): The Anatomy of Envy and the Gospel of Mark,” *JSNT* 69 (1998): 15–56 (17). See also Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1170. For an ancient definition, see Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1387B.

common reason for envy is the love of honor, which is related to one's fame and reputation.²³ This feature is clearly seen in the characterization of the religious leaders who "love" honorific places and titles (23:6–7). Envy is related to the idea of limitations of the good, so the increasing fame of Jesus results in the loss of fame for other leaders and teachers.²⁴ Discussing the Gospel of Mark, Hagedorn and Neyrey propose that "Jesus' growing public acclaim identifies him as a classic target of envy."²⁵

The same thing can be said about Matthew's story where the popularity of Jesus is underlined time after time.²⁶ Throughout the story the reader is told that great crowds followed Jesus (4:25, 8:1, 12:15, 19:2), and he entered Jerusalem with a great crowd (20:29) which proclaimed him as Messiah (21:9). Jesus' popularity among the people obviously threatened the religious leaders.²⁷ France translates φθόνος with "rivalry" and suggests that the context implies political aspects and the concern for positions and authority, and not the psychological sense of "envy."²⁸ But in light of Matthew's story as a whole, with its emphasis on Jesus' popularity and success among the crowds, the normal definition of the term makes perfect sense. The envy of the religious leaders is related to the success and influence of Jesus among the people.²⁹

Even after the death of Jesus, the religious leaders are afraid of the influence of Jesus and make arrangements to put an end to it (27:62–66, 28:12–14).³⁰ The threatening influence of Jesus is clearly seen in the religious leaders' labeling of Jesus as "deceiver" (πλάνος) in 27:63. This word relates to leading people astray and should thus probably be understood as a reference to Jesus as a "misleader" in the general sense. Jesus' teaching is highly polemical to the teaching of the religious leaders in the story (see e.g. 5:20, 16:12), and in 22:29 the verb πλανᾶν is used in the context of understanding and teaching.³¹ The accusation of the religious leaders in 27:63 thus implies that Jesus is one who leads people astray through his teaching,

²³ Hagedorn and Neyrey, "Anatomy of Envy," 35–36. Cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1387B.

²⁴ Hagedorn and Neyrey, "Anatomy of Envy," 55.

²⁵ Hagedorn and Neyrey, "Anatomy of Envy," 42.

²⁶ See 4.3.1.

²⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:586, come to the same conclusion: "The leaders of Jerusalem were, so Matthew implies, threatened when significant numbers gave heed to Jesus instead of them ... Their envy came from thirst for power." Cf. Powell, "Plot to Kill Jesus," 606–07.

²⁸ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1046 n. 4.

²⁹ See Morris, *Matthew*, 703 n. 34; Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 74; Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:823; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1170; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:497.

³⁰ Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 28.

³¹ Cf. 2 John 7 where the term πλάνος is used in the context of misleading in teaching.

messianic claims, and statements about a coming resurrection.³² The religious leaders are, however, portrayed themselves as deceivers when they instruct the guard to lie about the reason for the empty tomb (28:11–15). They are also presented as deceivers elsewhere in Matthew's story (e.g. 22:15) and the accusation of Jesus as "deceiver" is thus ironic for the reader.³³

Faithful followers

As Jesus had predicted (26:31), all his disciples become scattered when he has to face death. Since the disciples of Jesus betray (26:46–50), abandon (26:56), and deny (26:69–75) him, and the people of Jerusalem choose to follow the path of the religious leaders against Jesus (27:20–23), is then Jesus dying without any followers? Is Jesus not a leader, in the functional sense, when he dies?

By introducing new characters, the author shows that Jesus, in spite of the absence of his disciples, dies surrounded by faithful followers. After describing the crucifixion scene the author informs that "many women" were present and "watching from a distance" (27:55). These women "had followed (ἠκολούθησαν) Jesus from Galilee and served (διακονοῦσαι) him" (27:55). As committed followers, they "serve as foils for the disciples and play important roles that the disciples should have played," as Keith Reeves explains.³⁴ The faithfulness of the women is contrasted with the disciples' lack of faithfulness.³⁵ Two women are also presented by name, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (27:56). These two characters are mentioned three times in this section (27:56, 61; 28:1) and play significant roles in the resurrection narrative (28:5–10).

Besides these women, Joseph from Arimathea is also portrayed as a follower to Jesus. The reader is told that he has been "instructed" (ἐμαθητεύθη) by Jesus and after his death he takes care of the body and buries it (27:57–60). The author here uses the verb μαθητεύειν and not the noun μαθητής which indicate a distinction to

³² Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1094. Contra Powell, "Plot to Kill Jesus," 606 n. 10, who proposes that ὁ πλάνος should be understood in reference to Jesus' claims about himself, even if he notices that the term literally means "one who leads people astray."

³³ See e.g. Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 47; Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 104; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:654.

³⁴ Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 34. Cf. Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 91, who suggests that the women "serve as substitutes for the male disciples." Wilkins, *Matthew*, 909, proposes that since the women are caring for Jesus' needs and worship him (28:9), they are presented as exemplary disciples. Though they are faithful followers, the term "disciple" is misleading since it is reserved for the Twelve in Matthew's story. Cf. Janice C. Anderson, "Matthew: Gender and Reading," in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff, FCNTECW 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 25–51 (41–44).

³⁵ Jane Kopas, "Jesus and Women in Matthew," *ThTo* 47 (1990): 13–21 (20–21); Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 55; Anderson, "Matthew: Gender and Reading," 40–41.

the twelve disciples.³⁶ Wilkins appropriately describes the women and Joseph as “among the wider circle of Jesus’s adherents.”³⁷ These committed adherents make clear that Jesus in fact had faithful followers in his death, though his apprentices abandon him on his way to the cross.

Though the passion narrative highlights the loneliness of Jesus in suffering and the failures of his closest followers, it also clarifies, in several ways, that it is a leader who dies. *Through the usage of the shepherd metaphor, the emphasis on the threatening influence of Jesus from the point of view of the religious leaders, and the notion about faithful followers in the context of the crucifixion, it is evident that the death of Jesus is a death of a leader.*

6.1.2 A courageous leader?

Ancient biographies often pay attention to how the protagonist faces death.³⁸ In the beginning of his biography of Evagoras, Isocrates declares that “men of honor and ambition do not only want to be praised for such things [habits in life and deeds], but they want to die gloriously (εὐκλεῶς) instead of living, seeking glory rather than life, and doing everything for the sake of leaving an immortal memory of themselves” (3).³⁹ Xenophon, likewise, points out that Agesilaus “was always pious, believing that those who live well are not yet happy (εὐδαίμονας), but only those who have ended life gloriously (τοὺς δὲ εὐκλεῶς τετελευτηκότας) are already blessed (μακαρίους)” (11.8).⁴⁰

A widespread idea in the Greece view of the “noble death” is that “courage to fight and die brings honor, while cowardly flight merits shame,” as Neyrey points out.⁴¹ This view is confirmed in the portraits of the good leader where courage sometimes is underlined as a main characteristic of the leader, as seen in chapter two. Evagoras is presented as courageous since he does not fear the dangers (29, 36) or thinks about his own security (30, 65). Agesilaus is likewise portrayed as a leader

³⁶ Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 36 n. 75. Cf. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 191–92. See further pp. 174–75.

³⁷ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 911.

³⁸ See Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 339: “Immer wieder berichteten antike Biographen über die mehr oder weniger vorbildliche Haltung ihrer Hauptpersonen im Angesicht des Todes.”

³⁹ Cf. Isocrates, *Dem.* 43, where he states that “to die nobly (καλῶς) is reserved for the good (τοῖς σπουδαίοις).”

⁴⁰ See also 10.3 where Xenophon speaks about “a proper death (θάνατος ὥρατος).”

⁴¹ Jerome H. Neyrey, “The ‘Noble Shepherd’ in John 10: Cultural and Rhetorical Background,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 267–91 (269). Writing about the Athenians, Neyrey concludes: “Hence their preference was clear: whereas flight, saving one’s life, and fear are dishonorable and disgraceful, fighting, faithfulness, and death are glorious and honorable” (p. 273). See further Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 17–39, for the importance of dying courageously in the Greco-Roman world.

with courage, who does not choose the safest way, but places himself in the frontline of the battle and does not flee from the enemy (6.1–3, cf. 2.12).

Up to this point in Matthew, Jesus has been characterized without strong emotions, as a person who has control over his feelings. Repeatedly he has soberly informed his disciples that he is going to suffer and die (16:21, 17:22–23, 20:18–19). In Gethsemane, however, Jesus is presented as a man with a vibrant emotional life.⁴² Here he begins “to be sorrowful and troubled” (26:37) and says to his disciples: “My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and watch with me” (26:38). Jesus himself prays to his Father “if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me” (26:39). Some scholars propose that this is an unheroic portrayal of Jesus.⁴³ In a recent, comprehensive study of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane and its relationship to courage, Karl Olav Sandnes even concludes that Jesus “appeared as a coward when confronted with his death ... asking for relief from the very purpose of his ministry.”⁴⁴ Is Jesus presented as a leader who lacks courage?

The unique nature of Jesus’ death

In the mission discourse, Jesus exhorts his disciples: “Do not fear (μὴ φοβεῖσθε) those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul” (10:28). Does Jesus then fail to practice his own teaching when he prays in Gethsemane? To some extent, Jesus quails when his suffering and death come closer. But the strong emotional expressions of Jesus, which are surprising to the reader in light of the earlier teaching, indicate that Jesus’ coming death is not a common martyrdom. It is more probable that the emotions and prayers of Jesus highlight the unique nature of his own death. It is not only the fact that Jesus is going to die, but the nature of his death—an atoning death for sinners—which is the reason for his anguish in Gethsemane.⁴⁵

The nature of Jesus’ death is seen in the expression “this cup” (26:39), which refers not only to suffering and death (cf. 20:22–23), but also to an atoning death (26:27–28), and probably even to the wrath of God. This is noted already by Origen, who in his *Exhortation to Martyrdom* points out that the demonstrative τοῦτο shows that Jesus is hesitating not martyrdom in general, but this special kind of martyrdom

⁴² Cf. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1097, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1002.

⁴³ See Hare, *Matthew*, 301, and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:638, who state: “Of Jesus’ heroic valour and faith we hear nothing.”

⁴⁴ Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 317. Sandnes further states: “Jesus is portrayed in agony, emotionally anguished and praying to have the cup pass from him. In so doing, he violated then-common ideals of the virtuous man: he acted out of fear and sought escape, which was tantamount to selfish cowardice or being womanish, like a soldier leaving his post” (p. 312). But see also p. 143 where he tunes down the idea that Jesus seeks to escape.

⁴⁵ Morris, *Matthew*, 667; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 394; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1005; Carson, “Matthew,” 608.

(29).⁴⁶ The uniqueness of Jesus' death is clarified to the reader successively through the story. In 20:28 Jesus explains that he "has come to give his life as a ransom (λύτρον) for many." Just before the events in Gethsemane, when he eats the Passover meal with his disciples (26:19), he declares about the cup: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (26:28). The death of Jesus is thus clearly related to the atonement of the sins of the people.⁴⁷ Moreover, Jesus is conscious that he is going to be crucified (20:18–19, 26:2), not only put to death. According to the OT (Deut 21:22–23), this death implies God's curse of the dead one.⁴⁸ In light of Jesus' cry of abandonment in 27:46, and the common usage of the cup metaphor as a reference to wrath in the OT,⁴⁹ it is reasonable to conclude that "this cup" in 26:39 also refers to the wrath of God.⁵⁰ Witherington thus properly states: "It is then not so much the suffering itself that Jesus shrinks from, but rather facing abandonment by the one he has known as Abba all this time and, even more daunting, facing the wrath, the judgment of God on the cross."⁵¹

The death of Jesus is thus not a common martyrdom. In the story of Matthew, the death and resurrection are climatic events both in the life of Jesus and in the salvation plan of God. When Jesus says that "my time (ὁ καιρός) is near" (26:18) he points to his death as the crucial moment through which a new age is inaugurated.⁵²

A voluntary death

In the beginning of the passion narrative Jesus declares to his disciples that he will "be handed over to be crucified" at the Passover (26:2). The suffering and death does not come as a surprise for Jesus, who is well informed about the divine plan in the Scriptures (26:54) and thus freely and consciously faces the opponents. This is clearly seen in the end of the Gethsemane narrative (26:45–46) where Jesus is aware of his opponents' arrival, and does not flee from them but approaches them. Luz points out that Jesus has control over the situation and suggests that he, "far from

⁴⁶ See further Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 257–58.

⁴⁷ Cf. Birger Gerhardsson, *The Ethos of the Bible*, trans. Stephen Westerholm (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), 59: "The basic thought in the crucifixion narrative is that Jesus gives his 'soul' (his life) in a faultless, perfect sacrifice on behalf of 'many.'"

⁴⁸ Cf. Gal 3:13.

⁴⁹ E.g. Ps 75:8–9, Isa 51:17, Jer 25:17–38, Ezek 23:31–33. See further C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Cup Metaphor in Mark xiv. 36 and Parallels," *ExpTim* 59 (1948): 137–38. Cranfield concludes that "in the O.T. the metaphorical use of 'cup' refers predominantly to God's punishment of human sin" and points out that Jesus' "cup is the cup of God's wrath against sin" (p. 138). He then rightly notices the implications: "We can then understand why Jesus did not maintain the calm serenity, which many a brave man has maintained, in the face of death" (p. 138).

⁵⁰ See e.g. Morris, *Matthew*, 668–69; Witherington, *Matthew*, 490; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 638.

⁵¹ Witherington, *Matthew*, 491. See also Hagner, *Matthew*, 2:782, and Carson, "Matthew," 608.

⁵² Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 182. Senior concludes: "For Matthew's Gospel, therefore, even though the 'close of the age' awaits realization (28:20), history has already turned on its axis from the age of sin and death to the age of forgiveness and new life" (p. 183).

being overwhelmed by the following events, majestically goes forth to meet them.”⁵³

The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane—“if it is not possible that this passes unless I drink it, your will be done” (26:42)—also shows a close relationship between fulfilling the plan of God (cf. 3:15) and the drinking of the cup, as Sandnes points out. The declaration of Jesus in the following event, that the Scriptures must be fulfilled (26:54), “indicates that Matthew does not envisage Jesus in Gethsemane as really praying for his escape, since the cup prayer jeopardizes that outlook.”⁵⁴ The events in Gethsemane display Jesus’ reluctance to the coming horrifying death (26:39), but also his willingness to follow the will of his Father.⁵⁵

There is a remarkable change in the relationship between Jesus and his opponents in the end part of the story. In the whole public career of Jesus, 4:12–25:46, he is prosperous, as Gerhardsson points out: “Jesus is successful and fortunate. Nothing can fail for him: nobody can withstand him.”⁵⁶ From 26:1–27:56, however, his ministry is fundamentally changed and now it is possible for his enemies to overcome him.⁵⁷ The voluntary character of Jesus’ death is thus underlined, and consequently his courage.⁵⁸

That Jesus willingly submits and gives his life is indicated to the reader already in 20:28. In the passion narrative the voluntary character of the death of Jesus is also seen in the potential possibility of help from an army of angels (26:53). Similarly, the silence of Jesus when accused (26:62–63, 27:14) shows that he allows the suffering and death to come upon him. The notion that Jesus “gave up (ἀφῆκεν) the spirit” (27:50) also implies that Jesus dies willingly.⁵⁹

The events in Gethsemane do not portray Jesus as a coward, who seeks to escape from his mission. He trembles when his suffering is approaching, but the emotions

⁵³ Luz, *Matthew*, 3:398 (cf. p. 333). See also e.g. Gerhardsson, “Utlämnad och övergiven,” 100; Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 51; Green, *Message of Matthew*, 267.

⁵⁴ Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 143. Sandnes further points out that “[t]he cup prayer is carefully intertwined with the submission motif” (p. 147). See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:502, who likewise conclude: “Although he recoils from death, or at least crucifixion, his course is fixed by the will of God, and this overrides whatever beliefs or feelings he has about death, so there is no real resistance.” Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 3:408.

⁵⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1011, correctly writes that “Jesus is taken into the power of the Jerusalem authorities not because he had no choice but because this is the will of his Father, declared in the Scriptures, which he has accepted as his messianic calling.” For a different view, see Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 323.

⁵⁶ Gerhardsson, “Christology of Matthew,” 22.

⁵⁷ Gerhardsson, “Christology of Matthew,” 22–23.

⁵⁸ Cf. 2 Macc 6:26–28.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Viviano, “Matthew,” 672, Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:628, and Luz, *Matthew*, 3:552, who understands the phrase “as a way of speaking of an intentional, sovereign death in which Jesus dies willingly; he ‘masters’ death.” For a different view, see Senior, *Matthew*, 333, who suggests that it is a common description of the death moment.

and prayers of Jesus primarily highlight the unique nature of the coming suffering and death—an atoning death for sinners and God’s abandonment of his Son. The prayers and words of Jesus further underline that Jesus is obedient to his Father and gives his life willingly. Jesus thus both quails and acts courageously in Gethsemane.

A leader with courage

If the feelings and prayers of Jesus in Gethsemane makes the reader to wonder about the courage of Jesus, the preceding events in Jerusalem and the succeeding passion narrative make it clear that he is actually a brave leader.⁶⁰

Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem and to his opponents, even if he knows that it will end with his death (16:21, 20:18–19). Courageously he confronts his antagonists in the center of their authority, shows their inadequacy as leaders, and judges them.⁶¹ The courage of Jesus is also seen in the latter events in Gethsemane when he confronts his enemies (26:46) and freely chooses to be arrested (26:52–54).⁶² The declaration of his divine identity before the religious leaders (26:63–64) is clearly a “courageous speech.”⁶³ Likewise, that Jesus confirms his identity as “the King of the Jews” in front of Pilate (27:11) shows his courage.⁶⁴ The heroism of Jesus is further seen in his silence when accused, with the consequence that “the governor was greatly amazed” (ὥστε θαυμάζειν τὸν ἡγεμόνα λίαν) (27:14).⁶⁵ Gerhardsson thus rightly points out: “For the narrator it is important to show that the accused, who is outwardly the underdog, is actually the victor, superior in courage, wisdom, and spiritual power.”⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Cf. Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 327, who points out that it is necessary to understand the events in Gethsemane in its larger narrative context.

⁶¹ See 5.3.1.

⁶² Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 149.

⁶³ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 150. See also Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 62, who notices that Jesus here models his earlier teaching to his disciples (10:19–20). Cf. Peter J. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 94–95.

⁶⁴ Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 71. Heil points out that “Jesus accepts responsibility for his ‘kingship’ with its implications of sedition to the Roman government.”

⁶⁵ Cf. Origen, *Cels.* 7.55. Sandnes, *Early Christian Discourses*, 73, explains that “Jesus’ silence during the hearing, scourging, and mocking enables Origen to claim that Jesus did in fact face death nobly.” See also France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1049, who points out that the amazement of Pilate “indicates a favorable impression,” since that has been the case when the term has been used earlier in the story (p. 1052). Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 668, notes a parallel with 4 Macc 17:16.

⁶⁶ Birger Gerhardsson, “Confession and Denial Before Men: Observations on Matt. 26:57–27:2,” *JSNT* 13 (1981): 46–66 (58). Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 67, who even proposes that the author may have an intention of presenting Jesus as a noble philosopher-teacher like Socrates and writes: “Jesus’ calmness and steadiness in facing the trials and death demonstrate his personal quality as a great teacher whose virtue and wisdom have armed him well with the moral courage and spiritual insight to deal with injustice and the loss of life.” Since Jesus is presented as a man who faces his death with courage, some scholars propose that the author presents Jesus according to

The author further makes use of contrast in order to characterize Jesus as courageous. While Jesus bravely confronts the religious leadership in Jerusalem (21:1–13), the religious leaders are portrayed as “afraid (φοβούμεθα) of the crowd” (21:26) when thinking of the reaction to their answer. The reader is also told that after Jesus has given a provocative parable they want to arrest him, but “feared (ἐφοβήθησαν) the crowds” (21:46). The contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders is also seen in the beginning of the passion narrative (26:1–5). Frank Matera rightly states: “The contrast between Jesus and the religious leaders could not be more striking. He deliberately and courageously faces his death. Filled with fear, they secretly plan to arrest him by stealth.”⁶⁷

The political leaders are also portrayed as fearful in the story. King Herod becomes “frightened” (ἐταράχθη) of the news about a newborn king (2:3), but conceals his desires and lies to the magi.⁶⁸ Herod the tetrarch is explicitly presented as a “king” (14:9) who “feared (ἐφοβήθη) the people” (14:5). He appears as a man who fears all he encounters (Herodias, her daughter, the people, and his dinner guest), and is thus portrayed as “deeply superstitious and fearful,” as Dorothy Weaver points out.⁶⁹ The consequence of his fear is that he cannot accomplish his own will.⁷⁰ Since both Herod senior and junior are presented as “kings” (2:1, 14:9) it is possible for the reader to see the contrast between them and Jesus, the Messiah. Pilate cowardly washes his hands “in front of the crowd” (27:24) in an attempt to show himself innocent. He lets the crowds decide the case, even if it is against his inner conviction.⁷¹

Courage is also underlined in the teaching of Jesus to his disciples. In the mission discourse, he makes clear that their mission is dangerous, and that they will meet severe persecution (10:16–17, 21–22). Nevertheless, Jesus repeatedly exhorts the

the conventions of encomium. See Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 116, and Talbert, *Matthew*, 211. Cf. Shuler, “Philo’s Moses and Matthew’s Jesus,” 101.

⁶⁷ Frank J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies: Interpreting the Synoptics Through Their Passion Stories* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 88. Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 63, also notices the contrast between “the courageous confession of Jesus before the high priest” and “Peter’s cowardly denial of Jesus.”

⁶⁸ In the passive mode the verb *ταράσσειν* is often used with the meaning of “be troubled, frightened, terrified.” See BDAG, “*ταράσσω*.” Cf. Isa 8:12 and 1 Pet 3:14 where *ταράσσειν* and *φοβήσθαι* are used synonymously.

⁶⁹ Weaver, “Power and Powerless,” 461.

⁷⁰ Weaver, “Power and Powerless,” 462, concludes that “in spite of his apparent power, Herod is effectively a puppet on a string, operated now by this outside force and now by that one.”

⁷¹ Lawrence, *An Ethnography*, 127–28. Influenced by D. A. Carson, “The Jewish Leaders in Matthew’s Gospel: A Reappraisal,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 161–74 (173–74), she points out that the handwashing is understood as a cowardly act. See also Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 31; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 662; Turner, *Israel’s Last Prophet*, 260.

disciples not to be frightened (10:26, 28, 31), but to fearlessly face the coming confrontations (10:38, 16:24).⁷²

In several ways, the reader is shown that Jesus is a courageous leader. Though Jesus knows that his arrival in Jerusalem will lead to harsh opposition, he enters the city and confronts the religious leadership. Willingly he submits to his opponents and boldly he admits his divine authority and his kingship. The courage of Jesus contrasts with other leaders in the story, who let their fear direct their actions.

6.2 The resurrected leader (28:1–20)

Matthew's biographical story follows the life of Jesus from his cradle to his grave. This biography, however, ends with an empty grave, as foretold by Jesus himself (16:21, 17:23, 20:19). Though Matthew has an end, the reader is informed that the life of Jesus has no end (28:20). Through the final event at the mountain in Galilee (28:16–20), a passage crammed with references to main themes of the previous story,⁷³ the author launches a beginning of a new story which he does not narrate.⁷⁴

The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders continues even after his death. In an attempt to discredit claims of resurrection, they persuade the soldiers to spread a lie about the disciples' stealing of the body (28:11–13). The lie "was spread out widely" (διεφημίσθη) among the Jews, still in the day of the composition of Matthew (28:15). The influence of the religious leaders thus continues even after the end of the story proper. But that is also the case with Jesus, the true Leader.

In the end part of ancient biographies, the significance of the protagonist is often underlined, through remarks about his aftermath, a final praise, or a conclusive comment.⁷⁵ Isocrates makes clear in the epilogue that Evagoras "left an immortal memory (μνήμην)" when he died (71), and points out that all his offspring had royal dignities (72). When Xenophon has finished his presentation of Agesilaus' life and virtues, he points out that Agesilaus is a model for those who want to live virtuously (10.2). He closes the biography by declaring that after the leader "having put up monuments (μνημεῖα) of his virtues all over the earth," he was given a royal burial in his homeland (11.16). Plutarch tells the reader in the closing of *Numa* that the leader, when still alive, had explained and implanted the contents of his books to his priest, so they, and not lifeless books, could guard the secrets of Numa (22.2–3).

⁷² Cf. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 116.

⁷³ Cf. Chouinard, "Literary Study," 381: "Virtually every line of Matthew's concluding scene evokes, by means of retrospection, earlier features of his story." See further Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:687–88, for examples.

⁷⁴ Cf. Powell, "Plot and Subplots," 191, who points out that the end of Matthew introduces new goals and conflicts which are unresolved within this story.

⁷⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 347.

The closure of Matthew, “the Great Commission” (28:16–20), greatly emphasizes the lasting significance of Jesus.⁷⁶ The theme of kingship now reaches its culmination.⁷⁷ “Jesus is the ruler of all,” as Davies and Allison point out.⁷⁸ Matthew does not only end with a highlighting of Jesus’ divine authority, but with a continuation of the story, since the risen Jesus sends his apprentices to make followers of him of all the peoples of the world and to teach them his commandments (28:19–20). The new teaching ministry of the disciples and the sending to the gentiles, together with the declaration of Jesus’ authority, give reasons to regard the commission as a kernel event in the story.⁷⁹ The empty grave does not only result in a continued life for Jesus, it also results in a continued leadership. Jesus commissions his apostles to multiply his followers and to enlarge his influence all over the world.

6.2.1 The lasting leader

The faithful leader

In Gethsemane all the disciples abandon their master (26:56). The leader among them, Peter, totally denies his association with Jesus (26:69–75). At the crucifixion and burial of their leader, the disciples are absent and other followers take care of the entombment. With the resurrection of Jesus, the story takes a new turn, which also results in a renewed relationship between the master and his disciples. The two women are first instructed by “an angel of the Lord” to “quickly” deliver a message to the disciples (28:7). When they later meet the risen Jesus he gives them the same instruction as the angel, but tells them to go to “my brothers” (28:10).⁸⁰ The addressing of the disciples as “brothers” indicates that from the point of view of Jesus the relationship to his apprentices is restored.⁸¹ The reader learns, despite the

⁷⁶ Cf. Yieh, *One Teacher*, 67.

⁷⁷ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1113.

⁷⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:682.

⁷⁹ Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” 252. Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks,” 479–80, however, suggests that the resurrection of Jesus (28:1–10) is the last kernel event in the story. Carter is right to underline the importance of the resurrection; still, it is first in the commission that its implications are outlined to the reader. The two events belong together.

⁸⁰ Carson, “Matthew,” 659, suggests that “brothers” refers to “all those attached to his case who were then in Jerusalem.” Cf. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 949. But this view is unlikely since the angel recently has instructed the women to address the disciples with the very same message (28:7).

⁸¹ Viviano, “Matthew,” 673, suggests that the use of the term “brothers” implies forgiveness. See also Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 269.

the abandonment of the disciples, that the meeting between the risen Jesus and the disciples in Galilee restores the close family relationships.⁸²

Jesus' treatment of his disciples after his resurrection thus underlines his faithfulness, as Powell notes:

We should note, in passing, that Jesus's desire for the disciples to be recovered – and, indeed his reference to them as 'my brothers' (28:10; cf. 12:46–50) – conveys a strong sense of his faithfulness to these errant disciples in a way that contrasts sharply with their faithlessness to him. Clearly, they are to be forgiven for their apostasy, welcomed back, and restored to positions of leadership (see 28:16–20).⁸³

The faithfulness of Jesus, despite the failures of his disciples, is a persistent theme throughout the whole narrative.⁸⁴ In the characterization of the disciples at the phraseological plane it can be concluded that Jesus gives a more positive view of the disciples than their own speech. Jesus does not only call them brothers, but also says, for example, that they are a part of the church he will build (16:18–19, 18:15–18), that they are "guiltless" (12:7), and that they will disciple all nations (28:19). The disciples are thus portrayed with a great potential, which is not based upon their own qualities but upon the way Jesus sees and empowers them.⁸⁵ It should also be noted that Jesus commissions his eleven disciples as the foundational leaders of his community, even if some of them are still "doubting" (28:17).⁸⁶

The resurrection of Jesus and the reconciliation between him and his disciples in Galilee also implies that a main aspect of the leadership of Jesus is restored, since he is again surrounded by his apprentices.⁸⁷ The final words of Jesus in Matthew's story, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (28:20), emphasize Jesus' lasting presence among his followers. The reader is reminded that Jesus is "Immanuel," "God with us." (1:23). Just as God's presence is promised to the servants in the commission scenes in the OT (e.g. Exod 3:12, Josh 1:5, Judg 6:16), so the disciples are promised the presence of Jesus when facing "their daunting task."⁸⁸ The last words of Jesus thus underline his faithfulness to his followers. Jesus promises that he will be faithful to the new community he has founded and support

⁸² Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1253, points out that "beyond all reasonable expectation Jesus treats the relationship as unruptured." Cf. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 428; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1103.

⁸³ Powell, "Literary Approaches," 74. See also Donaldson, "Guiding Readers," 40; Edwards, *Matthew's Narrative Portrait*, 138; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:607.

⁸⁴ Powell, "Literary Approaches," 80.

⁸⁵ Powell, "Characterization on the Phraseological Plane," 171.

⁸⁶ Turner, *Matthew*, 691.

⁸⁷ Cf. Heil, "Ezekiel 34," 706–07: "The shepherd metaphor then reaches its climax in the Gospel's final scene, when the shepherd who was struck is reunited with the scattered sheep of his flock on a mountain in Galilee."

⁸⁸ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1119. Cf. Hare, *Matthew*, 335.

it, as Efrain Agosto clarifies: “Matthew offers a more direct charge [than the other synoptics] to the disciples of Jesus who will become the movement’s leaders ... it makes an eschatological promise—the movement founder will be present—in spirit—with the movement followers and leaders.”⁸⁹

The new ministry of the disciples

The final words of Jesus in Matthew are addressed to his disciples, to whom he now gives new assignments:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and disciple (μαθητεύσατε) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching (διδάσκοντες) them to observe (τηρεῖν) all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days, until the end of the age (28:18–20).

The commission of the eleven apostles⁹⁰ follows the declaration of the authority of Jesus. Since Jesus has received universal lordship over all creation, he sends his apostles to disciple “all nations” of the earth.⁹¹ Their assignments are thus a consequence of his authority.⁹² Peter O’Brien helpfully clarifies the line of thought in the saying of Jesus: “Because he possesses all authority and is Lord over all peoples he is able to make the claim on men and women to become his disciples.”⁹³

Throughout the story, the apprentices have been trained by their Master. As curious students they have observed their teacher as he taught them through words and deeds. Now, at the end of the story, some of the disciples still have doubt, but they are fully trained. With the authority of their teacher, they can transmit his teaching to others. The disciples have consequently gone through a significant development.⁹⁴ Since the commission implies a new ministry for the disciples, it can be described as the “commencement” of the disciples, rather than their

⁸⁹ Efrain Agosto, *Servant Leadership: Jesus & Paul* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2005), 95. Cf. Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 402.

⁹⁰ The early church (and the medieval) underlined that the commission was addressed to the apostles. See Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet*, 2:487. Cf. Justin, *1 Apol.* 31.7.

⁹¹ Fornberg, *Matteusevangeliet*, 2:485; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 285.

⁹² Some scholars propose that Jesus here transfers his authority to the disciples (cf. 10:1, 7). See e.g. Heil, *Death and Resurrection*, 106; Reeves, *Resurrection Narrative*, 77; Viljoen, “Power and Authority,” 332. But even if Jesus sanctions his disciples to be teachers, this scene does not mention that he transfers or gives authority to them. The focus is on the authority of Jesus.

⁹³ Peter T. O’Brien, “The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20,” *JETS* 2 (1978): 254–67 (260). See also Wilkins, *Matthew*, 953–54, and Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 715.

⁹⁴ Byrskog, ”Slutet gott, allting gott: Matteus 28:16–20 i narrativt perspektiv,” in *Matteus och hans läsare—förr och nu: Matteussymposiet i Lund den 27–28 september 1996. En hyllning till professor Birger Gerhardsson*, ed. Birger Olsson, Samuel Byrskog, and Walter Überlack, Religio 48 (Lund: Teologiska institutionen, 1997), 85–98 (92).

“graduation.”⁹⁵ Though Jesus promises them his spiritual presence (28:20), he now delegates his ministry to them, as Michael Green clarifies: “It is the end of the training of the Twelve. And the emphasis now shifts to them ... In one sense their apprenticeship is over. The ball is passed to them and they must run with it.”⁹⁶

The main task of the disciples is *μαθητεύειν*, since this is the finite verb which controls the sentence. The verb is commonly translated as “making disciples.”⁹⁷ Though this translation is reasonable, it is not completely adequate, since the author distinguishes between “the disciples,” the Twelve who are given leadership positions in the community, and other instructed followers (cf. 27:57).⁹⁸ The term *μαθητεύειν* is also used in the general sense of “instructing.”⁹⁹ A preferred translation would be “to disciple” (from the verb “discipling”).¹⁰⁰ The future instructed followers are, nonetheless, also to be pupils of Jesus, since they are to keep *his* teaching (28:20).¹⁰¹ There is, further, a close relationship between “the disciples” (οἱ μαθηταί) and their main task, “discipling” (*μαθητεύειν*). Nolland helpfully describes both the distinctiveness of *μαθητεύειν* and its relationship to the Twelve:

Matthew restricts his use of the noun ‘disciple’ (*μαθητής*) to the Twelve, but by making a wider use of other language markers of discipleship and more pointedly by his wider use of the cognate verb ‘disciple’ (*μαθητεύειν*) Matthew indicates that the discipleship of the Twelve, though unique and unrepeatable, embodies patterns of discipleship which are of a more general relevance.¹⁰²

The mission to make disciples is specified with two participles, “baptizing,” and “teaching,” which concretize how the discipling process is to be worked out.¹⁰³

⁹⁵ France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1110.

⁹⁶ Green, *Message of Matthew*, 320. Cf. Minear, *Matthew*, 141.

⁹⁷ E.g. NRSV, NIV, ESV. See also David Kuske, “Exegetical Brief: The Meaning of *μαθητεύσατε* in Matthew 28:19,” *WLQ* 94 (1997): 115–21. Cf. Ign. *Eph.* 3.1, *Rom.* 5.1; Plutarch, *Mor.* 832B, 837C.

⁹⁸ See p. 176 for a discussion of the term in 13:52.

⁹⁹ See Kuske, “Meaning of *μαθητεύσατε*,” 117–18. Cf. Kingsbury, *Parables of Jesus*, 126–27; LSJ, “*μαθητεύω*.” See e.g. Ign. *Eph.* 10.1 and *Rom.* 3.1, where the term seems to be used synonymously with *διδάσκειν*. Cf. Ign. *Trall.* 3.2 where the noun *μαθητεία* (“lesson” or “instruction”) is used.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 41, who uses the term “discipling,” which he explains as “the responsibility of disciples helping one another to grow as disciples.” He suggests that the “nearest equivalent” to “discipling” in the NT is *μαθητεύειν*. See also Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 161.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Louw-Nida, “*μαθητεύω, ἀκολουθέω*,” who describe the meaning of *μαθητεύειν* (and *ἀκολουθεῖν*) as “to be a follower or a disciple of someone, in the sense of adhering to the teachings or instructions of a leader and in promoting the cause of such a leader.”

¹⁰² Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1265. Cf. Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 465 n. 40.

¹⁰³ The participles are thus participles of means, describing the manner the exhortation in the finite verb (*μαθητεύειν*) is to be accomplished. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 645;

These two tasks are new for the disciples. Baptism is an act of initiation and conversion. It implies belonging to God and the submission to the lordship of Christ and is thus the beginning of discipleship.¹⁰⁴ Teaching is a continuing process, which enables the baptized person to live as a follower and pupil to Jesus. Throughout the story, teaching has been the most prominent activity of Jesus, and in contrast to preaching and healing it has been reserved for the Master (cf. 10:7–8). Now, when the disciples have fully learnt and understood the teaching of Jesus, they are themselves commissioned to teach.¹⁰⁵

The use of the word “all” in 28:20 echoes “all” in 26:1, which refers to all previous teaching discourses. This command thus concerns all the past teaching of Jesus in the story.¹⁰⁶ The teaching of Jesus is not, however, limited to his words and discourses. As other ancient teachers, he has taught his disciples with both words and deeds.¹⁰⁷ Allison thus rightly concludes:

One can accordingly take the phrase in 28:20 ... to be all-encompassing: the reference is not to the Sermon on the Mount or even to Jesus’ words but to his life in its totality. His person is, for those baptized, a command, so his followers must creatively mirror the virtues he speaks and embodies.¹⁰⁸

In the commission of the disciples nothing is said about preaching the good news about the kingdom or healing the sick. This does not imply that these tasks are no longer a part of the disciples’ ministry. The reader observes the new things in the story, that the ministry is now extended to the gentiles and that the disciples also are

Kuske, “Meaning of μαθητεύσατε,” 118. Some scholars, for example Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 718–19, suggest that the first participle, “going,” also characterizes the mission. But this participle is frequently used as an imperative in the story (2:8, 9:13, 11:4, 17:27, cf. 10:7) and for that reason it is probably not of equal importance as the two others. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 645, and France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1115 n. 34.

¹⁰⁴ Hans Kvalbein, “Go therefore and make disciples ... The concept of discipleship in the New Testament,” *Them* 13 (1988): 48–53 (52), helpfully explains: “Baptism in the early church corresponds to the call to discipleship in the ministry of Jesus. Therefore it is not by accident that the Great Commission explains baptism and ethical instruction to be the means to ‘make disciples’ of all nations Baptism is therefore initiation into discipleship giving admittance to the ‘school’ of Jesus and starting a new life in obedience to him and his commands.” See also O’Brien, “The Great Commission,” 265; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 720. For a different view, see e.g. Kuske, “Meaning of μαθητεύσατε,” 119, who understands baptism as “means of grace in which God forgives our sins and claims us as his dear children.”

¹⁰⁵ Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 259. Cf. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 123. For a different view, see Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 123, who proposes that the disciples still do not understand, but are enabled to teach by the continued presence of Jesus. Cf. Lincoln, “Story for Teachers,” 124.

¹⁰⁶ Lincoln, “Story for Teachers,” 115; Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 152; Yieh, *One Teacher*, 69.

¹⁰⁷ See pp. 163–64.

¹⁰⁸ Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 151. See also Wilkins, *Matthew*, 957.

given a teaching role, and take the preaching of the kingdom and the healing ministry for granted.¹⁰⁹ In 24:14 Jesus prophesies that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (cf. 26:13), which clearly implies a continuity between the former activity of the disciples in 10:7 and their coming ministry. The commission of the disciples as Jesus’ fellow shepherds, which began in the mission to the lost sheep of Israel, is now completed.¹¹⁰

The lasting influence of the leader

The final words of Jesus in the story obviously gives his eleven disciples important tasks as leaders and teachers for the peoples. At the same time, these words also make clear that Jesus himself shall remain the Master of the peoples.

As noticed in the previous chapter, Jesus underlines to his followers towards the end of his public career, 23:8–10, that he is the leader *par excellence* of the people in his community.¹¹¹ In his final words in the story Jesus confirms his lasting influence as leader. This is seen in the instruction to the disciples to teach the peoples to keep all that *he* has commanded them (28:20). Though the disciples are given teaching roles, they are still disciples of Jesus.¹¹² His authority is on another level and he remains the Teacher and Master of all his followers.

This fact shows that Jesus is not presented as a typical rabbi. In contrast to the ordinary rabbinical disciple, who is himself acknowledged as a rabbi after a time of learning, Jesus’ disciples always remain disciples. Though the apostles of Jesus clearly are presented as the future leaders of the community in the story, Jesus remains the Leader. This is also seen in the way the term “shepherd” is used in Matthew. Even if the disciples function as shepherds or “under-shepherds,” they are never explicitly designated as “shepherds.” In this way the author emphasizes that Jesus is *the* Shepherd, on whom his fellow shepherds and the sheep (the people) are dependent.¹¹³

Wilkins proposes that the use of *μαθητεύειν* implies that the eleven disciples are instructed to do to others what Jesus had done with them, which includes the whole

¹⁰⁹ Hannan, *Sovereign Rule of God*, 228. Cf. also e.g. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 128; Hare, *Matthew*, 334; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:170. For a different view see Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:273.

¹¹⁰ See Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 707: “So the disciples ... are commissioned by their struck but raised shepherd, forever united with him, to be shepherds who make disciples and thus sheep of all peoples by baptizing and teaching them.”

¹¹¹ See pp. 264–65.

¹¹² See e.g. Sheridan, “Disciples and Discipleship,” 251; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 238; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 958.

¹¹³ Heil, “Ezekiel 34,” 707; Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd*, 147; Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 416.

process of becoming a disciple.¹¹⁴ It should be noted, however, that the disciples in Matthew's story also are apostles and leaders in the community. Consequently, there are differences between the disciples and the future followers, which relate to the disciples' roles as leaders, since they are not commissioned to make apostles of the nations. The coming followers will be adherents and pupils rather than apprentices and apostles.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, the new followers will also have a similar relationship as the disciples, since "the focus is on calling individuals to absolute commitment to the person of Jesus as one's sole Master and Lord," as Wilkins points out.¹¹⁶ The mission of the apostles involves making people relate to Jesus as their Master—people who are taught and led by Jesus. They are commissioned to disciple people to be learners and followers of Jesus, to relate to him as leader. Matthew's story thus ends, appropriately according to its biographical genre, with a main focus on the protagonist, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is presented as the remaining Leader with a worldwide influence.

The closing words of Matthew's biographical story make clear that Jesus will continue to have followers and to be the Leader even after his resurrection. Though the story ends with a new beginning where the apostles are given leadership roles, Jesus remains the Master of all his followers. Since Jesus instructs his under-shepherds to disciple the peoples and to teach them to observe his commandments, the reader is shown that the influence of the protagonist will remain.

6.3 Summary

The theme of leadership

In several ways, the theme of leadership is present in the last part of the biography of Jesus. For the third time the shepherd metaphor is used with reference to him, in the context of his coming death (26:31–32). This time Jesus speaks about himself as a shepherd, which implies that he confirms the appropriateness of the earlier references and his role as leader. The great influence of Jesus among the people is also underlined, since it is clarified to the reader that the religious leaders' will to put him to death is related to envy (27:18). Though Jesus' apprentices abandon their master when he is arrested, Jesus is presented as a leader with followers even in his death since Galilean women and Joseph of Arimathea are introduced as devoted

¹¹⁴ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 161–62. Cf. Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry*, 40, and Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 571.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Turner, *Matthew*, 689–90, who points out that the coming followers will be "disciples" in a metaphorical sense.

¹¹⁶ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 952.

followers (27:55–61). The reader is thus told that the death of Jesus is the death of a leader.

The final words of the risen Jesus imply a leadership role of his disciples. The training of the apprentices is now complete and they are sent out to teach and instruct the nations in a way that corresponds to Jesus' ministry. The apostles are not, however, presented as authorized rabbis. They are commissioned to make people followers and pupils to Jesus and to teach them to observe *his* teaching. Jesus thus remains the Master of all his followers and his lasting influence as leader is underlined.

The character of the leader

In the last part of the story the reader learns that Jesus is a *courageous* leader. Even if he knows that the religious leadership in Jerusalem wants to put him to death, he enters the city and confronts the leaders. Though he quails when his horrifying suffering and atoning death are approaching, he bravely faces his antagonists in the garden and submits willingly to them. Courageously he confirms his divine identity and authority as King of the Jews in front of the leadership of Jerusalem. The author also presents Jesus as courageous through contrasting him with other leaders in the story. Both the religious and the political leaders are portrayed as fearful and greatly concerned of the opinions of the people. In contrast, Jesus teaches his disciples to not fear men or death, and models courage in his life and death.

The relationship between the leader and the people

Some new information about the relationship between the leader and the people is also given in the last part of the biography. That Jesus cares for his disciples after his resurrection and gives them significant roles in spite of their denial and abandonment show his faithfulness to his followers. His *close relationship to his followers* is further seen in his promise, which ends the story, that he will always be with them.

The last part of the biography also informs the reader that Jesus significantly *benefits the people* through his death. The death of Jesus is not a common martyrdom but an atoning death that provides forgiveness of sins for the people. Through his death and resurrection, a new age is inaugurated with significant benefits for the people. Jesus is thus presented as a leader who not only benefits the people in life, but also in death. The development of the apprentices in the story, who in the end are sent out as teachers and leaders, points also to the good influence and empowerment of their leader.

7. Comparisons and conclusions

The previous chapters have examined Matthew's presentation of Jesus, through a biographical-narrative reading of the text, with the purpose of understanding and clarifying the portrait of Jesus as leader. It is now possible to put together the findings to see the whole picture, make comparisons, and draw conclusions. This chapter outlines the progress of the theme of leadership and how it is related to the plot and the narrative development of the story. It shows that Jesus' role as leader is highlighted in the narrative in several ways. The main moral character traits of the leader and the features of his relationship to the people are summarized and comparisons with the other biographies are made in order to find out how the presentation of Jesus relates to common leadership ideals. In this way the portrait of Jesus as leader is clarified. The questions of if and how Jesus is presented as a model for leaders are then discussed. The chapter closes with some reflections on the implications of the present study for further research.

7.1 The theme of leadership

The beginning of the biography (1:1–4:11) presents the origins of Jesus for the reader. In this part of Matthew's story, which gives important information about the protagonist and the plot, a leadership theme is introduced. In the context of the birth of Jesus, he is clearly presented as leader to the reader. The author uses two common leadership terms, *ἡγούμενός* and *ποιμαίνειν*, in this initial description of the protagonist. The birth of Jesus is the birth of a leader. In addition to this characterization, the newborn child is immediately involved in a conflict with the present leadership in Jerusalem. The negative portrayal of these leaders, especially the contrast between Jesus and Herod, signals to the reader that the birth of Jesus implies the arrival of a *true* leader. The comparison between Jesus and Moses, the former great leader of Israel, also indicates that Jesus will be a great leader. The first part of the biography thus introduces the protagonist as a new leader in Israel. It also informs the reader about Jesus' preparation for his leadership role by John the Baptist and his temptations in the desert.

In the middle part of the biography (4:12–25:46), which describes the public career of the protagonist, the leadership theme is continued and developed. One of

Jesus' first actions is a strategic call of apprentices with the purpose of training and developing them to be his co-workers in his ministry to the people (4:18–22). In the calling narratives, leadership language is used when Jesus exhorts the fishermen to “come after” (δεῦτε ὀπίσω) him and in the notion that they responded by “following” (ἀκολουθεῖν). The reader is also told that “large crowds followed” Jesus and received his ministry (4:23). Jesus' role as leader is thus confirmed early in his public career. It is established successively throughout the story through repeated mentions of “crowds” who followed him (8:1, 12:15, 14:13, 19:2, 20:29). The author uses leadership terms to describe Jesus even in this part of the biography. In 9:36 the shepherd metaphor is used for the second time in the story when the reader learns that Jesus relates to the people like a shepherd. His care for the crowds, who are characterized as leaderless (9:36), makes Jesus empower his apprentices and send them out as apostles and under-shepherds to minister to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6). The first part of the public career of Jesus (4:12–11:1) thus establishes the portrayal of Jesus as leader through repeated mentions of followers and the usage of leadership terms. Though the conflict with the religious leadership is present in the background, the focus in this part of the story is on the popular leader and his followers.

From 11:2 the story takes a new turn when the author begins to narrate the rejection of Jesus' leadership. In this context, Jesus again uses leadership language when he invites the people to come to him, accept his authority, and learn from him (11:28–30). Even as Jesus' apprentices and the crowds continue to follow their leader, more focus is now given to the opponents of the leader. In the second part of Jesus' career (11:2–25:46), the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders develops. This conflict is partly related to the popularity of Jesus among the people and can thus be seen as a consequence of the influence described in the first part of the public career of Jesus. The reader now learns that the religious authorities have failed as leaders, since Jesus points out that “they are blind leaders (ὁδηγοί)” (15:14).

In the context of increasing hostility from his opponents and his approaching death (12:14, 16:21), Jesus founds a new community, and declares that his twelve apprentices and apostles are going to play significant roles in the future (16:18, 18:18, 19:28). In the community discourse, the shepherd motif is used again and the disciples' role as under-shepherds is thus confirmed. In the last section of the middle part of the biography (21:1–25:46) the conflict escalates as Jesus enters Jerusalem and confronts and judges the religious leadership. The reason for this confrontation is clearly related to their responsibility as spiritual leaders and their bad influence upon the people. How the religious leaders have failed in their responsibility is detailed for the reader in chapter 23. Again they are described as “blind leaders” (23:16, 24). This chapter is a discourse on leadership, since Jesus not only pronounces judgment upon the failed leadership, but also gives teaching about true leadership (23:3–12), and declares that he is the leader *par excellence* in his

community (23:10). Jesus here presents himself as “the Master” by making use of *καθηγητής*, which relates to both teaching and leadership.

In the end part of the biography (26:1–28:20), which outlines the death and resurrection of Jesus and his lasting influence, the theme of leadership continues. Before his death, Jesus prepares his disciples for the immediate split of the community and its restoration (26:31–32). Here Jesus applies the shepherd metaphor to himself and thus confirms to the reader that it is an appropriate description of him. It is also clarified that the religious leaders’ opposition of Jesus and will to put him to death is related to his influence among the people, since the author declares that they handed over him to Pilate “out of envy” (27:18). Though Jesus’ closest followers are absent when he dies, followers nonetheless surround him, since many women and Joseph of Arimathea are presented as faithful adherers to Jesus. Consequently, the reader is shown that the death of Jesus is the death of a leader. Matthew’s biographical story does not end here, but also presents Jesus as a resurrected leader with lasting influence. The final words of the story introduce a new beginning, since the risen Lord commissions his apostles to disciple the nations. The time of training and learning for the apprentices is completed and they are now able to continue the ministry of Jesus. Though Jesus gives them important leadership roles, he remains himself the lasting Leader, since they are going to make followers and pupils to him and not to themselves.

The theme of leadership is an important aspect of the story of Matthew, as seen above. It relates, in different ways, to all the main characters: Jesus, the protagonist, is presented as the true Leader. The twelve disciples are the closest followers who are apprenticed by the Master in order to continue his ministry and provide leadership as his under-shepherds in the community he founds. The great crowds refer to a wider circle of adherents to Jesus who also are followers that are influenced by him. The religious leaders are confronted and judged as leaders who fail in their responsibility. The leadership theme relates to the plot of the story since the opposition to Jesus and his death is partly caused by his influence among the people. *In many ways, Matthew’s story is a story about leadership.*

7.2 The character of the leader

7.2.1 The portrait of Jesus

How then is Jesus, the true leader, characterized in the biography? The previous chapters have shown that there are some main moral character traits, which are highlighted to the reader in the text. These traits, the “virtues of the soul” of Jesus, describe his character and are important parts of Matthew’s biographical portrait.

The reader first gets to know that Jesus is *righteous*. In his baptism Jesus shows that he confirms John's movement of repentance and the necessity of living righteously (3:1–10). Later Jesus describes this ministry of John as “the way of righteousness (ὁδὸς δικαιοσύνης)” (21:32). The very first words of Jesus in the story show that his salvific ministry is related to righteousness (3:15, cf. 9:13). In the following event, the temptation narrative, where Jesus' character is tested, he shows himself to be a pious and obedient man who submits to the will of God. These traits are also included in the concept of “righteousness,” a fundamental virtue in the ancient world. The first teaching discourse (5–7) confirms the presentation of Jesus as righteous, since its main theme concerns righteous behavior. Here it is made clear that righteousness relates to both the relationship to others (5:20–48) and to piety (6:1–18). Another aspect of this virtue is justice. Jesus, who is presented as the coming Judge in the story, has a compassionate ministry to the marginalized, afflicted, and needy people (e.g. 11:28–12:14) and declares that he is going to reward and punish humanity according to their deeds (13:49, 16:27, 25:31–46). At the end of the story, when the trial of Jesus is narrated, the righteousness and innocence of the leader is emphatically demonstrated (27:4, 19, 23).

Early in the narrative the reader also gets to know that Jesus is a man of *self-control*. The author does not explicitly mention this trait, but the deeds and words of Jesus inform the reader that this quality is present. In the desert Jesus is tempted after a forty-day fast (4:1–11). The notion of this long fast, together with the resistance against the first temptation, clearly show that Jesus can control his desires for food. The last temptation, when Jesus resists the offer of “all the world's kingdoms and their glory” (4:8), likewise shows that he does not let a thirst for power control him. The temptations in the desert thus not only reveal the righteousness of Jesus, but also his self-control. The virtue of self-control is also seen in the passion narrative where Jesus keeps silent in the trials (26:59–63, 27:12–14) and when he is mocked and ridiculed (e.g. 27:27–31). The teaching of Jesus likewise portrays him as a self-controlled leader, since he exhorts his disciples to take control of their desires in matters of anger (5:21–22, 38–42), wealth (e.g. 6:19–24, 19:24), and sexuality (e.g. 5:27–30, 32; 15:19; 19:9, 18). In contrast to the religious leaders, who are portrayed as men with “lack of self-control” (*ἀκρασία*) (23:25), Jesus is presented as a leader with temperance.

In the presentation of the public career of Jesus it becomes clear that Jesus is a *compassionate* leader. The healing ministry of Jesus especially highlights this trait. When Jesus sees the needy crowds or hears the cries of the sick, he is moved with compassion and ministers to them (e.g. 9:27, 14:14). Jesus' ministry to the crowds in general is also directly related to his compassion (9:36–38, cf. 15:32). Several times the term *σπλαγχνίζεσθαι*, which expresses a strong feeling of compassion, is used in reference to Jesus (e.g. 14:14, 20:34). His teaching moreover shows the importance of mercy for him. In the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:23–35), the harsh judgment of the servant is caused by his lack of mercy (18:27, 33). That

Jesus is presented as a compassionate leader is confirmed by the contrast with the religious leaders, who are repeatedly criticized for neglecting mercy (9:13, 12:7, 23:23).

Through his words and deeds Jesus is further presented as a *peaceful* and *gentle* leader. Even if Jesus makes clear that his ministry results in conflicts and divisions (10:34–36), the overall portrait underlines his concern for peace. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages his followers to be “peacemakers” (εἰρηνοποιοί) (5:9) and not to retaliate (5:38–42). In the mission discourse, he sends his apostles to bring peace to the people (10:12–13). The teaching in the community discourse shows his concern for reconciliation and unity (18:15, 19, 21–35; cf. 5:23–26). The teaching of Jesus is confirmed by his deeds, which also characterize him as peaceful and gentle (12:19–20). The reader clearly sees these traits when Jesus, the great King, enters Jerusalem on a donkey. Even if the city rejects him he does not come with violence but peacefully (21:1–7). That Jesus is a peaceful man is also seen in the passion narrative, when he is arrested (26:47–52). In contrast to the well-armed squad, which is sent out by the religious leaders, Jesus forbids his followers to make use of swords.

The reader also recognizes that Jesus is a leader with *wisdom*. Jesus himself declares that his lifestyle is in accord with wisdom (11:19). He points out that he represents something greater than the wisdom of Solomon (12:42). The portrayal of Jesus as a wise leader is confirmed to the reader in the narration of his visit to his hometown, since it is stated that the people were “astonished” by his wisdom (σοφία) and power (13:54). Similar information about how the teaching of Jesus amazes and astonishes the people is also given later in the story (22:22, 33). The way Jesus teaches, with beatitudes, aphorisms, parables, and riddles, also implies that he acts as a wisdom teacher. Jesus further exhorts his followers to be wise (7:24, 10:16, 24:45) and describes his disciples as “wise men” (23:34). Wisdom in Matthew’s story includes both the practical aspect of how to live one’s life and the revelation of the knowledge of God.

Humility is another of Jesus’ main traits. The leader presents himself, when he invites the people to accept his authority and to learn from him, as “meek and humble (πραῦς and ταπεινός) in heart” (11:29). This statement expresses his obedience and submissiveness to God and humility and service towards men. The author also makes use of the OT to portray Jesus as a humble leader. The quotations from Isa 42:1–4 (12:18–21) and Zech 9:9 (21:5) clearly underline this quality. Contrary to the common Jewish expectation of a politically triumphant Messiah who conquers his opponents, Jesus is presented as a humble servant who has compassion for the needy people. In his teaching, Jesus emphatically instructs his followers to be humble and serving and not seek the greatest position (18:4) or exalt oneself (23:12). The contrast with the religious leaders, who are preoccupied with pride, honor, titles, and positions (23:5–7), further highlights the humility of Jesus for the reader.

Towards the end of the biographical story, it becomes clear to the reader that Jesus is true—he is a leader with *integrity*. Through the mouth of a hypocritical opponent Jesus is, correctly, characterized as a leader who is “true” (ἀληθής), teaches the way of God “truthfully (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ),” and does not care about others’ opinions (22:16). This statement, which confirms what the reader has noticed in the presentation so far of the public career of Jesus, expresses that Jesus is honest and trustworthy since he does not adjust his words according to the opinion of people. The integrity of Jesus is clearly seen in the correspondence between his words and deeds in the story. He not only teaches his followers to be humble (5:5), merciful (5:7), and to not retaliate (5:21–26), but also acts humbly (21:5), mercifully (9:27–30), and without vengeance (26:52). The contrast between Jesus and other leaders in the story also highlights the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Jesus. The political leaders are presented as concerned with their public reputation, and the main trait of the religious leaders is hypocrisy. The author portrays Jesus, on the other hand, as a leader who is coherent in intentions, speech, and actions.

The biography also presents Jesus as a *courageous* leader, even if this term is not used. The reader observes this trait most clearly in the last part of the story. Though Jesus knows that he has many enemies in Jerusalem who want to put him to death, he directs his way to the city and confronts the religious leadership. In front of the horrifying atoning death and abandonment from his Father he quails in Gethsemane, but nonetheless makes clear his willingness to be obedient. When his opponents come to arrest him he boldly faces them and willingly surrenders in order to fulfil his mission (26:46). Courageously, Jesus confirms his authority and identity in front of both the religious (26:64) and political leadership (27:11). Jesus further encourages his followers to be brave. When he sends out his apostles and tells them that they will meet harsh opposition and be persecuted (10:16–17, 21–22) he exhorts them to be courageous: “Do not fear (μὴ φοβεῖσθε) those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul” (10:28). The contrast with other leaders also establishes the portrait of Jesus as a courageous leader to the reader. Both religious (21:26, 46) and political leaders (2:3, 14:5, 27:24) are presented as leaders who fear the reactions of the people.

7.2.2 Comparison with other portraits

What can then be said about the main character traits of Jesus in comparison with the other biographical portraits of good leaders? Which similarities and differences can be noticed? In the examination of the other biographies in chapter two, several common traits were noticed, as well as some peculiarities. How does Matthew’s portrait relate to these ideals?

Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) is a trait that is used in the characterization of all the other leaders. The meaning of the term differs, however, between the usage in

Matthew and the other biographies. In Matthew it denotes, when it refers to the quality of a human, obedience to God, piety, right behavior towards others, and justice. In the other biographies it is mostly related to just behaviour and the leader's judgment and punishment of the people.¹ These aspects are clearly seen in Philo's presentation of Moses as lawgiver. Philo portrays Moses as a leader who values equality and treats everyone according to his deeds (2.9). It should be noted, however, that *δικαιοσύνη* has a broad meaning in the Hellenistic literature also.² Isocrates mentions the virtue together with piety (38). Xenophon relates the justice of Xenophon to his honest and generous usage of money (4.1–6, 8.1, 8) and his obedience to the laws (7.2). A difference between Matthew and the other biographies is that piety is a central aspect of its usage in the former. In all the other biographies, piety is mentioned as a specific virtue of the leader. In Matthew, this trait is included in the righteousness of Jesus. The virtue of righteousness in the life of Jesus is consequently, to a large extent, corresponding to the justice and piety of the other leaders.

The *self-control* of Jesus clearly matches this common trait among the other leaders. The authors use different terms to show the self-control of their protagonists. Isocrates uses the term *σωφροσύνη*. Xenophon and Philo likewise make use of this term, but also *ἐγκράτεια* and *καρτερία*. Plutarch does not use any of these terms but tells the reader that Numa had tamed his passion and could rule over himself (3.5). The examples of self-control given in the other portraits, however, resemble the portrayal of Jesus. Agesilaus shows temperance in matters of food (9.3, 11.11), sexuality (5.4–7), and possessions (8.6). Moses, who lived for his soul and not for his body, was content with little (1.29) and adopted a simple lifestyle in matters of food and clothes (1.152–53). Numa is likewise presented as a leader who does not seek wealth or glory from power and authority (6.2). Consequently, Matthew and the other biographies all portray the good leader as one who can control his own desires and rule over himself.

There are similarities between the presentation of Jesus as *compassionate* and the other biographical portraits. The other biographies, however, use the more general term *φιλανθρωπία* to denote the leader's care for needs of the people. In the life of Agesilaus it is seen in his merciful treatment of slaves (1.22). In Moses' life it is manifested through his mercy towards his enemies when he does not take revenge (1.249). Philo tells the reader that in this event the leader showed one of the best qualities, namely "kindness" (*χρηστότητα*). Matthew uses almost the same term in the description of the rule of Jesus (11:30). Plutarch also relates benevolence to kindness and exemplifies this quality of Numa in his compassionate treatment of slaves (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.5). Though Jesus' compassion is expressed by different activities (e.g. healing and feeding), the trait which leads to these activities is similar

¹ See Isocrates, *Evag.* 42–43; Philo, *Mos.* 1.40–44, 54–56, 154, 324–28; Plutarch, *Num.* 6.3.

² See p. 149.

to the benevolence and mercy of the other leaders. Compassion is, however, more emphasized and elaborated on in Matthew than in the other portraits.

The presentation of Jesus as a *peaceful* and *gentle* leader has a clear parallel in one of the other portraits, the biography of Numa. When Numa describes himself he speaks about his “quiet lifestyle,” and “habitual love for peace and peaceful actions (σύντροφος εἰρήνης ἔρως καὶ πραγμάτων ἀπολέμων)” (5.4). He is also characterized in the story as a “gentle leader (ἡγεμόνα πρᾶον)” who will lead the people to “good order and peace (εὐνομία καὶ εἰρήνη)” (6.3). Gentleness is also used to describe Evagoras (67), Agesilaus (1.20, 11.6), and Moses (2.279), but it is not a main characteristic in these biographies. The presentation of Jesus as peaceful and gentle is, consequently, not unique, but neither is it common.

The portrayal of Jesus as a leader with *wisdom* (σοφία) is similar to the other portraits. This trait is common to all the other leaders, but the different authors emphasize different aspects. The wisdom of Evagoras relates mostly to his intellectual capacity (41, 61) and ability to rule (80). Agesilaus’ wisdom is seen in the way he gained the obedience of his people and how he handled and overcame his enemies (6.5–6). In the life of Moses, wisdom is integrated with philosophy and is related to his teaching (2.215) and legislation (2.36). Numa, likewise, is presented as a wise ruler (20.4) who also wrote books on philosophy (22.2). The portrayal of Jesus as a man of wisdom, which relates both to revelatory knowledge and practical life issues, thus presents him in a way that is similar to the other leaders.

A difference between Jesus and the other leaders, however, is seen in the emphasis on *humility*. This is not a highlighted trait in any of the other biographies. The term *πραῦς* or its cognates is used in *Evagoras* (67), *Agesilaus* (1.20, 11.6), *Moses* (2.279), and *Numa* (6.3, 20.3), but in these contexts it denotes kindness, mildness, or gentleness rather than humility.³ Xenophon’s portrayal of Agesilaus expresses some aspects of the kind of humility Matthew describes. The biographer points out that though Agesilaus was a man of magnanimity (μεγαλόφρων) he was “not insolent” (οὐ σὺν ὕβρει) (11.11, cf. 8.1, 11.2). Even when he looked down to the boastful he was “more humble (ταπεινότερος) than common men” (11.11). At the same time, Xenophon states that Agesilaus “prided himself (ἐκαλλωπίζετο) in the simplicity of his clothing and the splendid ornament of his army, and in the least requirement for himself and the greatest benevolence for his friends” (11.11). Though Xenophon presents Agesilaus as humble in some ways, he does not emphasize humility as one of his virtues or main traits. Rather he relates the humility to Agesilaus’ self-control, generosity, and charm (εὐχάρις).⁴ The emphasis on

³ See further pp. 225–26 for the usage of *πραῦς* in Greek literature.

⁴ Grundmann, *TDNT* 8:4, suggests that Xenophon portrays Agesilaus as a modest man. Cf. Esser, *NIDNTT* 2:259.

humility in the portrayal of Jesus, in the sense of submission, servanthood, and renunciation of status, is thus unparalleled in the other biographies.⁵

The presentation of Jesus as a leader with *integrity* corresponds to most of the other portraits. Isocrates points out that Evagoras “observed agreements by both deeds (τοῖς ἔργοις) and words (τοῖς λόγοις) (44). Xenophon, who relates integrity to piety, tells that Agesilaus exposed himself “firstly to be a man who hold his oaths and thereafter one who did not deceive in his agreements” (1.12). Philo elaborates on this trait in his portrayal of Moses and underlines the coherence of the thoughts, words, and deeds of the leader. When he describes the beauty of the mind he points out that it is “adorned with an eminent ornament of truth (ἀληθείας), and agreement (ὁμολογίας) of deeds with words and words with deeds and even intentions (βουλευμάτων) with both” (2.140, cf. 2.212). Consequently, the emphasis on integrity, truthfulness, and trustworthiness in the portrayal of Jesus is in agreement with most of the other portraits.

The final virtue of Jesus in the portrait in Matthew, *courage*, is an emphasized trait in two of the other portraits. Isocrates shows that Evagoras did not think about his own security, but instead confronted the enemy immediately (30). He was also fighting, even alone against many, until he had captured the palace and restored its honors to the family (32). Because of his courage, Evagoras is described as a superior ruler, who “handled the fearful (δεινούς) and terrible (φοβερούς) dangers (τοὺς κινδύνους)” (36). Agesilaus is also presented as a man of courage. The virtue is seen in his life through his willingness to fight against the strongest enemies and in the way that he placed himself in the front of the battle. He did not flee from a dangerous battle, but confronted the enemy, which the scars on his body attested to (6.1–3). Both Isocrates and Xenophon relate the courage of the leader primarily to their role as generals. Though the portrait of Jesus differs in regard to warfare, weapons, and leadership roles, it presents nonetheless a courageous leader who not only avoids the dangers but also confronts the opponents.

Most of the main moral character traits of Jesus are thus also important traits in the other biographies. This is the case with righteousness, self-control, compassion, wisdom, integrity, and courage. Peacefulness and gentleness are not common in the other portraits, but they are not unique. The emphasis on humility is, however, a peculiarity in the portrayal of the good leader in Matthew.

⁵ Cf. Theissen, *Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*, 72: “It is characteristic of primitive Christianity that it makes renunciation of status the presupposition for authority within the community. ‘Humility,’ elsewhere the disposition of slaves and dependants, becomes the characteristic of those who want to assume leadership roles in the community.” Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 169, likewise shows that 1 Clement advances a specific idea of leadership, and notes that humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη) is “[t]he most celebrated disposition in the letter.” He proposes that “it functioned as a central and authority-bestowing trait among the early Christ-confessing communities in Rome and Corinth” (p. 174). Further, he proposes that “humility, in Clement’s discourse, is a virtue distinguishing healthy leaders” (pp. 180–81). See e.g. 1 Clem. 16.2, 44.3.

7.3 The relationship between the leader and the people

7.3.1 The portrait of Jesus

The other part of the portrait of the true leader in Matthew is the description of the relationship between Jesus and the people and the features of the leadership. The previous chapters have shown that the biography gives a lot of information about how Jesus relates to the people and their relationship to him.

The reader is informed that Jesus operates in three main *leadership roles*, namely as king, teacher, and prophet. The introduction of the biography and the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah, the son of David (1:1), clearly underlines Jesus' role as *king*. As the Messiah Jesus is even the ideal King. The second chapter, with its focus on kingship, confirms that the newborn child will have this role. When Jesus initiates his public career and the middle part of the biography begins, the reader also learns that Jesus is a *teacher*. The author repeatedly emphasizes teaching as Jesus' primary activity (4:23, 9:35, 11:1) and provides the reader with long teaching discourses. Jesus primarily instructs his apprentices in private settings, but also informs the people generally in public spaces. The first teaching discourse informs the reader that the teaching of Jesus is not of a common sort, but corresponds to a new law. The emphasis on his authority as teacher, the comparison with Moses, the usage of legal terms in the description of his teaching, and similarities with other lawgivers, show that Jesus is presented as a kind of lawgiver. This role is associated with both his role as king and teacher. Jesus further relates to the people as a *prophet*, which the activity of proclamation (4:23, 9:35, 11:1) and the comparisons between Jesus and John the Baptist imply. The prophetic ministry both encourages and confronts the people. In the latter part of the biography it becomes clear to the reader that Jesus is also the judge of humankind (25:31–46). The judgment activity relates to his role as king (25:34, 40). It will primarily be exercised in the future (cf. 16:27), but it is also seen in Jesus' dealings with the failed religious leaders (23:13–39).

In the beginning of the biography it is made clear to the reader that there is a *closeness between the leader and the people*. The comparison between Jesus and Moses in the second chapter indicates that Jesus, like Moses, will not rule from above but suffer with the oppressed people and identify with their needs. This feature is confirmed to the reader through the baptism of Jesus, where the leader identifies with the sinful people and stands with them (3:13–15). Later in the public career of Jesus, when he heals a marginalized person (8:2–4), calls a social outcast, and shares the fellowship with sinners (9:9–10, cf. 14:14–21, 15:32–38), he is again portrayed as a man of the people. But the most intimate and familiar relationship is between the master and his apprentices. He spends a lot of time with them, teaches them in private settings, and calls them his “brothers” (12:48–50). Though they abandon their master when he suffers and dies, Jesus shows his faithfulness to them

after his resurrection and continues to relate to them as his brothers (28:10). The fourth teaching discourse, with its emphasis on the responsibility of the leaders and the importance of the little ones, also highlights Jesus' care for his entire community. That Jesus presents himself as the "Master" (καθηγητής) of his followers (23:10) shows that he relates to them in a personal way. The close relationship between Jesus and his followers is furthermore seen in the risen leader's promise to be with them until the end of the age (28:20).

The first part of the public career of Jesus clarifies that he is a leader with *willing followers*. When he invites and calls individuals to come after him and to be apprenticed by him, they immediately respond positively and follow him (4:18–22, 9:9). Repeatedly the reader is informed that large crowds follow him as a result of his ministry (4:23, 8:1). In the second part of his career, it becomes clear that not all in Israel respond positively to him and accept his leadership (11:20–24). The opposition against Jesus is, however, primarily related to the religious leadership and the people of Jerusalem. Large crowds continue to follow Jesus throughout his career (12:15, 14:13, 19:2, 20:29) and the reader thus notices that Jesus is a popular leader.

When Jesus recruits his apprentices, he presents himself as a *role model* to imitate. He exhorts individuals to "come after" (4:19) him and to "follow" him (9:9). That Jesus is presented as a model is confirmed by his role as master and teacher and the narrative structure of the first part of his career. In chapters 8–9 examples of Jesus' healing ministry are given and thereafter the apprentices are sent out in chapter 10 to do the very same thing that Jesus has done. Through the general invitation to the burdened people to accept his authority and leadership, Jesus also presents himself as a model for the people when he says "learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart" (11:29). Later in the story, when his death is approaching, Jesus again presents himself as a role model for his followers, with regard to both suffering (16:24) and servanthood (20:26–28). Jesus is thus a leader who leads by example.

In the latter part of the biography the reader is shown, in different ways, that *serving the people* is a main feature of the leadership of Jesus. When Jesus teaches his disciples about leadership he criticizes the oppressive leadership of the gentiles and underlines that the leader shall not use his position in order to see to his own interests. He points out that "whoever wants to be great among you shall be a servant of the others and whoever wants to be first among you shall be a slave for the others" (20:26–27). Jesus thus teaches his disciples, the future leaders, to serve other people and willingly do even the simplest tasks in their care for the people. In the "leadership discourse," the other passage in Matthew where Jesus explicitly teaches leadership, 23:1–12, servanthood is again underlined. Here the exhortation of the great one to be a servant is repeated (23:11) and contrasted to exalting oneself (23:12). Jesus also presents himself as a model of servant leadership when he clarifies that he puts aside selfish interests and gives his life for the benefit of others

(20:28). The deeds of Jesus confirm this picture to the reader. It is seen in the description of his comprehensive healing ministry and, especially, in the passion narrative when Jesus, God's Servant (12:18), suffers and dies for the sake of the people.

From the beginning to the end of the biography, Jesus is presented as a leader who *benefits the people*. Already in the beginning of the story the reader is informed that Jesus will benefit the people in important ways since he is presented as one who "will save his people" (1:21). The contrast between Jesus and king Herod and the usage of the term *ποιμαίνειν* in chapter two indicates that Jesus will be a merciful leader who restores the people and cares for them. The following description of his public career confirms to the reader that this is the case. The healing ministry, one of Jesus' main activities (4:23, 9:35), and the feeding miracles (14:15–21, 15:32–38) show that Jesus cares for the bodily needs of the people. He presents himself as a benevolent ruler who can provide rest and peace for the souls of the people (11:28–30). The fourth teaching discourse portrays him, through his teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation, as a leader who creates unity and harmony in the community. In the last part of the biography it becomes clear to the reader that Jesus benefits the people in a significant way through his death. He does not die as a common martyr but in order to make atonement, provide forgiveness for sins (26:28, cf. 1:21, 20:28), and inaugurate a new age. When Jesus, at the end of the story, sends out his disciples to teach and instruct the nations, the reader notes their development in the story and the empowering influence of their leader. Jesus is thus presented as a leader who benefits the people spiritually and physically, provides unity and harmony in the community, and empowers his apprentices.

7.3.2 Comparison with other portraits

The main features of the relationship between Jesus and the people in Matthew's portrait has thus been summarized. Do then the features of Jesus' leadership conform to the presentation of the leaders in the other biographies, or do they differ in significant ways?

In chapter two it was concluded that the portraits of good leaders show a great variety with regard to the *leadership roles* of the protagonist. The only common role is kingship. This role is also greatly emphasized in the portrait of Jesus. Matthew furthermore underlines Jesus' role as teacher. This is not a unique feature, since both Moses and Numa are presented as teachers, as well as lawgivers. Philo tells his reader that "it was a custom ... to engage in the study of wisdom, whilst the leader instructed (*ὀφηγουμένον*) and taught (*διδάσκοντος*) all things which should be done and said and the people developed their conduct and improved both character and life" (2.215). Numa teaches especially the priests (12.1, 14.1), but is also presented as the educator of the whole people (5.5, 15.1). The teaching role of Jesus thus has

parallels in two of the portraits. There is a difference, since the role is more underlined in Matthew. But the combination of the leader's role as king and teacher in Matthew has much in common with these two portraits, since both Moses (2.2) and Numa (20.6–7) are presented as philosopher-kings, according to the ideal of Plato. Wisdom is, furthermore, underlined as a main trait of Jesus. But it should be noted that “philosophy” is not mentioned in Matthew. The role of the prophet is not common in the other biographies, but it is present in the portrayal of Moses. The portrait of Jesus is, consequently, similar to the other portraits in both its description of Jesus as king and its idiosyncratic combination of leadership roles. Seen from the perspective of the roles of the leader, the portrait of Jesus is most similar to the portraits of Moses and Numa.

The presentation of Jesus as a leader with a *close relationship to the people* and to his followers has several similarities with the two other portraits. The portrayal of Evagoras as a leader with knowledge of his citizens (42), and of Agesilaus as accessible to the people (9.1–2) and familiar with their conditions (11.4), correspond to the presentation of Jesus as a man of the people. Family language is also used in *Agesilaus* to describe the relationship between the leader and the people, since Agesilaus (1.38, 7.3) is presented as “father” of the people. Xenophon (1.17–19) furthermore describes the relationship between the leader and his followers as friendship. Jesus' close relationship with his apprentices, however, has no direct parallel in the other portraits, but Agesilaus is presented with an inner circle of “intimates” (11.13) or “comrades” (e.g. 6.4). The identification of Jesus with the people is also a particularity.

The notion of *willing followers* of the leader is seen in all the portraits. Isocrates states that many reputable men left their countries and moved to Cyprus in order to enjoy the benefits of the leadership of Evagoras (51). Xenophon underlines that the people willingly followed and obeyed Agesilaus (1.38, 6.4). Moses, likewise, “received the authority willingly from his subjects (παρ' ἐκόντων ἔλαβε τὴν ἀρχήν)” (1.163). Plutarch shows that Numa did not have to use force to have the people live virtuously. On the contrary, they willingly adjusted their ways and followed the good example of Numa (20.8). The popularity of the leader among the people is also underlined in the other portraits. This can be seen in the life of Agesilaus (11.13), Moses (1.328), and Numa (22.1). It should be noted, however, that the opposition and rejection of the leader is emphasized more in Matthew's story than the other biographies. But since the rejection is primarily related to the religious leaders and Jerusalem and the popularity of Jesus among the people is underlined throughout his life, there is no significant difference. All the five portraits give notions about willing followers to the leader. This feature is foundational in the portrait of a good leader, since leadership implies a possibility of free choice among the followers.⁶

⁶ See pp. 57–58.

The portrayal of Jesus as a *role model* for his followers corresponds to most of the other portraits. Xenophon implicitly presents Agesilaus as a leader who is an example to his followers (5.3, 7.2, 10.2). Philo tells his reader that if the leader is a bad example, the people will behave badly, but if the leader is a good example, the people will also behave in a good way (1.160–61). Then he points out that Moses was “a living law (νόμος ἐμψυχος)” (1.162), which implies that he incarnated the law in his life, and thus was a perfect model for his people. Plutarch explains that the modeling of a virtuous life is the greatest task of the leader. When the people “see virtue in the clear model (εὐδὴλῳ παραδείγματι) and the manifested lifestyle of the ruler” they also will begin to live virtuously. He then points out that “Numa understood this more than all others” (20.8, cf. *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.8). Since Jesus is presented as a model for the people, the portrait in Matthew thus corresponds to most of the other portraits. Though the term is not used in Matthew, the portrayal of Jesus as king, lawgiver, and model for the people, moreover, shows many parallels with Philo’s portrayal of Moses as a “a living law” (1.162). The people in Matthew’s story is exhorted to copy the life and spirit of Jesus and not only to obey his commandments. A difference between Jesus and the other leaders, however, is to be noted since the presentation of Jesus as the model in ministry for a group of apprentices has no parallel in the other portraits.

The main difference between the portrait of Jesus and the other portraits relates to the importance of *serving the people* in Matthew. In the other biographies, some notions of the leader’s service of the people are given. Isocrates states that Evagoras was “for the people (δημοτικός) in his service to the people (τῇ τοῦ πλήθους θεραπείᾳ)” (46). Likewise, Xenophon mentions Agesilaus’ “readiness to serve (θεραπευτικόν) his friends, even if not called” (8.1). Here, however, the noun *θεραπεία* and the adjective *θεραπευτικός* are used, which are related to service and care in a general sense.⁷ It is thus merely a way to show that the leader benefits the people.⁸ Jesus’ saying that the leader should be a “διακονός (servant)” and a “δοῦλος

⁷ See LSJ, “θεραπεία.”

⁸ Cf. Xenophon, *Ages.* 7.1. Seeley, “Rulership and Service,” 235–36, proposes that the idea that the ruler should serve the people was common in Hellenistic political philosophy (cf. Talbert, *Matthew*, 241). According to Seeley, “the Greek and Hellenistic world had a long tradition of painting the ruler in colors of servitude” (p. 238). Seeley reaches this conclusion since he has a wide definition of “service”, which includes the idea that the ruler should benefit his people. In the examples he gives, occurrences which use the word groups *διακονεῖν* and *δουλεύειν* are rare. The one exception is Plato, *Laws*, 6.762E, who states that “the one who has not served (ὁ μὴ δουλεύσας) will not be a master (δεσπότης) worthy of praise, and one should adorn oneself more with serving (δουλεῦσαι) well than ruling (ἄρξαι) well.” Plato explains that, firstly, one should serve the laws, which actually is service to the gods, and, secondly, the young should serve older people and those who lived honorably. Though service is underlined, it is not suggested that the leader actually should serve the people in a general way. Wischmeyer, “Herrschen als Dienen,” 34–38, likewise proposes that the idea of the ruler as servant is also present in texts from early Judaism. But she also uses a wide definition of “service” and the close parallels are few. One parallel she picks up, where *διακονεῖν* is used, is *T. Job* 15, which portrays Job as the king of Egypt.

(slave)” (20:26), is different since it refers to a readiness to do things which are associated with slaves and servants. These terms are never used in the description of the good leader in the other portraits.⁹ The example of Jesus, moreover, relates serving to a readiness to give one’s life for the people, since he says that he has come “to serve (διακονῆσαι) and to give his life” (20:28). So even if other portraits, to some extent, present the leader as a “servant of the people,” the emphasis of the importance of unselfish humble service and its implications for the leader in Matthew’s portrait makes it unique.

The portrayal of Jesus as one who *benefits the people*, cares for their needs, and brings blessings through his leadership, is similar to the other portraits. There is sometimes a striking difference between Jesus and the other leaders concerning how they benefit the people. While Evagoras gives security to the people and develops trading and communications (47–48), and Agesilaus gives prosperity (1.37), and material goods (11.8), Jesus benefits his people with healing of the body, rest for the soul, and forgiveness of sins. But there are also similarities between the other leaders and Jesus. Moses provides delicate food to the people in the desert through the intervention of God (1.209).¹⁰ Agesilaus (1.37), Moses (1.221, 2.257), and Numa (17.3, 20.8) are portrayed as leaders who give unity and harmony to the people. The leadership of Evagoras (49) and Numa (20.8) results in a virtuous lifestyle of the people. Isocrates’ description of Evagoras’ great influence on the people with transformative consequences when he points out that “of the barbarian citizens he made Hellenes, of the cowards he made warriors, of the inglorious he made famous men” (66–67), is an interesting parallel to the description of the development of the disciples of Jesus in Matthew’s story. Plutarch also tells his reader that Numa spend a lot of time teaching the priests (14.1, cf. 12.1). But Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ intentional focus on a small group of disciples throughout his career, whom he empowers, has no parallel in the other biographies. Even if Jesus benefits his people differently than the other leaders in some ways, which partly can be explained by different leadership roles, the way he helps, cares, and provides for his followers clearly shows the reader that Jesus, like the other leaders, is a leader with real concerns for the welfare of the people.

The comparison of the portrait of Jesus with other portraits of good leaders shows that Matthew’s portrayal in many ways conforms to leadership ideals in ancient biographies: Jesus is a leader with justice, piety, self-control, benevolence, wisdom, integrity, and courage. He has different leadership roles, a close relationship to the people, is surrounded by willing followers, leads by example as a role model, and benefits the people in diverse ways. At the same time, some idiosyncratic features are noted: Jesus is a peaceful and gentle leader, which is not common, and his humility clearly makes him distinctive. The importance of unselfish service of the

⁹ Cf. Philo, *Prob.* 36, who states that “no one is willingly a slave (δοῦλος γὰρ ἐκὼν οὐδεὶς).”

¹⁰ Cf. Plutarch, *Num.* 15.2.

people in similarity with servants and slaves also distinguishes Jesus from the other leaders.

7.4 Jesus as a model for leaders?

When the portrait of Jesus as leader has been clarified, one important question remains: Is Jesus presented as a model to be imitated by other leaders? The other portraits are written with a purpose to provide coming leaders with a good model, as seen in chapter two. Does the text indicate that Jesus is described as a role model for the leaders in the Christian community or does the uniqueness of Jesus' identity and mission rule out imitation? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to deviate slightly from the text-centered approach in this study and to consider Matthew in light of the ancient culture and other ancient texts. When studying the purposes of the Gospel of Matthew, one enters an uncertain landscape where no definitive answers can be given. Nevertheless, by paying attention to common purposes of the biographical genre and the distinctiveness of Matthew's story regarding imitation, it is possible to draw some probable conclusions in these matters.

Imitation and ancient biography

"Ancient culture was a culture of imitation," Finn Damgaard points out.¹¹ The good examples in the past were to serve the present and the future.¹² In this culture, biographies were important tools in order to facilitate imitation of good examples. In the introduction to his biography of Demonax, Lucian explains that the reason for his presentation of the life of Demonax is that his memory shall be conserved and that good young men should have a pattern from their own days to copy (1–2). Lucian is not the only writer who underlines the purpose of imitation in his biography.¹³ Ancient biographies were often written on two levels, both as a

¹¹ Damgaard, *Recasting Moses*, 1.

¹² See e.g. William S. Kurz, "Narrative Models for Imitation in Luke-Acts," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 171–89 (176–85). Kurz points out: "Most scholars agree that Greco-Roman education and rhetoric, as well as works (including narratives) that were written under their influence, emphasize models, paradigms, or exempla for imitation by pupils or readers" (p. 171). Cf. Matthew B. Roller, "Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloella," *CP* 99 (2004): 1–56 (6): "Exemplary discourse ... encompasses all of Roman society, from the loftiest aristocrats to the humblest peasants, laborers, and slaves." See further Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 17–46.

¹³ See, besides the presentation of the other biographical portraits in chapter two, e.g. Philo, *Abr.* 1.3–5; Plutarch, *Aem.* 1, *Per.* 1.4. Cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.3.

historical account of an individual and as a model for the present day.¹⁴ Frickenschmidt points out that in this genre, the author/biographer, the protagonist in the story, and the reader are united together in the striving for a true life.¹⁵

It should be noted that an ancient biography often served several purposes and was not always written primarily for the purpose of imitation. In his study of ancient biographies, Burridge points out that the biographer often has “a number of different purposes, some applying to various members of his envisaged audience, while others reflect his purely literary concerns.”¹⁶ He notes encomiastic, exemplary, informative, entertaining, preserving, didactic, and apologetic and polemic purposes.¹⁷ The didactic purpose of the biographies was, nonetheless, a central feature.¹⁸ This is seen in the focus on moral qualities in this kind of literature.¹⁹ Burridge’s first conclusion about the genre of Graeco-Roman biography is that “*biography is a type of writing which occurs naturally among groups of people who have formed around a certain charismatic teacher or leader, seeking to follow after him.*”²⁰

Imitation and the Gospel of Matthew

What can then be said about the purpose of imitation with regard to Matthew? The reader is not informed with an explicit statement about imitation, as in the case of Lucian’s *Demonax*. Such statements about an individual’s function as a paradigm were, however, generally rare in ancient biographical writings.²¹ But is the reader shown in other ways that Jesus is presented as a model to imitate?

¹⁴ Aune, “The Gospels as Hellenistic Biography,” 6. Aune points out that “[t]he subjects of most biographies were therefore presented as models of virtue to be emulated by the thoughtful reader.” See further Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 211–16.

¹⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 217.

¹⁶ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 121.

¹⁷ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 145–48, 180–83. Cf. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, 94–98, who proposes that ancient biographies function in five different ways: To provide a model to imitate, to correct a false view of a teacher/ruler and to provide a model, to dishonor a teacher/ruler, to show where the true followers of a teacher can be found, and to validate/or provide the hermeneutical key for the teaching/legislation of a teacher/ruler. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 4, suggests that “among the various overlapping purposes for biographies, praising the subject, using his life as an example, and teaching ethics were common.”

¹⁸ See Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, 93.

¹⁹ See pp. 46–47. See also A. S. Osley, “Greek Biography before Plutarch,” *GR* 15 (1946): 7–20 (9), who points out that “[a]t all events, the *moral* strain in Greek biography, which may be observed at work in both Isocrates and Xenophon, is a constant characteristic which appears in its best form in Plutarch.” Italics his. According to Osley, “[l]ives are written for the purpose of giving examples of various aspects of human character and providing models of conduct” (p. 20). He thus describes biographies as “education by example” (p. 10).

²⁰ Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 76. Italics his.

²¹ Aune, “The Gospels as Hellenistic Biography,” 7.

Several scholars argue that the disciples are presented as models for the reader. Mark Sheridan, for example, refers to the disciples as “exemplary for all Christians.”²² Other scholars, however, point out that the disciples are not straightforwardly presented as models for the reader but only function as one part of the reader’s overall understanding of ideal discipleship. Terence Donaldson, who also speaks of the disciples as “models,” points out that the ideal is seen in the interaction between Jesus and the disciples and that the reader needs the guidance of the narrator.²³ Some scholars suggest that Peter, the leader among the twelve, is presented as a model for leaders in the Christian community. Hagner, who also regards the disciples as models, proposes that “Peter is a prototype of Christian leadership.”²⁴ Ritva Williams even describes Peter as “Matthew’s ideal leader.”²⁵

The blending of positive and negative portrayals of the disciples in the story makes it, however, unlikely that they should be regarded as models who the reader should imitate.²⁶ The disciples are, moreover, presented as apprentices and thus in a learning process in the story. It should also be noted that they are the apostles of Jesus, which implies that their roles do not completely correspond to the roles of other followers of Jesus.²⁷ Though the disciples help the reader to understand the teaching of Jesus, they are not models since they sometimes fail to practice the teaching. In contrast to the disciples, Jesus himself embodies its standards, and is thus to be recognized as the model.²⁸ Luz describes Matthew as an inclusive story that both informs and forms the reader and points out: “Part of the strength of Matthew’s story of Jesus lies in Jesus’ effectiveness as an example and a model.”²⁹

²² Sheridan, “Disciples and Discipleship,” 255. See also Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 19: “The disciples not only represent the companions of the earthly Jesus but also serve as models for the Matthean Christians.” Cf. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 95.

²³ Donaldson, “Guiding Readers,” 41–42. Cf. Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 133.

²⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, lxiii. Cf. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 170: “The church as a whole can identify with the group of disciples, while the individual and individual leader within the church can learn from Peter.” In *Following the Master*, 154, Wilkins also states: “He is a very human disciple whom Matthew has presented as a model for all disciples to follow” (see also pp. 185–86).

²⁵ Williams, *Stewards, Prophets, Keepers*, 118.

²⁶ Cf. Caragounis, *Peter and the Rock*, 100, who suggests that “Matthew’s presentation of Peter is more the example to avoid rather than the ideal to follow.”

²⁷ Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:62–63, and Wilkins, *Matthew*, 386: “As disciples the Twelve are examples of what Jesus accomplishes in all believers; as apostles the Twelve are set aside as the leaders within the new movement.”

²⁸ Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 53. For Jesus as a model in Matthew, see also e.g. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 177–84; Gerhardsson, *The Ethos of the Bible*, 54–60; Matera, *Passion Narratives*, 142–48; Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 147–55. Cf. Leander E. Kech, “Ethics in the Gospel According to Matthew,” *IREv* 41 (1984): 39–56 (44–47).

²⁹ Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 375–76. He points out that Matthew is “concerned with Jesus in history (‘horizontal christology’) and the model character of Jesus’ life” (p. 94). Cf. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 462.

The biographical genre of Matthew makes this conclusion plausible.³⁰ This does not imply that the disciples are not characters that the reader can identify with.³¹ They can be regarded as realistic examples while Jesus is presented as the ideal, and thus the model.³²

Some scholars speak about both Jesus and the disciples as models and suggest that the disciples function as models of the imitation of Jesus in a similar way as Paul presents himself in 1 Cor 11:1: “Be imitators (μιμηταί) of me as I am of Christ.”³³ Derek Tidball even proposes that the author of Matthew is a model for Christian teachers and their ministry.³⁴ The biographical genre of Matthew, however, makes these suggestions implausible. There is a difference between Paul’s exhortation, as author of a letter, to imitate Christ, and a biography. In the letter to the Corinthians, Christ is to be imitated indirectly, through the example of Paul. In the biography, Jesus is presented directly as the only model by the author, as Frickenschmidt explains:

Diese besondere Rolle des Autors einer Biographie prägt auch die Eigenart der Evangelien und trägt neben anderen Faktoren zum Zurücktreten des Autors als Mitter-Autorität oder mittelbarem Vorbild bei: die eigentliche Lehrerrolle kann nur von der Hauptperson der Erzählung ausgeübt werden; Evangelist wie Vorbild und Lehrer im eigentlichen Sinn kann in den Evangelien also nur Jesus selbst sein.³⁵

³⁰ Surprisingly Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 223, who underlines the biographical genre of Matthew, also suggests that the disciples are “a good pattern to follow, because they are fallible human beings like us.” He makes clear, however, that “they are to be imitated only insofar as they themselves are imitating Jesus.”

³¹ Cf. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 107.

³² See Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 56: “Identification with Jesus will be idealistic, in that he represents the perfect model for what the implied reader would like to be ... The best possibility for realistic empathy in Matthew’s Gospel is offered by Jesus’ disciples.” Cf. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 169, who proposes that the author gives a realistic portrait (and not an idealistic one) of the disciples which provides the reader with both positive and negative examples. But, confusingly, he concludes that the author “portrays the disciples as they really were so that they can be an example of what his church *should* be.” Italics mine. In *Following the Master*, 175–76, he more clearly points out that Jesus is the “ideal hero” and the disciples “provide us an example of realistic people.”

³³ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 193; Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 223.

³⁴ Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 18–37. Tidball suggests that the model of ministry in Matthew is the scribe and that “Matthew himself exercises his ministry as a model of a wise scribe” (p. 33) in the context of a divided church. He further proposes that Matthew is written for teachers “in order to provide them with a model of how to pass on and apply the ministry of Jesus to the practical questions of the day” (p. 21). Tidball surprisingly does not mention Jesus as model for ministry here or in his presentation of Matthew in *Skilful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 56–64.

³⁵ Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 223.

Though Jesus is presented in a way that implies that the reader will never be able to imitate him completely and perfectly, he is nonetheless the model for the reader.³⁶ The presentation of a protagonist with a unique identity who at the same time is a model is not exceptional for Matthew. Philo presents Moses as a unique man who “was named god (θεός) and king of the whole nation” and who entered into an unseen reality where God is (1.158). But this close relationship to the divine did not prevent Philo to also explicitly present him as a model to imitate. Rather it makes him an appropriate model (1.158–59). When Quintilian, a contemporary of the author of Matthew, outlines several important qualities of the orator, he underlines the benefit of striving for the ideal, even if one not succeeds:

Such a person has perhaps never yet existed; but that is no reason for relaxing our efforts to attain the ideal. Many of the ancients indeed acted on this principle, and handed down precepts of wisdom, despite their belief that no ‘wise’ man had yet been found. Consummate eloquence is surely a real thing, and the nature of human abilities does not debar us from attaining it. But even if we fail, those who make an effort to get to the top will climb higher than those who from the start despair of emerging where they want to be, and stop right at the foot of the hill (*Inst.* 1. Proem 19–20 [Russell]).

The exemplary purpose of Matthew is confirmed by the self-presentation of Jesus in the story. As seen above, Jesus presents himself as a model for both his disciples (4:18–22, 9:9, 20:25–28), the future leaders, and for the people generally (11:28–30, 16:24). These statements invite the reader to regard Jesus’ actions as a pattern in a general way.³⁷ The example of Jesus is also seen in the overall relationship between Jesus and his followers, who are to embrace his way of life, throughout the story.³⁸ The conclusion that Jesus is presented as a model for the reader is thus based on both the content of Matthew, especially Jesus’ self-presentation, and the

³⁶ Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 258. Cf. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 70 n. 1: “Although Matthew’s Jesus is undeniable unique, there are nonetheless many ways in which his followers are encouraged to emulate him.”

³⁷ Cf. Kurz, “Narrative Models,” 176.

³⁸ Cf. Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul*, 76: “Though relatively little explicit reference is made to the imitation of Jesus, the motif is implicit throughout . . . The overall impression we get of Jesus in the Gospel, at least from one point of view, is that of a humble, compassionate, suffering servant, totally submissive and obedient to God’s will, even to the point of death; and this is precisely the kind of life to which disciples are called.” See further Bauer, *Structure of Matthew’s Gospel*, 57–63.

recognition of its biographical genre.³⁹ In agreement with widespread Christian tradition, Matthew presents Jesus as a model to be imitated.⁴⁰

A model of leadership?

Does the conclusion that Jesus is presented as a model then imply that the reader is to imitate the leadership of Jesus? Even if Jesus is not presented as a paradigm of virtue in an explicit way, that function was assumed by both author and reader.⁴¹ Talbert helpfully explains what kind of imitation was generally expected:

The imitation of noble examples as understood in ancient biography is not to be regarded as a blind and unthinking repetition of acts performed by some great man in the past. It meant learning from a great example the way to order one's life and then, without necessarily performing the same actions, to emulate what sort of man he was.⁴²

The invitation of Jesus in the story, where he exhorts the people to learn from his humility (11:29), confirms that his virtues and character are to be imitated. The

³⁹ For the implications of the biographical genre of Matthew for the presentation of Jesus as a model, see e.g. Shuler, "Philo's Moses and Matthew's Jesus," 102; Dormeyer, "Mt 1,1 als Überschrift," 1379–81; Carter, *Matthew*, 41; Witherington, *Matthew*, 12–13. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 148, suggests that biographies were often produced in times of social crisis, which created a need for examples to follow. This was also the case in early Christianity: "They accordingly needed new models. And Jesus himself, through the promulgation of the tradition about him, became the new model par excellence." Cf. Justin, *1 Apol.* 67.3–4, who writes that on the Sunday "*the memoirs* (τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα) of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time allows. Then, after the reader has stopped, the president gives a word of admonition and invitation to the *imitation* of the good things of this (ὁ προεστὼς διὰ λόγου τὴν νοουεσίαν καὶ πρόκλησιν τῆς τῶν καλῶν τούτων μιμήσεως)."

⁴⁰ For examples of the imitation of Jesus in Christian tradition, see e.g. Soon-Gu Kwon, *Christ as Example: The Imatio Christi Motive in Biblical and Christian Ethics*, AUU 21 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1998), and Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 147–55. The motif of *imitatio Christi* has been tuned down in some Christian traditions since Martin Luther's days, partly because he underlined that it is impossible to achieve with only human effort. Cf. Alister E. McGrath, "In What Way Can Jesus be a Moral Example for Christians," *JETS* 34 (1991): 289–98. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 148 n. 38, rightly points out that this objection is not fair in the case of Matthew, since Jesus is presented as "an ever-abiding, helpful presence." The motif of imitation has also been regarded as a reduction of Jesus to an ordinary human being. In Matthew, however, Jesus is simultaneously presented as a model and as Savior (cf. 1:21, 20:28, 26:28) and the Son with divine identity (cf. 11:27, 28:18–20). Cf. Webster, "Imitation of Christ," 114, who in his discussion of the theology of Paul concludes that "the acts of Christ are both that which accomplishes human salvation and that which elicits and gives a distinctive character to the Christian life."

⁴¹ Aune, *Literary Environment*, 62.

⁴² Talbert, "Gospel Genre," 56–57. Cf. Teresa Morgan, "Not the Whole Story? Moralizing Biography and *Imitatio Christi*," in *Fame and Infamy: Essays for Christopher Pelling on Characterization in Greek and Roman Biography and Historiography*, ed. Rhiannon Ash, Judith Mossman, and Frances B. Titchener (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 353–66 (354).

ethical content of Jesus' teaching, as seen in the Sermon on the Mount, also points in this direction.⁴³ Since the virtues of Jesus are an essential aspect of the portrayal of him as leader, the imitation of them relates to leadership. The fundamental significance of good character for leadership is seen in that all the other four biographies clarify that the leader is worthy his position because of his virtues.⁴⁴

Teresa Morgan points out that she avoids "the language of virtue for the disciples' imitation of Jesus because it is rare in the NT and the language of practicing virtue has overtones of attentiveness to self and self-control which sit oddly with the *mentalité* of New Testament writers."⁴⁵ Though there may be a difference in terminology and frequency, the present study, however, has shown the emphasis on moral character traits, including self-control, in Matthew that clearly corresponds to common virtues. It is thus appropriate to speak about imitation of the "virtues" of Jesus, in agreement with some paths of early Christian tradition.⁴⁶

The imitation of Jesus should not, however, be restricted to his character, even if it is the central aspect. Since Jesus presents himself as a model for his apprentices (4:18–22, 9:9), the future leaders, and trains and equips them throughout the story, it is appropriate to conclude that his ministry is to be imitated by Christian leaders.⁴⁷ Turner correctly points out that "Matthew's purpose goes beyond providing a narrative of the past ... Jesus's ministry is a model for our own ministries."⁴⁸

But are there then no limitations in the imitation of Jesus as leader? Is the Christian leader to emulate all the ministry of Jesus? A comparison between the leadership roles of Jesus and of his apostles gives clarification in this matter. Jesus acts in the role of king, teacher, and prophet. In the mission discourse, he sends out

⁴³ Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul*, 77, points out that that the Sermon on the Mount shows that "the *imitatio Christi* is not to be understood in any wooden, literalistic sense ... but a thoroughgoing assimilation of Jesus' inner attitude and character."

⁴⁴ See chapter two. Cf. Jacobs, *Plutarch's Pragmatic Biographies*, 92, who concludes after her survey of ancient pragmatic literature for statesmen that "moral character was an essential foundation of political or military effectiveness in every area in which advice was being offered, whether in oratory, euergetism, city administration, diplomacy or generalship." Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 157, likewise points out that "the leader's character or lifestyle" is an "essential tool in the Pauline conception."

⁴⁵ Morgan, "Not the Whole Story?," 357 n. 16.

⁴⁶ See e.g. Justin, *2 Apol.* 2.13, who refers to the teaching of Christ as "the divine school of virtue (τὸ διδασκαλεῖον τῆς θείας ἀρετῆς)," and Origen, *Princ.* 4.4.4 who states that "Christ is put forward as an example to all believers, because just as he always, even *before he knew evil* at all, *chose the good and loved righteousness and hated iniquity*, and therefore *God anointed him with the oil of gladness*, so also each one ought, after a lapse or transgression, to cleanse himself from the blemishes by the example put forward, and, having him as the guide of the journey proceed along the arduous path of virtue, that so, perchance by this means, as far as is possible we may, by the imitation of him, *be made partakers of divine nature*, as it is written that, *He who says that he believes in Christ ought himself to walk just as he walked* [Behr]." Italics by the translator.

⁴⁷ Cf. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 485.

⁴⁸ Turner, *Matthew*, 137. See also Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels*, 105. Cf. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 139; Morgan, "Not the Whole Story?," 357.

the apostles to act as prophets (10:7, 27, 41; cf. 23:34). It thus seems appropriate to conclude that the Christian leader is guided to imitate the prophetic ministry of Jesus and speak truthfully to comfort and confront.⁴⁹ When Jesus sends out his apostles for the second time he also commissions them to be teachers (28:19–20, cf. 13:52, 23:34). The teaching ministry of Jesus, which includes both informing and instructing, can thus also be regarded as a model for the Christian leader.⁵⁰ It should be noted, however, that Jesus’ teaching has the character of a law and his disciples do not teach with the same authority. While the story of Matthew presents the apostles as prophets and teachers, it does not portray them as kings.⁵¹ Jesus is presented as the King, the Messiah, and this role is reserved for him. Jesus’ authority is exceptional. This implies that the roles of the lawgiver and the judge, which are connected with his role as king, are unique to him. The leader in the Christian community is thus not to imitate Jesus’ ministry in these roles. There are thus confrontational aspects in the ministry of Jesus that the Christian leader shall not imitate.⁵²

That Jesus is presented as a model does not imply that everything in his life and ministry should be imitated. But Matthew’s biographical story highlights several traits of Jesus’ character and some aspects of his ministry which the Christian leader ought to emulate. In addition to this, Jesus also teaches his under-shepherds to relate to the community in a way that corresponds to the way he relates to the people: They are to care for the individual and seek to restore the lost one (18:10–15), serve the people, and not to use their positions for their own benefits (20:25–28). Their mission to disciple the nations also implies that they are role models (28:19–20). The correspondence between the portrayal of Jesus and his teaching to the future leaders thus implies that Jesus is presented as a model for leaders. Matthew therefore resembles a “pragmatic biography,” which both reveals the good character of the

⁴⁹ Cf. Green, *Message of Matthew*, 233: “Controversy for the truth is an aspect of Christian leadership which is widely neglected today, since tolerance seems to be almost the only virtue. But Christ was a controversialist, and so should his disciples be as need arises, especially when they are in positions of leadership and truth is dragged in the dirt.”

⁵⁰ Cf. Richard A. BurrIDGE, *Four Ministries, One Jesus: Exploring Your Vocation with the Four Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2017), 17–23.

⁵¹ The statement in 19:28 implies that the Twelve are going to operate in the role of a king/judge, but first when Jesus returns in glory. In this age they are not to act like kings/judges (cf. 28:19–20).

⁵² See Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul*, 77: “There are, of course, limits to the principle of imitation; for as κύριος, Jesus bears an authority that disciple does not, and this authority may give him the prerogative to manifest certain kinds of attitudes and behaviour that the disciple may not (Compare his denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in 23.17, 33 with the character demanded of the disciple in 5.22, 39, 44 ...).” Cf. Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 56, and Reid, “Violent Endings in Matthew’s Parables,” 252–53. For a different view, see Wiggin, “Leadership Lessons,” 285–87, who proposes that Jesus’ handling of conflicts should be followed by Christians today, without reservations or qualifications.

leader and provides leadership lessons for the reader.⁵³ Cabrido rightly concludes that Jesus is presented as a model for leaders in different ways in Matthew:

the portrait of Jesus as Shepherd in the First Gospel stands in stark contrast to the root of the problems of many peoples and countless groups – bad leadership. Instead Jesus is the preeminent example of his own teaching regarding the service of authority and the readiness for sacrifice ... He does not seek his own comfort ... but is solely dedicated to the common good ... He himself trains under-shepherds who would follow after him ... and empowers them ... to continue his work long after his own death.⁵⁴

A book for leaders?

It has thus been concluded that Jesus is presented as a model for leaders in Matthew. Does this imply that the book is addressed only to leaders? How does the presentation of Jesus as leader relate to the purposes of the writing?

A number of Matthean scholars, who do not regard the text as a biography, have proposed that the gospel is written for church leaders. Krister Stendahl considers the writing as a product of a school for church leaders and teachers and suggests that it has “the nature of a handbook and a storehouse for teaching, preaching and church government.”⁵⁵ According to Minear, the author was a teacher who wrote for the teachers in the Christian communities.⁵⁶ He suggests that the gospel is “designed to serve as a manual for church leaders.”⁵⁷ From a literary perspective, Patte argues that the reader is successively trained for leadership and to be a scribe, and therefore all intended readers are potential leaders in the view of the author.⁵⁸ Andrew Lincoln likewise describes Matthew as a “story for teachers,” and suggests that the implied reader is encouraged at the end of the story to teach after the pattern of Jesus and

⁵³ See p. 114–15.

⁵⁴ Cabrido, *Portrayal of Jesus*, 478–79.

⁵⁵ Krister Stendahl, *The School of Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament*, ASNU 20 (Lund: Gleerup, 1954), 206 (see also p. 35). Cf. Bornkamm, “End-expectation and Church,” 38. Several scholars underline the pastoral and practical character of Matthew. See e.g. Mark A. Powell, “Matthew as Pastor: The Presence of God,” *WW* 18 (1998): 348–54; Daniel J. Harrington, “Matthew’s Gospel: Pastoral Problems and Possibilities,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 62–73 (73); Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 18–37.

⁵⁶ Minear, *Matthew*, 3. See also Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 21–22.

⁵⁷ Paul S. Minear, “False Prophecy and Hypocrisy in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Neues Testament und Kirche*, ed. Joachim Gnllka (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1974), 76–93 (79). See also Viviano, “Gospel according to Matthew,” 631, who suggests that “Matthew’s primary intent was to write a handbook for church leaders to assist them in preaching, teaching, worship, mission, and polemic.”

⁵⁸ Patte, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 58 n. 5. Cf. Hannan, *Sovereign Rule of God*, 228.

with his help.⁵⁹ More recently, Witherington likewise proposes that Matthew is addressed to leaders.⁶⁰

Though these conclusions partly relate to the proposal that Jesus is presented as a model for leaders, since they see a specific address to leaders, some of them narrow the scope too much when they see Matthew as directed to teachers. As seen above, the biography encourages imitation not only of Jesus' teaching role, but also his leadership in a general sense, as shepherd, and especially his character. Another problem with the suggestions above is that they do not recognize the different purposes of the writing, which relate to different target groups. France correctly underlines the inadequacy in searching for one single purpose in Matthew:

I must confess that the eager search for 'the purpose of' each New Testament book seems to me often to lose touch with reality. How many books are ever written with the just one purpose in mind? How many authors are able, or would wish, so to discipline their writing that the whole document is single-mindedly directed to one specific goal? How many books are written in a situation which allows one to predict that they will fall only into the hands of a clearly-defined target audience, so that no-one else need be considered by the author?⁶¹

The biographical genre brings clarification in this matter. Ancient biographies were written with several purposes in mind, as seen above. Perry Kea suggests that of the common purposes of biographies, exemplary, didactic, apologetic, and polemic purposes seem applicable to Matthew.⁶² In addition to these, Matthew also clearly has an evangelistic/propagandistic purpose.⁶³ The presentation of Jesus as a true leader is probably partly related to this evangelistic purpose, to get people to accept

⁵⁹ Lincoln, "Story for Teachers," 124.

⁶⁰ Witherington, *Matthew*, 17. For a contrary view, see e.g. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 112.

⁶¹ France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 120. Cf. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 380.

⁶² Kea, "Writing a *bios*," 586. Cf. Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, 109, 134–35. He proposes that Matthew is written to correct a false view of the protagonist and to present a true model to imitate, and at the same time to validate or provide the hermeneutical key for the teaching/legislation of the teacher/ruler. In *Matthew*, 6, Talbert suggests that Matthew is an encomiastic biography, written with the purpose of both praising and defending its hero.

⁶³ See McKnight, "Matthew as 'Gospel,'" 67–75, and Smith, *Why βίος?*, 170–82, who points out that ancient biographies often were written to spread the memory of the subject widely. This feature is also seen in Matthew (24:14, 28:19–20): "As with other biographies of contemporary subjects, the author (Matthew) is interested in seeing the literary memory of his subject (Jesus) remembered in time (*until the end of times*) and in space (*to the ends of the earth/to 'all nations'*). In the case of the gospels and especially here with Matthew, the literary expectation of wide dissemination is strengthened by a call from the subject himself to spread the 'good news'" (p. 191). Cf. Richard A. Burridge, "About People, by People, for People: Gospel Genre and Audiences," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 113–45 (130–37). Possibly, an encomiastic purpose should also be added. See p. 36.

the authority and leadership of Jesus and to follow him in the general sense.⁶⁴ It also plays a role in the argumentation that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the leader *par excellence*, which is a main feature of the biography.⁶⁵ The presentation of Jesus as a model for leaders further indicates that one of the purposes of Matthew is to provide instruction for leaders. But this does not imply that Matthew is addressed only to leaders.⁶⁶

A comparison with Isocrates' *Evagoras* is helpful. When Isocrates mentions the purpose of the writing in the beginning, he explains that the reason why he writes about the deeds of Evagoras is to "make the character (ἀρετήν) of Evagoras unforgettable for all people (παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις)" (4). In the end of the biography, the author however makes clear that he has written primarily for the instruction of Nicocles, the present king (73–81). For this reason the writing is regarded as a "mirror for princes." Isocrates also explicitly shows that while the emulation of Evagoras' wisdom is beneficial for all, it is mostly important for a ruler: "On the one hand it concerns all to greatly value prudence, but on the other hand it should mostly concern you who have authority over many and great matters" (80). The biography is thus addressed to leaders and to a wide audience at the same time. The other biographical portraits do not explicitly point out their purposes, but they also seem to be written both for leaders and a wider audience. In a similar way Matthew's biographical story aims both to instruct leaders and to inform and transform a wider audience.

The common purposes of ancient biographies and the content of the story of Matthew, with its self-presentation of Jesus as one to imitate, imply that Jesus is presented as a model. The imitation concerns primarily the character of Jesus, but also includes some parts of his ministry and features of his relationship to the people and thus relates to leadership. That Jesus is presented as a model for leaders does not imply that the biography is written only for leaders. Like other ancient biographies it has several purposes and functions, and it seems to be written both to instruct leaders and to benefit a larger audience.

7.5 Implications for further research

This study has tried to clarify, by the use of a biographical-narrative method, Matthew's biographical portrait of Jesus as leader, and has shown that Jesus is emphatically presented as a true *leader* in this gospel. In contrast to the untrue,

⁶⁴ Cf. Hedrick, "Jesus as Shepherd," 297.

⁶⁵ See e.g. Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 167, and Choi, *Messianic Kingship of Jesus*, 53, who proposes that "behind the multifaceted character of the Gospel lies the prime concern of the evangelist: Namely, the conviction of Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah."

⁶⁶ Cf. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 111–13.

hypocritical leaders in the story, Jesus is portrayed as the *true* Leader. The truthfulness and integrity of Jesus is one of his main traits, which makes him an appropriate leader for Israel and the nations and a good model to imitate. With its biographical portrayal of Jesus as a good leader to imitate, Matthew clearly resembles other ancient biographies that give portraits of good leaders. What are then the implications of this study for further research? The present study concerns the overall presentation of Jesus as leader. The conclusions reached give reasons to even more thoroughly examine the different character traits of Jesus, the main features of his leadership, and the process of imitation in the Gospel of Matthew.⁶⁷ More studies of leadership ideals in the ancient world generally can also contribute to the understanding of the portrayal of Jesus in Matthew. However, three general implications for further research should primarily be noted.

The present study shows the appropriateness of research concerning questions that relate to “moral Christology” in the Gospel of Matthew. It clarifies that Matthew does not resemble other ancient biographies only in a superficial way. On the contrary, the text gives a rich portrayal of the character of Jesus, and thus conforms to a main feature of ancient biographical writing. In this way it clearly communicates to the Greco-Roman world. Matthew is not only concerned with *who* Jesus is, his identity and authority, but also *how* he is, his traits and character. Even if the four canonical gospels have their peculiarities, also regarding their relationship to the biographical genre, the present study shows that the examination of the *character* of Jesus should be a significant path in Gospel studies.

It has also been shown throughout the present study that a biographical-narrative approach is a fruitful method with which to clarify the character of Jesus. Character studies in the gospels need to be firmly grounded in the ways and conventions of ancient biographical writing, with its focus on the protagonist. At the same time, a lot of the insights gained from narrative criticism are relevant in the examination of biographical narratives and should thus not be neglected. The usage of a biographical-narrative approach, which both pays attention to genre conventions and makes use of elements of narrative criticism that are compatible with these conventions, is thus helpful. The present study shows that both common and idiosyncratic traits/virtues should be expected in character studies of ancient biographies.

The present study, finally, raises the question of the influence of Matthew on later Christian views of leadership. In his recent study on Christ-oriented leadership

⁶⁷ Studies on Jesus as leader and Christian leadership sometimes highlight only a few aspects, such as servant leadership. The present study shows that the portrayal of Jesus as leader in Matthew is multifaceted and relates to several qualities. This gives reasons to not reduce “Christian leadership ideals” or “Jesus’ leadership” to some few features, but approach the subject broadly. Cf. Clarke, *Pauline Theology of Church Leadership*, 103, who points out that “the way in which servant leadership one-sidedly dominates so many pastoral and management books is perhaps unwarranted in light of the extent of its treatment in both the Pauline and dominical texts.”

approaches in the Roman world, James Petitfils underlines the influence of Paul for the leadership ideals in 1 Clement.⁶⁸ One wonders, however, which role Matthew played for the development of leadership ideals in the early church. Though a question like this is hard to answer, the conclusions in this study indicate that Matthew in fact played a significant role in early Christianity in shaping ideals for its leaders. In any case, the present study implies that Matthew, with its rich portrait of a true leader, is an important field in the examination of leadership in the New Testament and in early Christianity.

⁶⁸ Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 196–98.

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Jesus the True Leader

This study focuses on the presentation of Jesus as a leader in the Gospel of Matthew. It underlines the text's genre as an ancient biography and shows that the gospel portrays Jesus in a way that resembles other Greek biographical portraits of good leaders. Through a biographical-narrative reading, the theme of leadership throughout the story is analyzed, and the moral character of the leader and his relationship to the people is clarified. In stark contrast to the contemporary failed leadership, the Gospel of Matthew paints a portrait of Jesus as a true leader. The portrait conforms to leadership ideals in ancient biographies in many ways, but significant idiosyncratic features are also recognized.