

A QUESTION OF DISCIPLESHIP – REMARKS ON MATTHEW 8:18-23

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SUMMARY

This paper analyses Matthew 8:18-23 using a narratological approach. Focusing on a number of narrative “gaps” in the narrative and the resulting creation of narrative suspense, the paper considers the effect of this suspense on the reader. It is argued that Matthew 8:18-23 does not so much present two pictures of “good” and “bad” discipleship, but rather invites the reader to ponder the question of discipleship in the sense of following Jesus in a radical way.

SOMMAIRE

Cet article analyse Matthieu 8,18-23 en utilisant une approche narratologique. En mettant l’accent sur un certain nombre d’ellipses narratives (“gaps”) dans le récit et sur la création de suspense narratif qui en découle, l’article étudie l’effet de ce suspense sur le lecteur. Il est montré que Matthieu 8,18-23 ne présente pas deux images du «bon» et du «mauvais» disciple, mais invite plutôt le lecteur à réfléchir à la question du disciple dans le sens de la suite de Jésus d’une manière radicale.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Matt. 8:18-23 (on the delineation of the pericope, see below), a pericope that is concerned with discipleship is often treated in terms of its presentation of positive and negative examples, or, even more typically: as containing two examples of deficient discipleship that are corrected by Jesus. Thus, the pericope is seen to be providing teaching on the nature of discipleship, for which commentators use formulations such as “the two scenes impress upon the reader two of the cardinal tenets of discipleship.”¹ While acknowledging the exemplary character of both the scribe and the disciple of Jesus that play a role in this pericope, this brief contribution to the exegesis of the Gospel of Matthew focuses on aspects of Matthew’s literary technique that occur in this pericope and intends to draw attention to narrative aspects of the pericope 8:18-23 that have been neglected, or at least not addressed systematically in recent scholarship. Specifically, it will be shown how the pericope does not so much answer the question of “good” and “bad” discipleship and, in a direct way, teaches this to the audience, *c.q.*, Matthean community, by means of the presentation of two examples,² but rather creates narrative suspense that invites, or even compels reflection on the part of the reader, who may be assumed to self-identify as a disciple – what is said in the narrative about discipleship is transparent for the experiences and life world of the Matthean community –³ as to who is a disciple and who functions as a disciple. All of this further develops the topic of discipleship that, as such, is central to (this part of) Matthew.

Thus, the present paper uses a synchronic approach, albeit one that is informed by information gleaned from the study of Matthew’s redaction of his sources, more specifically a narratological approach with special attention for the creation of suspense; questions of historicity and tradition historical questions are not addressed independently. Throughout the

¹ Jack Dean KINGSBURY, ‘On Following Jesus: The “Eager” Scribe and the “Reluctant” Disciple (Matthew 8.18-22),’ *NTS* 34 (1988), 45-59, 45. For further examples, see below, section 3.

² See, e.g., Donald A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 218 (though noting that the discipleship of both men mentioned in this pericope is deficient and gives Jesus an occasion to teach what real discipleship means); also Craig S. KEENER, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 273-274, verges into the direction of seeing two examples of deficient discipleship here.

³ See, notably, the convincing argument of Ulrich LUZ, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), noted on 79.116.119.125.131.133.138.142.149; these remarks occur in a number of studies collected in this volume.

paper, narrative suspense is understood with Mieke Bal as “the effect of procedures by which the reader or character is made to ask questions.”⁴ In Matt. 8:18-23, such suspense is largely caused by *Leerstellen* in the narrative, i.e., narratological gaps (“narratologische Leerstellen”), as Mayordomo calls them,⁵ that invite, or even compel the reader to reflect on the text based on one’s own knowledge and thinking in order to make sense of it. This notion and usage of the literary or textual “gap” has been placed on the agenda of literary analysis in (post)modern times,⁶ but also existed in antiquity⁷ and can be shown to operate in Matthew elsewhere.⁸ Examples of the occurrence of such narratological gaps that create suspense and lead the reader to think beyond the text, include the following. First, the title “Christ” in Matt. 1:1 can be considered a *Leerstelle* that leads to suspense and questioning on the reader, given that Matthew does not immediately provide an explanation or definition of it. Frankemölle, for example, notes this, when he writes that upon having heard the title Christ “der Leser gespannt ist, wie Matthäus näherhin den Titel ‘Christus’ inhaltlich auffüllt.”⁹ Second, in the genealogy that follows immediately upon Matt. 1:1, the four women that are mentioned (Rahab, Tamar, Ruth, and, indirectly, Batsheba) also constitute narratological gaps,¹⁰ as Mayordomo notes: they are “insgesamt Leerstellen, die die narrative Phantasie und mnemische Kompetenz der Hörer/innen unterschiedlich aktivieren.”¹¹ Furthermore, Matthew 9:1-8 can be mentioned; here, Jesus notices the faith of the men that bring their friend on a stretcher in v. 2, even though it is not made clear how he sees it, this leads to asking the question how faith is apparent. Finally, in Matt. 26:68,

⁴ Mieke BAL, *Narratology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, ³2009), 163 - Bal adds “that are only answered later”, but this will not play a role in this paper; obviously, the answer to what discipleship amounts to is given on the later pages of the Gospel of Matthew, but that does not concern the present considerations about Matt. 8:18-23.

⁵ I.e.: “fehlende Kohärenz auf der Erzählebene, Handlungszusammenhänge, Zeitsprünge usw.” (Moises MAYORDOMO, *Den Anfang hören. Leserorientierte Evangelienexegese am Beispiel von Matthäus 1–2* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], 79).

⁶ See esp. the considerations offered by Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 27-131, esp. 75-77.

⁷ See, e.g., Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 126, and compare George A. KENNEDY, ‘The Evolution of a Theory of Artistic Prose,’ in: idem (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), 184-199, 195-196.

⁸ See, e.g., the examples offered by Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 126n111.214.250.255.279.324.

⁹ Hubert FRANKEMÖLLE, *Matthäus 1* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1994), 131, see also Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 214.

¹⁰ For readers ancient and modern; see also: Peter-Ben SMIT, ‘Something about Mary? Remarks about the Five Women in the Matthean Genealogy,’ *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010), 191-207.

¹¹ Mayordomo, *Anfang*, 250.

the reader is not told that Jesus has been blindfolded, but has to infer this her-/himself from the challenge to Jesus to identify those who beat him prophetically. This list of narratological gaps that create suspense and lead to a process of reflection on the part of the reader could easily be extended further, but these examples should have sufficed to demonstrate that this literary technique occurs in Matthew at large.

In order to draw out some aspects of Matt. 8:18-23 that create such suspense, first the question of the boundaries of the pericope will be addressed; second, the characterization and behavior of the γραμματεὺς that appears on the scene in v. 19 and the “other one of the disciples” (v. 21: ἕτερος δὲ τῶν μαθητῶν) and their narrative juxtaposition will be considered with attention to the use of “out group” and “in group” characters in a narrative; third, it will be shown how the presentation of these two characters serves to raise the questions both “who is a disciple” and “what does discipleship consist of”, with which the reader is left, as s/he is not told who enters the boat precisely in v. 23, even though Matthew makes explicit (compare the Markan version in 4:35 that does not use the word μαθητῆς explicitly here [but that has used it in v. 34]) that the *disciples* enter it.¹²

2. THE DEMARCATION OF THE PERICOPE

Matthew has inserted the dialogue between Jesus and the scribe and the subsequent dialogue between Jesus and the other disciple (probably Q material, or at least material known to both Matthew and Luke, cf. Luke 9:57-62) into part of the Markan narrative, specifically between what is now Mark 4:35 and 4:36.¹³ Luke has chosen a different option and integrated the material into his account of Jesus’ journey towards Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51.57). The result of Matthew’s editorial decision is that the two short dialogues have become sandwiched between Jesus’ initial expression of his intent to cross the lake (Matt. 8:18) and his actual entering of the boat, followed by his disciples, and their subsequent crossing of the lake (Matt. 8:23). Most commentaries, however,

¹² See, e.g., Michael J. WILKINS, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew’s Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 130; with a slight variant on Wilkins’ terminology, one may call Matthew’s specification here a “purposeful non-identification” of the disciples in v. 23.

¹³ See, e.g., W.D. DAVIES/Dale C. ALLISON, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew II* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 39-41, Joachim GNILKA, *Das Matthäusevangelium I* (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 310, Robert H. GUNDRY, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 151.

ignore this *inclusio* and distinguish one pericope consisting of Matt. 8:18-22 and another one starting with 8:23.¹⁴ While the transitional character of v. 23 is occasionally recognized,¹⁵ little is made of it in relation to the content of the preceding verses, i.e. of 18-22, in terms of its conclusion of that pericope.¹⁶ Still, the fact that that Matt. 8:18 and 8:23 constitute an *inclusio* around the newly inserted dialogue, the observation that the new “action” is only fully introduced in v. 24 with the remark *καὶ ἰδοὺ*,¹⁷ and the acknowledgement that the language of discipleship that is so prominent in vv. 18-22 (see, e.g., the words *διδάσκαλος* [v. 19], *ἀκολουθεῖω* [vv. 19, 22],¹⁸ and *μαθητής* [21]¹⁹) is continued in v. 23²⁰ through Matthean redaction that emphasizes Jesus’ leading and the disciples’ following,²¹ strongly suggest that Matt. 8:23 might not just introduce a new section of the Matthean narrative, but could very well be seen as concluding the previous section as well, or even primarily so. This impression is strengthened when it is taken into account that the word pair *ἀπέρχομαι* (vv. 18, 19, 21) and *ἀκολουθεῖω* (vv. 19, 22, 23) also frames the pericope and provides for even more internal semantic and thematic coherence.²²

¹⁴ A partial exception is Gnlika, *Matthäusevangelium*, 310.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 213, but without making much of it, and further Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 306.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 221, commenting on the actual following of Jesus by the disciples in v. 23: “This example of obedience stands in stark contrast to the hesitance of the disciple of v. 21, if not also the would-be disciple of v. 19.” The comment on v. 21 makes sense the one v. 19 hardly. – John L. NOLLAND, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2005), 370, does not relate v. 23 to the preceding pericope at all. The same applies to Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, 71, Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus II* (Zürich: TVZ, 1990), 27.

¹⁷ As noticed by, e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 221.

¹⁸ The “critical importance” of this notion in relation to discipleship in Matthew is rightly emphasized by Kingsbury, ‘Following,’ 46, based on his earlier study ‘The Verb *ἀκολουθεῖν* (“to follow”) as an Index of Matthew’s View of His Community,’ *JBL* 97 (1978), 56-73.

¹⁹ On the use of this noun in Matthew, see, esp., Wilkins, *Concept, passim*, noting on 165, in agreement with Bornkamm, that the entire pericope Matt. 8:18-23 should be considered a “disciple story.” See for this view also, e.g., Gundry, *Matthew*, 150.

²⁰ See also, e.g., Gnlika, *Matthäusevangelium*, 309.316, although not noting the Matthean redaction, only the continuation in theme.

²¹ Both the more independent action of Jesus and the words “following” and “disciples” are introduced by Matthew; compare Mark 4:36: *καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν ὄχλον παραλαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸν ὡς ἦν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, καὶ ἄλλα πλοῖα ἦν μετ’ αὐτοῦ* with Matthew 8:23: *Καὶ ἐμβάντι αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ πλοῖον ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ*. See on the Matthean redaction here, e.g., the brief remarks of Luz, *Matthäus*, 21-22.

²² Kingsbury, ‘Following,’ 45, misses out on the fact that the use of *ἀκολουθεῖω* in v. 23 in relation to the use of *ἀπέρχομαι* in v. 18 constitutes a further part of the *inclusio* and strongly indicates that v. 23 should also be taken as part of the pericope. See also Wilkins, *Concept*, 130-131, though without providing a further interpretation of his correct observation that v. 23 is linked to the previous verses through the use of *ἀκολουθεῖω*.

As Gundry rightly observes, by editing Mark the way he did, Matthew “makes the voyage a going away in discipleship.”²³ What these observations might entail precisely for the functioning of both this verse and the entire pericope, will be explored below.

3. GOOD SCRIBE – BAD DISCIPLE? THEIR CHARACTERIZATIONS AND NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS

As has been readily acknowledged by, for example, Kingsbury,²⁴ a parallelism exists between the γραμματεὺς that appears onto the scene in v. 19 and the “other of the disciples” that addresses Jesus in v. 21. Both are anonymous, introduced only with an *epitheton* (i.e. γραμματεὺς and μαθητῆς respectively), both address Jesus, albeit that one calls him as διδάσκαλε (v. 19) and the other calls him κύριε (v. 21), while one expresses the desire to follow Jesus radically and the other one asks some time off to fulfill his filial and moral duties before following Jesus. Aspects of this parallelism are, doubtlessly, antithetical, as, e.g. Davies and Allison have argued,²⁵ but probably not all of them. Nor is it the case that “[t]he conclusion is inescapable” that “8.18-22 first offers a negative example and follows with a positive presentation of genuine discipleship.”²⁶ Apart from that, there might be more to the narrative than just the juxtaposition of a “good scribe” and a “bad disciple,” or, as this is what Luz’ position approximates, the correction of two flawed models of discipleship, the one too close to the “general” rabbinical model (less radical than Jesuanic discipleship, more sedentary), the other not radical enough in relation to social obligations and conventions,²⁷ or one that relies too much on one’s own initiative and the other not radical enough.²⁸ However, I would venture to argue that both of these two models, i.e. both the one that discerns a positive and a negative example in this pericope and the one that finds two negative examples, are too black-and-white. In fact, in different ways, both the scribe and the “other one of the

²³ Gundry, *Matthew*, 151.

²⁴ See Jack D. KINGSBURY, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, ²1998), 133-134.

²⁵ See Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, 39.

²⁶ Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, 39.

²⁷ See Luz, *Matthäus*, 23-27. Another such example would Stanton’s view, who also argues that both the scribe and the disciple are rebuked, see Graham STANTON, *Studies in Matthew and Early Christianity* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl/David Lincicum; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 109.

²⁸ See, e.g., Kingsbury, ‘Following,’ 57.

disciples” are characterized as disciples and whether or not they follow Jesus – and in which role – is left open by the Matthean narrative. In order to substantiate this claim, a few remarks on each of the two characters, i.e. the scribe and the disciple, need to be made.

First, the scribe can be addressed. As can be easily observed, the term γραμματεὺς often has a negative connotation in Matthew, even though certainly not exclusively.²⁹ Still, the term γραμματεὺς does not indicate a “in group” member, but, given its use in Matthew at large, a (potentially hostile) “out group” member and it may come as a surprise that such a person not only addresses Jesus respectfully as διδάσκαλος,³⁰ but also expresses Jesus to follow Jesus in a radical way (ἀκολουθήσω σοι ὅπου ἐὰν ἀπέρχῃ) as well.³¹ Given these latter words from his mouth, it may well be surmised that he has understood that following Jesus entailed something else than a more typical at least semi-sedentary attachment to a rabbi and his house of study, even if it is often argued that precisely this scribe expects Jesus to be more like a common rabbi.³² It seems more plausible, given the words of the γραμματεὺς (notably: ὅπου ἐὰν ἀπέρχῃ) to ascribe a rather good grasp of Jesuanic discipleship to him, which, then, is confirmed by Jesus when he says αἱ ἀλώπεκες φωλεοὺς ἔχουσιν καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνώσεις, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει πού τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνῃ (v. 20). It is easier to

²⁹ See, e.g., David E. ORTON, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1989), 35.

³⁰ This form of address would still be within the limits of common courtesy – though not every γραμματεὺς in Matthew feels the need to address Jesus thus, cf. e.g. 9:3; 15:2; 27:41, but see 12:38.

³¹ It is true that διδάσκαλος can in Matthew also refer to deficient understandings of Jesus, but it is also used by Jesus to refer to himself and in other texts to indicate a non-suspicious understanding of Jesus. See, e.g. the overview provided by Hagner, *Matthew*, 216, note especially the positive connotation of this way of addressing Jesus in 10:24-25; 23:8; 26:18. See also the similar comments of Nolland, *Matthew*, 364-365. – Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, 41, do not suppose that the title has to be taken positively. Luz, *Matthäus*, 23, certainly overstates his case when he argues that the address διδάσκαλε is a clear indication that the scribe is not a disciple. Keener, *Matthew*, 274, offers an interpretation that may well do justice to the experience of some in the Matthean community, i.e., the reference to the fact that the man is a scribe “no doubt supposes that he is paying a high price in volunteering to follow Jesus; such a decision will cost popularity in some circles, and going through the process of discipleship after already being a scribe would be a humbling and time-consuming experience.”

³² See for a comparison of Jesuanic and more typical rabbinic discipleship, e.g., Gerd THEISSEN/Annette MERZ, *The Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 214-217, esp. 214, for an attempt to interpret the scribe’s desire as deficient, see, e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 216. Hagner is right, however, when he notes that the term “to follow” “becomes infused with the notion of discipleship” here.

understand this as a confirmation of the scribe's desire than as a correction, or even only an expansion of it.³³ In other words: the scribe's question already anticipates Jesus' answer. Still, in spite of all of this, Matthew does not tell the reader whether or not the scribe acts through on his and Jesus' words; the question thus remains: will he indeed follow, being a scribe after all, or not?³⁴

Second, when turning to the ἕτερος δὲ τῶν μαθητῶν that is introduced in v. 21, it may be observed first that his introduction already achieves two things. To begin with, the statement that he is a ἕτερος δὲ τῶν μαθητῶν could well be taken to indicate that the γραμματεὺς, who expressed a desire to follow Jesus in an appropriately radical way, is now understood as a μαθητῆς by Jesus.³⁵ Translations that understand the "other" to mean "one", confuse ἕτερος with τις; ἕτερος is not capable, in general, of carrying the meaning of the latter word.³⁶ This observation

³³ For the expansion, see, e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 216; why this should be the case is unclear to me, given that the scribe emphasizes that he will go wherever Jesus goes, while also the beginning of Jesus' answer and its introduction lack any indication that it is intended to contradict or correct the scribe (even words like δέ or ἀλλά that would indicate a contrast are not there). See also Nolland, *Matthew*, 365, "this scribe is offering to become a disciple without yet knowing all that is involved." Nolland's subsequent statement is (more) to the point (and seems to contradict the one just quoted): "Despite what is often claimed, it is hard to see how Jesus' statement here (on any possible meaning) could function as a simple rebuff." (Nolland, *o.c.*, 365). Nolland's comments certainly apply to Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, 42, as they both emphasize that the scribe wishes to follow (and learn from) Jesus wherever he goes and then have Jesus correct the scribe by underlining that he is an itinerant preacher. Also Keener, *Matthew*, 274-275, thinks that the scribe's understanding of discipleship is insufficient. The same applies to Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 310, and Kingsbury, 'Following,' 48-52; there is hardly any textual basis, unlike Kingsbury thinks, for the conclusion that "the 'eager scribe' is not made out to be a disciple of Jesus and is...turned away by Jesus from following after him" (Kingsbury, *o.c.*, 52).

³⁴ See, e.g., Orton, *Scribe*, 36, who rightly notes that the reader is indeed not told whether the scribe follows Jesus or not, but he seems to indicate that v. 23 suggests that he does – here it will be argued that also v. 23 leaves this open, which is part of the way in which the Matthean pericope works with narrative suspense. See for his conclusion that the scribe of this pericope is presented in a fully positive light: *idem*, *o.c.*, 37.137. See also Gundry, *Matthew*, 151, who states that both the scribe and the disciple represent the crowd of disciples around Jesus and that in this pericope the question of authentic discipleship is at stake.

³⁵ See, e.g., Hagner, *Matthew*, 217, also noting that this is a possible, not a necessary interpretation. Daniel J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 119, places emphasis on the fact that the "second questioner has already become a disciple" (a mistaken view, given what this "disciple" has to say). Davies/Allison, *Matthew*, 54, argue that there is no implication that the scribe is a disciple, given that one should understand the Greek to mean "another one, one of his disciples." This, however, is not necessary either, nor likely given grammatical conventions.

³⁶ See, e.g., Friedrich BLASS/Albert DEBRUNNER/Friedrich REHKOPF, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 182001), par. 306,

could be supported well by a further comparison of Luke and Matthew. Luke (probably following Q) only refers to an action by Jesus: εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς ἕτερον (Luke 9:59); the reference to “another” fits the structure of the Lukan text well, given that Jesus addresses first one person, then another, and then yet another; the result is well constructed sentence. Even if Matthew had inherited the reference to “another” from his source and retained it somewhat sloppily, it remains somewhat of an oddity that he felt the need to add τῶν μαθητῶν (it is hard to see why this should have been part of the original source) when the person that had been discussed before, the scribe, is not regarded as a disciple, which, in fact, would suit the rest of his presentation well.³⁷ Thus, the introduction ἕτερος δὲ τῶν μαθητῶν could serve both to complete the identification of the scribe as a disciple and to indicate a contrast, given that now, indeed, another one of the disciples begins to speak, unlike the scribe already carrying the description “disciple.”³⁸ However, the text makes the identification of the scribe as disciple not very explicit, which adds to the creation of suspense, given that multiple possibilities of interpretation are created. When, then, turning to what the person introduced as the “other disciple” has to say, it appears to remain a far cry from what the scribe-now-possibly-disciple had to say, i.e. he asks time off from his following of Jesus in order to bury his father. He wishes to go away (ἀπελθεῖν) not to follow (ἀκολουθεῖν); his wish stands in direct contrast to Jesus’ command expressed in v. 18: also to go away (ἀπελθεῖν),³⁹ but to the other shore. As Jesus’ answer makes rather clear, this is not an appropriate

as well as Walter BAUER/Kurt ALAND/Barbara ALAND, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), s.v. ἕτερος. The only solution would be to argue that the construction that Matthew intends to use is one designation “the one person and the other”. However, in such cases, the article is typically used (Matt. 6:24; Luke 7:41; 16:13; 17:34-35; 18:10, etc.); more likely is, as also Bauer-Aland, s.v. εἷς that εἷς carries the meaning of τις in Matt. 8:19 and is not part of a construction with Matt. 8:21. See further also Blass/Debrunner/Rehkopf, *o.c.* par. 247. See also the considerations of Kingsbury, ‘Following,’ 48, whose analysis of the use of ἕτερος in v. 23 seems to depend on his understanding of the non-discipleship of the scribe, therefore, ἕτερος can for him not carry the meaning “another one of the disciples”, but must mean “another, one of the disciples”, which is precisely not what Matthew writes. See also Orton, *Scribe*, 35-36, as well as Gundry, *Matthew*, 151-152.

³⁷ See for this also Orton, *Scribe*, 35-36.

³⁸ Which is, as Wilkins, *Concept*, 165, rightly indicates, no guarantee at all that he will live up to this designation (cf. Matt. 14:31; 16:8.22-23; 17:20 for deficient faith on the part of the disciples, which also plays a central role in the pericope that immediately follows, i.e. Matt. 8:23-27, cf. idem, *o.c.*, 182).

³⁹ See, e.g., Nolland, *Matthew*, 367.

attitude. Taking up the same word with which the scribe already expressed his desire, i.e. ἀκολουθεῖν, thus echoing and thereby confirming the scribe's words, Jesus calls upon the "disciple" to follow him and to let the dead bury the dead. In fact, the second part of this sentence is probably best understood as a further explanation of the first part, which would turn the conjunction καί into a καί *epexegeticum*.⁴⁰ This interpretation would suit the content of the verse well, given that it would now read "follow me, that is to say: let the dead bury the dead", rather than "follow me and let the dead bury the dead." The unity of Jesus' statement and the integral relationship between following and leaving the dead bury the dead as one, not two actions emerges more clearly when this interpretation is followed. When considering all of this, it is hard to escape the conclusion that this "other disciple" is portrayed negatively indeed, his remark to Jesus does not live up to the demands of discipleship. This is the case, quite in spite of this "disciple's" seemingly correct address of Jesus as "Lord."⁴¹ What the disciple does or says in reply is not told by Matthew, though one option is certainly that he ceases to follow Jesus. It seems inviting, therefore, to understand the disciple's choice of words and reluctance to follow through on his discipleship in relation to other Matthean texts in which such a connection between discipleship in name only and failure to live up to it is made (and criticized), e.g. 7:21-22⁴² and 25:11.⁴³ Still, this does not mean that one has arrived at a black-and-white picture of the "good scribe" and the "bad disciple." In fact, it can be argued that what has been achieved so far is the creation of narrative surprise and suspense, given that the scribe does seem to live up to an appropriate attitude regarding discipleship, while the disciple does not, but of neither of them one is told that they, in fact, follow Jesus.⁴⁴ The

⁴⁰ On this see my earlier treatment of Matt. 12:30, 'Ein καί epexegeticum mit Folgen. Zu Matthäus 12,30,' in: *Biblische Notizen* 145 (2010), 113-118.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Wilkins, *Concept*, 171: "the sign of faith is when one comes out of the crowd and calls Jesus 'Lord'" (with reference to Matt. 8:21).

⁴² ²¹ Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι· κύριε κύριε, εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. ²² πολλοὶ ἐροῦσίν μοι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ· κύριε κύριε, οὐ τῷ σῶ ὀνόματι ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, καὶ τῷ σῶ ὀνόματι δαιμόνια ἐξεβάλομεν, καὶ τῷ σῶ ὀνόματι δυνάμεις πολλὰς ἐποιήσαμεν;

⁴³ ¹¹ ὕστερον δὲ ἔρχονται καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ παρθένοι λέγουσαι· κύριε κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν. ¹² ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς.

⁴⁴ The intertext 1 Kings 19:19-21 that may well be evoked by the disciple's reluctance to follow Jesus can be interpreted in two ways in this respect: either the intertext indicates that the disciple will, eventually, follow Jesus, or Jesus' answer indicates precisely the opposite, i.e. that following him entails demands that go beyond those of Elijah. See, e.g., Gundry, *Matthew*, 153-154.

effect of this will be explored next, together with the suspense inherent in v. 23 when it is taken as part of the pericope Matt. 8:18-23: Having considered the portrayal of both the scribe and the disciple, it is now possible to turn to the question of what kind of effect these portrayals have for the consideration of the question of discipleship by the Matthean audience.

4. DISCIPLESHIP, READERSHIP, AND NARRATIVE SUSPENSE

The Matthean audience, it will be argued now, is both challenged by the juxtaposition of the scribe and the “other disciple”, which is quite clearly there in the text, and by the various kinds of narrative suspense, created through the not-telling of certain things (and present through gaps in the text), to rethink its notion of discipleship and to rethink the actual discipleship of those called disciples. It will also be shown how Matthew’s redaction of Mark fits in v. 23 into this process.

First, the juxtaposition of the scribe who behaves like a disciple in actual fact and the disciple who does not live up to this designation needs to be considered. As has been said already, while it is possible to read the text as presenting the positive and negative examples of the “good scribe” and the “bad disciple”, or as two examples of deficient discipleship, as it is more common among the commentators, there is also more to the juxtaposition than just this. It seems likely, namely, that Matthew uses a narrative technique here that can be observed elsewhere in this Gospel as well,⁴⁵ i.e. that the “in group” is challenged by the positive example in matters of faith and discipleship presented by a member of the “out group”; in other words: if even a scribe can express the desire to follow Jesus in an appropriately radical way, how much more “real” disciples ought to show this kind of commitment. One way of reading Matthew 8:18-23, filling out some of the narrative gaps, would then be to understand the scribe as the real disciple, the one who indeed follows Jesus, and probably also enters the boat with him, while the one that is called “disciple” does not follow Jesus and is, in a way, left behind.⁴⁶ Such an example may have served (and may continue to serve) to ask the question of the discipleship of “disciples” and the discipleship of

⁴⁵ See, e.g., only in Matt. 8-9 already: Matt. 8:5-15 (centurion), 9:1-13 (healing of the paralytic, calling of the publican Matthew, Jesus’ eating with publicans and sinners), as well as the further healings in this chapter.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., in Matt. 8-9 already: 8:24-27 (the stilling of the storm), and further parables such as Matt. 25:1-13, 14-30, 31-46.

“others,” i.e. outsiders. That such discipleship on the part of scribes was not unheard of for Matthew – and may well have constituted a challenge for the core of the Matthean community – is evidenced by Matt. 13:52: *πᾶς γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὁμοίως ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότη, ὅστις ἐκβάλλει ἐκ τοῦ θησαυροῦ αὐτοῦ καινὰ καὶ παλαιά.* Narrative suspense created by narratological gaps plays a key role in all of this, given that the presentation of the scribe and the disciple, their words, and Jesus’ reaction to them are recorded, as well as the general reaction of “the disciples” to Jesus’ command in 8:18 in v. 23, but not what their specific responses are; the reader is left to consider this and thus to consider what (the own) discipleship amounts to.

Second, the narrative suspense that can be found in Matt. 8:18-23 needs to be considered. The suspense that is created in the narrative contained in Matt. 8:18-23 is created both by things that are said and things that remain unsaid. The things that remain unsaid and hence create suspense are: the question whether or not the scribe (now implicit disciple) indeed follows; the question how the disciple (with his failed sense of discipleship) reacted to Jesus’ words: did he leave the dead to bury the dead, or did he not? And, in relation to these two questions, the question who in fact boards the ship with Jesus, i.e. follows him, as Matthew emphatically puts it, emerges. The suspense of all of these issues is heightened by Jesus’ incredibly radical (if not blunt) statement in v. 22:⁴⁷ who, indeed, will enter the ship following Jesus when the (social) stakes are this high? Thus, because so many things remain unsaid and because the stakes are made so high, the reader is invited, if not compelled – if he or she wishes to make sense of the narrative and follow the events – to use the own imagination and thinking to complete the narrative and the answers questions such as: who did indeed follow Jesus into the boat (and onwards) and, because asking this question also means considering the notion of discipleship as it figures in the text – and as it was, likely, claimed by the Matthean community –, the suspense created by the gaps in the narrative⁴⁸ leads to a (re)consideration of the own commitment to (a particular kind of) discipleship on the part of the Matthean community,⁴⁹ which, in fact,

⁴⁷ See, e.g. Luz, *Matthäus*, 25 “schockierend.” For a succinct consideration of the social implications, see, e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, 217-218; compare also Nolland, *Matthew*, 367-368.

⁴⁸ See on this notion, see above, the brief remarks offered in section 1.

⁴⁹ As Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 207, rightly notes: “Während die Reaktion der beiden Nachfolgewilligen nicht erzählt wird, (diese Leerstelle zwingt die Leser zur eigenen Reaktion), betont Matthäus die Nachfolge der Jünger in 23 ausdrücklich.” See also Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 312.314.

suits the thematic of Matt. 8-9 as a whole.⁵⁰ This may serve the teaching aims of Matthew, i.e.: by not answering the question, or not fully telling the story, with all its details, he enables a process of reflection, i.e. wondering how the story continued and: how the reader positions him-/herself vis-à-vis of it. Given that Matthew's audience may well have self-identified as μαθηταὶ, raising this question serves the same aim as the juxtaposition of the scribe and the disciple earlier on. The fact that Matt. 8:18 and 8:23 both refer to a broader group of disciples (than the Twelve) suits the potential for identification with these disciples for the audience.⁵¹

Finally, it can be observed that one aspect of Matthew's redaction of Mark 4:36 in 8:23 can be seen to undergird this dynamic of leading the reader towards a consideration of (the own) discipleship through narrative suspense created by narrative gaps. Where Mark has καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν ὄχλον παραλαμβάνουσιν αὐτὸν ὡς ἦν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, καὶ ἄλλα πλοῖα ἦν μετ' αὐτοῦ, Matthew has: Καὶ ἐμβάντι αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ πλοῖον ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. Thus, in Matthew, unlike in Mark, Jesus leads and the disciples follow; by rephrasing Mark 4:36 in this way, Matthew also facilitates a return of the language of discipleship that also occurred in the preceding verses: the noun μαθητῆς (see also v. 21) and the verb ἀκολουθεῖω (vv. 19,22); in other words: the disciples that occur in v. 23 are doing what a disciple of Jesus is supposed to do, i.e. to follow Jesus. What Matthew does not tell, however, is who the disciples that follow Jesus into the vessel are. As was just argued already, this can be seen as giving rise to the question who they are and, more specifically, whether the scribe has lived up to his desire to follow Jesus and is now indeed a disciple who follows Jesus as the preceding verses have suggested (see the above considerations) and whether the disciple with his second thoughts regarding following Jesus immediately has indeed left Jesus and gone to bury his father, or whether he has changed his mind and lives up to Jesus' radical call to follow him. The reader is left to ponder these questions.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, a renewed consideration of Matthean narrative and literary technique, supported with information from his use of his sources (both Mark and Q, the latter on the basis of a comparison with Luke), and a reconsideration of the boundaries of the pericope, shows how Matthew 8:18-23

⁵⁰ See Kingsbury, 'Following,' 46.

⁵¹ See Hagner, *Matthew*, 215.

achieves much more than just presenting an example of good and bad discipleship, or discipleship in name only and actual discipleship that consists of following Jesus (the “good scribe” – “bad disciple” interpretation). Precisely through the creation of narrative suspense by means of narrative gaps, Matthew raises the question what discipleship amounts to and who, indeed, is a disciple and follows Jesus in actual fact. Rather than teaching something in a direct way (“this is good, this bad”), the way in which Matthew has edited his source and inserted it into the Markan narrative sequence, leads the audience to reflect on its own discipleship.