Chapter 7

The disciples in Matthew’s story

7.1 THE DISCIPLES’ HELPER FUNCTION

For the purpose of this study I accept without argument that Peter fulfills the role of the ‘type’ of the disciples, or primus inter pares, in the Gospel of Matthew (cf the detail in the argument of i a Strecker 1966:198-206; Luz 1971:152; R E Brown et al 1973:75-107; Frankemölle 1974:155-158; Kingsbury 1979a:71-72). The name ‘Peter’ is thus often used in this study interchangeably with the group name of ‘disciples’.

Where the Jewish crowd and the Gentiles are the object of Jesus’ mission, and the Jewish leaders his opponents, the role of the disciples consists of that of helpers of Jesus (cf Thompson 1970:16). The helper function of the disciples is manifested in the Gospel of Matthew on two temporal levels, namely the pre-paschal and the post-paschal level. On the pre-paschal level the role of the disciples consists in their functioning as the ‘medium’ through which Jesus as God-with-us shows his love (the act of forgiveness of sins) to the Jewish crowd (cf i a Mt 4:19; 14:19; 15:36). On the post-paschal level, they play a much more direct ‘missionary’ role. They continue the ‘prophetic’ line; this line, which began with the Old Testament prophets, reached a climax in John the Baptist and perfect realization in Jesus. Indeed, as the representative of the disciples, Peter is declared the foundation (πέτρος = ‘rock’) of the ἐκκλησία and he receives the ‘keys of the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 16:18-19). This logion relates to the disciples’ teaching and missionary commission as ‘prophets’ in the new dispensation (cf i a Jeremias 1938:749-750; Fuller 1967:312; Beare 1981:355-356). Fuller refers to this role as follows:

[I]t (Mt 16:19; 18:18 – A G v A) refers not to the familiar picture of Peter as the doorkeeper of heaven, but to Peter’s activity on earth as ...the preacher...which becomes presently operative not after Caesarea Philippi, but precisely after Easter, when Peter and the Twelve launch the kerygma.

(Fuller 1967:312)
The disciples' 'prophetic' mission has in other words an indissoluble continuity with the mission of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist and in particular the mission of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of David.

In our study the disciples have repeatedly represented a 'complex' type of character in the Gospel of Matthew. That is to say, they are inclined to deny their helper function on the pre-paschal temporal level. The narrator thus suggests that the same inclination exists on the post-paschal level, as far as the 'prophetic' missionary function of the disciples (the 'church leaders'?) is concerned. Their mission threatens to end abortively if they do not execute it obediently. In the light of this it is therefore very important to note that, in the mission discourse (Mt 10), Matthew does not tell the story from the perspective of the successful return of the disciples after the conclusion of the mission, as in the case of Luke 10:17-24. This can apparently tie in with the fact that, for Matthew, the parousia is the day of reckoning.

7.2 THE DISCIPLES' NAMES

On the one hand, the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, unlike in Mark (see i a Best 1977:387-389; Klauck 1982:26) have full 'insight' into the nature of Jesus' vocation. They apparently also understand the nature of their own vocation. This vocation is typified by names such as προφήται (see Mt 10:40-42; 23:34; cf also Daniélou 1964:351), and γρόμωτεopc; (see Mt 13:51-52; 23:34) and υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ (see Mt 5:9, 45). The analogy between Jesus' Emmanuel mission as the υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ and that of the disciples as υἱοί τοῦ Θεοῦ is explicitly given in, inter alia, the pericope regarding 'love for one's enemy' (Mt 5:43-48). On the strength of the phrases 'so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven' (Mt 5:45a) and 'be therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt 5:48), Frankemölle (1974:172) says that in the designation of the disciple as Son of God the possibility for them exists to be perfect as their Father in heaven (cf also Piper 1979:143).

On the other hand, the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew display a ὀλγοπιστία tendency, despite their full 'insight'. This tendency often has the result that they often display a perspective that has parallels with that of Jesus' opponents, the Jewish leaders. This impending commonality in perspective between the Jewish leaders and the disciples is related to a lack of obedience in living and proclaiming the will of the Father in heaven (the 'law and the prophets'), as he intended, to the Jewish crowd and other destitute people (see especially Mt 7:15-20 where the phrase τὰ πρόβατα is used in verse 15). To depict this darker side of the disciples Matthew uses the same names for the disciples as those he has used elsewhere for
the Jewish leaders. The most striking examples of this are the names ὑποκριταί (Mt 7:5; 24:51) and ψευδοπροφηταί (Mt 7:15, 22). In the pericope Matthew 15:1-20 the narrator himself makes a connection between the term ὑποκριταί (Mt 15:7) and the term ψευδομαρτυρία (Mt 15:19). Minear summarizes this paradox as follows:

In their essential structure...the sins of false prophecy and of hypocrisy were the same. The disciple-prophet who succumbed to hypocrisy became a false prophet. Matthew speaks in 7, 23 of the ἁνομία the false Christian prophets and in 23, 28 of the ἁνομία of Jewish scribes. What was true of one group was true of the other.

(Minear 1974b:93)

7.3 THE PORTRAYAL OF THE DISCIPLES IN MATTHEW 13:53-17:27 AND THE NARRATOR’S REDACTIONAL TECHNIQUE

For the purposes of our study I will investigate the narrator’s particular portrayal of the disciples in terms of his redactional narrative technique in the micro narrative of Matthew 13:53-17:27. Matthew 13:53-17:27 lends itself as illustrative material for a narratological analysis of the role of the disciples, especially since a traditional redaktionsgeschichtliche investigation into this section is handicapped by serious methodological problems. Our aim is to indicate that this micro narrative has been formally built up in accordance with the narrator’s redactional activity and according to the narrator’s particular portrayal of the disciples.

7.3.1 Introductory remarks – A gospel is the literary product of a redactor-narrator

As soon as a narrative has been written, the text is divorced from its historical writer and it functions as a closed narrated world with its own architectonic design with intrinsic harmonious characteristics. The gospels are such literary works. But the gospels, by their very nature, cannot be compared with modern artistic narratives. The gospels are not entirely fictional texts in the sense of products of pure imagination (fiction). A gospel is the literary product of a redactor-narrator. Using, among other things, transmitted tradition, editorially processed in an interpretative and creative manner, the evangelists each communicate their own theological ideas by means of the narrative form, as story-tellers.

In the interpretation of narrative discourses the primary concern is not breaking into the real world of the historical reader, and the place and circumstances of writing, or the world of the historical reader and the place and
circumstances of reception. Neither is the primary concern the description of the early literal or pre-literal contextualizations of a narrative's tradition. Nevertheless, an investigation into the application of traditions in a gospel as a narrative discourse is not irrelevant, since the evangelist indeed produced his texts as a redactor-narrator.

The traditional Redaktionsgeschichte placed the emphasis on the redactor's influence on his sources. On the other hand, narratology is inclined to recognize the techniques of the narrative art. Narratology therefore has an eye on the fact that a redactor-narrator has created particular perspectives through his own contextualization of traditions. The study of a narrator's redactional narrative technique is thus interested in the ideological motive underlying his phraseological redactive work.

As I have already indicated above, phraseology is the narrator's exercising of his options with regard to particular manners of speech. The narrator's phraseological redactive work can be seen in his rearrangement, modification, elimination, expansion and abbreviation of his sources. In narrative exegesis preference is given to the narrated world of the macro text, that is that of the gospel as a whole and not that of the source as a micro text. Hermeneutically, the holistic context of a narrative is always the determinant.

7.3.2 Matthew 13:53-17:27

7.3.2.1 Introduction
The reason why we regard Matthew 13:53-17:27 as illustrative material par excellence lies therein that the sequence of the different narrative units in Matthew is the same as the sequence we find in the Gospel of Mark (6:1-9:32), and that the traditional methodology of separation between redaction and tradition is made difficult. By regarding the evangelist's redactional activity as an aspect of his narrative technique and treating it as such, new perspectives are opened in contrast with the hermeneutic limitations faced by the traditional Redaktionsgeschichte. At the same time modern redaction-criticism as applied in North America is carried a step further by being used in a narrative-point-of-view analysis.

Although Matthew used many traditions in writing his gospel, he created his own narrative structure. For this reason it is necessary to read his gospel as a story and not merely as the product of a redactor (cf Petersen 1978a:118). With regard to the former, a distinction is made between redaction and tradition on the basis of the traditional Redaktionsgeschichte and the stress is laid on the redactor and his
As far as the former is concerned, the techniques of narrative art are recognized, as is the fact that the narrator, using his own contextualization of traditions, created specific perspectives. The evangelist’s redactional activity should be seen as a constitutive facet, like other facets, in the building of the plot of his narrative. Vorster (1980b:42) describes it as follows: ‘The manner in which the events or actions in a story are arranged is very important, since it has to do with its unfolding...It makes a considerable difference whether one reads the separate narrative units as independent units or as part of a macro text’ (my translation).

Tradition and redaction are, in other words, not separate in the narrator’s point of view. Tradition and redaction are seen as the material with which the evangelist as narrator manifests his ideological perspective on the phraseological level. The study of a narrator’s redactional narrative technique is thus concerned with the ideological motive behind the rearrangement, modification, elimination, extension, abbreviation, et cetera, of traditions in the narrative.

As mentioned above, Mark 6:1-9:32 served as a source for the compositional coherence of Matthew 13:53-17:27. Matthew, however, changed the structure of Mark in a cardinal respect.

Mark 6-9 constitutes part of the middle section of that gospel, namely Mark 1:16-14:11 (14:42, according to Vorster 1980a:123; 14:45 according to Via 1975:117). The plot of Mark is structured on two opposing semantic lines that are in constant tension with each other, but are nevertheless developed simultaneously (cf Via 1975:113-158, especially page 130; Vorster 1980a:126-130). The first semantic line may be described as the endeavor of the protagonist, Jesus, to complete his mission successfully; this mission is the manifestation of God’s reign. The second semantic line may be described as the endeavor of the antagonist, the Jewish leaders, to achieve success in their objective of protecting the religion of the day (Judaism). The latter objective meets with apparent success when Jesus is crucified, but it is frustrated by Jesus’ resurrection. Initially the plot unfolds in favor of the first semantic line. However, in the middle part of Mark’s gospel (8:27-33), there is a turning-point in the success story. Peter acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ, but fails to comprehend that the Christ must suffer. By means of the three passion predictions (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32ff), which function particularly prominently as structural markers (cf Petersen 1978a:60; Vorster 1979:175), Jesus teaches the disciples what it means to follow him in his suffering role (cf Perrin 1974:45), but their inability to comprehend becomes increasingly evident. The so-called ‘messianic secret’ in Mark’s gospel (cf in particular Mk 8:30; 9:9) probably functions against the backdrop of this inability of the disciples to comprehend who Jesus really is (Vorster 1980a:154). Mark discloses that, until Peter’s acknowledgement that Jesus is the...
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Christ (Mk 8:29), the disciples did not know who Jesus really was. After that event they knew who he was, but they only understood it after Jesus’ resurrection (cf. Petersen 1978a:78f).

Matthew does not take these dichotomous opposing semantic lines over from the Gospel of Mark. Meier (1979:94) mentions three things that prove that Matthew did not adopt Mark’s dichotomous structure. Firstly, Matthew does not develop the Marcan theologoumenon ‘messianic secret’. Secondly, he does not reserve the logia concerning the humiliation, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus for the second half of his gospel, as is done in the Gospel of Mark. These logia already appear early in the Gospel of Matthew, for example in Matthew 8:20; 11:19; 12:32 and 40. Thirdly, he focuses on a particular portrayal of the disciples, which is placed under the magnifying glass in the micro narrative Matthew 13:53-17:27, in the discourse in chapter 18, by expanding on certain consequences of this image more explicitly. The latter chapter deals with the actions and attitudes of the disciples and the underprivileged, respectively as δοξαλφοί in Matthew’s community. Because of these three points Meier is justified in disagreeing with Kingsbury’s (1975a:9, 36ff, 161ff) influential thesis that Matthew 16:21 introduces the so-called third part of the Gospel of Matthew. Such a radical hiatus in the construction of the gospel at Matthew 16:21 does not on the one hand take into consideration Matthew’s redactional activity, nor on the other his particular portrayal of the disciples, which in turn is underpinned by the redactional activity, especially here in Matthew 13:53-17:27.

Meier’s third point implies that Matthew did not adopt Mark’s image of the disciples. He did not include a shift in his portrayal of the disciples between the part preceding Matthew 16:20 and the part following Matthew 16:21, but maintained the same image in chapter 18 (and throughout his gospel). Just as Mark 6-9 and the plot of the Gospel of Mark as such (cf. Petersen 1978a:78f) basically center around the comprehension/lack of comprehension of the disciples, Matthew applied this theme of the disciples’ comprehension/lack of comprehension in an interpreted form in the plot of his gospel. This can be clearly seen in the way he redactionally restructured his tradition in Matthew 13:53-17:27.

Matthew 13:53-17:27 constitutes the fourth micro narrative in the Gospel of Matthew (see following chapter). It has been formally constructed in three parts. These three parts are Matthew 13:53-14:33, 14:34-16:20, and 16:21-17:27. Each of these units close with redactional material relating to Peter, namely Peter’s walk on the lake (Mt 14:28-33), the macarism of Peter (Mt 16:17-19) and Peter and the payment of the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27).
These three subunits comprising Matthew 13:53-17:27 often focus on a concluding report about Peter (Matthean redaction), peaking with ‘insight’ on the part of the disciples (Peter). Peter’s walking on the lake and the disciples worshipping of Jesus, while confessing: ‘Αληθῶς θεοῦ υἱός εἶ (Mt 14:28-33) are further peaks of the disciples’ ‘insight’, which had been mentioned in the preceding parable discourse (Mt 13:1-52). The same can be said of the macarism, the Πέτρος declaration by Jesus (after Peter’s confession, σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζωντος) and the logia concerning the ‘building of the ἐκκλησία ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς πέτρας’ and the ‘keys of the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 16:17-19). This peak of ‘insight’ is encountered once more in the present micro narrative and this is in the conclusion of the third subunit, the pericope of the payment of the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27). In this short narrative (in entirety Matthew’s own material = Sondergut) Peter resists the temple (Jewish) authorities with an ‘insight’ that attests to a perspective that accords with that from which Jesus himself is worshipped (see later). Matthew has therefore, using the redactional narrative technique, placed the person of Peter, as the ‘type’ of the other disciples, under the magnifying glass. At the end of each unit he has repeatedly drawn attention to Peter’s ‘insight’ – each time at a higher level.

This relationship between the emphasis on the image of Peter in Matthew 13:53-17:27 and the compositional coherence of the three narrative units have also been noticed by P F Ellis (1974:132): ‘Matthew has gone out of his way to emphasize the primacy of Peter because of the manner in which he composed the narrative in ch 13:53-17:27. The emphasis on Peter is unmistakable. It is also intentional.’ According to Murphy-O’Connor (1975:371), this division of Matthew 13:53-17:27 into three narrative units is however not convincing: ‘Ellis nowhere shows how the pericopes preceding each of the Petrine episodes can be considered a ‘lead-up’. Were this the evangelist’s intention there should be evidence in the material proper to the First Gospel, and I have failed to find any such indications.’

Such indications can indeed be shown in Matthew 13:53-17:27. I will show that this pinnacle of the disciples’ ‘insight’, which dramatically culminated in high tension at the end of the micro narrative, is nowhere else in the Gospel of Matthew to be found in as concentrated a form as in Matthew 13:53-17:27; on the other hand there is nowhere in the gospel greater evidence of the ‘complexity’ of the narrator’s image of the disciples. Using redactional activity, Matthew repeatedly let ὀλγοπιστία precede the disciples’ pinnacle of ‘insight’. This attests to the Gospel of Matthew’s tendency to portray the disciples’ perspective as exhibiting the characteristics with which he depicts the Jewish leaders.
7.3.2.2 The first sub-unit – Matthew 13:53-14:33

As far as the first sub-unit (Mt 13:53-14:33) is concerned: This sub-unit furnishes the backdrop necessary to understand the imminent danger to the disciples, namely that their point of view, as Jesus' 'helpers', could coincide with that of his opponents, the Jewish leaders. This backdrop consists of the role played by the Jewish crowd in their reciprocal relationship with Jesus, the Jewish leaders and the disciples, within the plot of the Gospel of Matthew. 'Will the "ochloi" remain under the care and the authority of the Pharisees and their scribes, or will their loyalties shift over to Jesus and his "mathetai", his scribes (23:34)? Matthew assumes that the answer to that question depends primarily on the faithfulness of the "mathetai" to their commission as teachers' (Minear 1974a:32).

A remarkable phenomenon, although not always recognized by redaction critics, is the manner and intention of the narrator's redactional treatment of the introductory pericope of Matthew 13:53-17:27 – that is, the rejection of Jesus as a 'prophet' by the inhabitants of his home town, Nazareth, as a result of their ἀποκρίσεις (Mt 13:53-58 = Mk 6:1-6a). Just as in the Gospel of Mark, this pericope functions as an introduction to the immediate broad context. It forms a clear transition from the preceding parable discourse (Mt 11:1-52) to the micro narrative under discussion. This 'transition' is marked by, inter alia, the stated change in topography. The phrase μετέφερε ἐκείθεν in Matthew 13:53 switches the scene from the home (originally in the scene in the boat on the lake), where Jesus directs his parable discourse at the disciples and the Jewish crowds, to Nazareth. This topographical change is combined with a time formula that is characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew, that is ἔγενετο ὅτε ἔτελεσαν....

The preceding parable discourse (Mt 11:1-52) and the third micro narrative (Mt 11:2-12:50) contribute intentionally (see later) to the nature and impact of the rejection in Nazareth. The meaning of Matthew 11:2-12:50 hinges upon the attitude towards Jesus, with the dual possibility of acceptance or rejection' (Lategan 1977:128), and the fact that the Jewish leaders, like Satan, choose the second alternative. Matthew 13:1-52, on the other hand, is structured around the contrast between the disciples who hear and understand (v 11f) and the Jewish crowd who see and yet do not see; who hear and yet do not hear (v 13). The parable discourse concludes with redactional material (v 51) in which Jesus' question to the disciples regarding their 'insight', and their answer to Jesus is expressly noted: 'Having told the parables, Jesus asks the very important question: Συνήκατε ταύτα πάντα; The question is important because it takes up the theme of 'understanding' again which is so central in the complete discourse. The disciples answer with a firm 'Yes'...' (Vorster 1977b:36). The 'complexity' of the role of the Jewish crowd in the plot of
the Gospel of Matthew, which is so clearly expressed against the background of the 'insight' of the disciples, as γραμματεύς μαθητεύθεντες τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν (v 52), with the aid of verba sentiendi in the parable discourse, is dramatically continued in the narrative unit Matthew 13:53-58. In Nazareth, Jesus' home town, the Jewish crowd decisively rejects Jesus - by denying that he is a 'prophet', the name that thus far in the gospel and hereafter characterizes their incomplete perspective on Jesus. The Jewish crowd in Nazareth side with their leaders in rejecting Jesus (Mt 11-12).

The reason that I identify the inhabitants of Nazareth with the character of the Jewish crowd lies in the following redactional activity of the narrator of Matthew: In Matthew 13:54 he adds the possessive pronoun αὐτῶν to the expression ἐδίδασκαν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ (cf Mk 6:2). In this regard Walker (1967:35) states that the terms 'their scribes' and 'their synagogues' equally presuppose the unity of the people of God in all its parts. 'They' are the one, homogeneous nation, represented by its teachers. The phrase 'their synagogues' thus confirms in its own way the Matthean topoi of the unity of Israel and of its identity, together with its representatives.

The pericope (Mt 14:1-12) regarding the beheading of the 'prophet' John the Baptist, a prototype of Jesus the 'prophet', by Herod Antipas, one of the Jewish leaders (cf the epithet King of the Jews, given to Herod the Great - Mt 2:3-4), emphasizes the role of the Jewish leaders as the antagonists with only one purpose, which is to keep Jesus from their midst and to kill him: '[T]he rejections of John and Jesus are put in parallel, thus anticipating the assimilation of the execution scene' (Murphy-O'Connor 1975:377). Trilling (1959:272) describes the redactional intention of Matthew with regard to Matthew 14:1-12 in the following manner: Matthew shortened the extended version of Mark radically. The events concentrate more on the death of John the Baptist. Furthermore, of the characters Herodias and Salome fade in importance behind Herod. The events seem only to serve as proof that a murder of a prophet took place.

The 'parallel' between the rejection of John the Baptist and that of Jesus, and the 'parallel' between the roles that the Jewish leaders and the Jewish crowd respectively play, are even more striking when one notes the following redactional activity:

The attempts by Herod, one of the Jewish leaders, to put John the Baptist to death were temporarily hampered by his uncertainty about how the Jewish crowd regarded John the Baptist, in his role as a 'prophet' (Mt 14:5). The Jewish leaders were similarly hesitant to put into action their desire to see Jesus dead, since they were worried about the fact that the Jewish crowd, just as in the case of John the
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Baptist, regarded Jesus as a 'prophet' (Mt 21:46). As I have already pointed out, the designation 'prophet' stresses a type of positive and at the same time incomplete viewpoint about Jesus on the part of the Jewish crowd. This view however took a dramatic turn (Mt 13:53-58) as a result of the rejection of Jesus as a 'prophet' by the inhabitants of Nazareth. This pericope therefore acts as a preview of the later negative choice on the part of the Jewish crowd in their identification with the Jewish leaders. 'We have there (Mt 13:53-58), therefore, a foretaste of what the attitude of the "crowd" would become under the influence of the Pharisees [cf xxvii, 20-26]' (Murphy-O'Connor 1975:376). The Jewish leaders finally succeed, at the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, in convincing the Jewish crowd that they should demand Jesus' death (Mt 27:20). This identification on the part of the Jewish crowd with the Jewish leaders results in both, alike, mockingly blaspheming (ἐβλασφήμων, ἐμπαιξούσες) the 'Son of God' (Mt 27:39, 41).

Mounting tension is created by the introductory pericope (Mt 13:53-58), in which the Jewish crowd in Nazareth rejects Jesus, and by the following pericope (Mt 14:1-12), in which John the Baptist, as the prototype of Jesus, is killed at the order of Herod Antipas (who, like Herod the Great – Mt 2:1 – is part of the Jewish leadership). Jesus' attitude towards the Jewish crowd, however, remains that of heartfelt love (unlike the opinion of Malan 1981:31, who contends that in Mt 13:36b Jesus had already turned his back on the Jews) which is vividly illustrated in the pericope about the feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14:13-21). The role of the disciples towards the Jewish crowd is delineated with unmistakable clarity in this miracle narrative as being that of a special intermediary function (cf also Van Tilborg 1972:162). Sheridan (1973:250) refers to Matthew's redactional activity in this connection as follows:

Matthew's redaction...has accentuated the role of the disciples as mediators...This he does in a subtle way by placing the disciples' giving of the bread to the crowds in a parallel construction with Jesus' giving of the bread to the disciples.

(Sheridan 1973:250)

Held (1961:171) referred to this role of the disciples as die Mittler des Mahles an die Menge (cf also Minear 1974a:32; Garland 1979:3). How will the disciples fulfill their mission towards the Jewish crowd? That is the burning question in Matthew 13:53-17:27, as it is throughout the Gospel of Matthew (cf Van Tilborg 1972:160-163; Minear 1974a; Thompson 1970:18f).
The concluding pericope of the first sub-unit, Peter's walking on the lake and the disciples' confession: ἀληθῶς θεοῦ ὑλὸς εἶ (Mt 14:22-33) is, as already mentioned, an indication of their 'insight'. In this concluding pericope we however discover the two contrasting character traits of the disciples. The disciples' confession and worship (προσκυνέω) is preceded by Peter having ὀλυγοποιία and being διστάξα (Mt 14:31). According to Braumann (1966:409-411), therefore, the cooperation and succession of faith and doubt make up a crucial part of the story. The disciple is equal to the Master in the sense that he can walk on the water like Jesus. He is unequal to the Master in that he is dependent on Jesus' rescuing deed.

7.3.2.3 The second sub-unit – Matthew 14:34-16:20

With regard to the second sub-unit (Mt 14:34-16:20), the Petrine confession (Mt 16:13-16) and the πέτρος designation (Mt 16:17-19) – the latter is a Matthean redaction – are a continuation of the redaction material in Matthew 16:12, τότε συνήκαν. This 'insight' consists of the disciples realizing the danger of the 'yeast' (of the bread = διδαχή) of the Jewish leaders. The 'bread' of the Jewish leaders is contrasted sharply with that which Jesus offered the Jewish crowd via the disciples (Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39) and the Gentiles (Mt 15:21-28). In the latter pericope, the healing of the demon-possessed daughter of the Canaanite woman is compared with the giving of 'bread'.

The 'bread' motif has an important function in the Gospel of Matthew and the word ἄρτος may be regarded as part of Matthew's religious vocabulary (E A Nida). The thematic correlation between Matthew 4:1-11 and Matthew 16:1-2 is thus very striking. The bread motif is present in both pericopes (see later). In Matthew 4:3f it is precisely Satan's tempting of Jesus to make bread miraculously that is in question. This suggestion is countered by Jesus with a quotation from the law (Dt 8:3) – that being υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ demands obedience to the will of the Father. After the miraculous multiplication of the loaves (Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39), which was motivated by his love for the Jewish crowd (Mt 14:14; 15:32) – the fulfillment of the law (Mt 19:16-30) shown in the acts of the disciples – the Jewish leaders tempted Jesus to give them a sign from heaven (Mt 16:1). It is therefore significant that their actions towards Jesus in Matthew 16:1 are described with the word πεσάζω. Mark 8:38 does not have this very expressive word. Jesus resists this request with a reference to the 'prophets' (Jonah) and the reproach that the Jewish leaders are not able to recognize the 'signs of the times' (cf Mt 16:3f; absent in the Gospel of Mark, cf however Lk 12:56). The fact that the 'yeast' of the Jewish leaders is related to Jesus' feeding of the Jewish crowd (Mt 16:8-12), is an indication
that this 'yeast' is in fact the 'bread' that the Jewish leaders are offering the Jewish crowd. The reference to the δῶχοχή of the Jewish leaders as 'yeast' (Mt 16:12) is a statement about the nature of this 'bread'; in contrast to the 'bread' that Jesus gives, it is iniquitous formalism without love.

It is this very formalistic perspective on the part of the Jewish leaders that Jesus exposes in the introductory pericope of the second sub-unit (Mt 15:1-9), and which he warns the Jewish crowd against (Mt 15:10f).

The imminent correspondence of the perspective of the Jewish crowd with that of the Jewish leaders, which had already been foreshadowed by the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth, is expressed in the second sub-unit in the image of the two types of blind who will fall in the pit (Mt 15:14). This logion is directly related to Jesus' call to the Jewish crowd (Mt 15:10) to listen and understand (ἀκούστε καὶ συνίστε), when he has to deal with a contentious question from the Jewish leaders regarding their formalistic religious practice. Jesus exposes their lack of proper inner attitudes by means of the parable regarding impurities coming from the mouths and hearts of people (Mt 15:17-20). The above-mentioned verba sentiendi, ἀκούστε καὶ συνίστε (Mt 15:10), do appear in the Gospel of Mark, but the reference to the 'blind leaders' who will fall into the pit with the 'blind nation' does not appear in Mark. (This expression appears in Lk 6:39, in a shorter form.)

It is particularly striking that, after Matthew 17:14, the first time that Jesus addresses the Jewish crowd directly (Mt 23), he again warms them against the 'leadership' of the Jewish leaders. This aspect of Jesus' perspective regarding the Jewish crowd gives added dimension to his name for them in Matthew 15:24 (also redaction material): τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἶκου Ἰσραήλ. 'They are lost because they were led astray by those whose mission it was to prepare them to comprehend the ways of God' (Murphy-O'Connor 1975:374f).

The disciples are the first to fail to recognize the danger that the Jewish leaders' formalistic point of view holds for the Jewish crowd (Mt 15:10-20). After Jesus has exposed both the ignorance of the Jewish leaders regarding the 'teaching' of the prophets and the Jewish leaders' role as puppets of Satan (Mt 16:1-4), he warns them against the influence of the 'yeast' of the bread of the Jewish leaders. At first the disciples do not understand the nature of this danger, but they later claim to understand it (Mt 16:5-12). Peter confesses that Jesus is 'the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Mt 16:13-16) and Jesus calls Peter, Πέτρος (Mt 16:18). Peter's confession and the πέτρος designation should therefore be read against the implicit background of the danger of the Jewish leaders as puppets of Satan.
What constitutes a unidirectional designation (Peter ←→ Jesus) in the Gospel of Mark becomes, in the Gospel of Matthew, a bidirectional designation (Peter ←→ Jesus): Simon confesses Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God; Jesus calls Simon Rock – 'the designation Jesus gives to Simon is just as much a title of office as the titles with which Simon addresses Jesus' (Meier 1979:108, note 105). Peter’s receiving of the ‘keys of the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 16:19) is set in relief against the background of this bidirectional designation. This should also be understood in the light of the danger of the Jewish leaders acting as the puppets of Satan. Against the backdrop of Matthew 7:24, where the words ὁ λογισμός and Ἠ Ρέθρον, as in Matthew 16:18, appear in combination (the only two such occurrences in the New Testament) and where they serve as metaphors referring to obedience to the will of the Father, and against the background of Matthew 11:28-30 (v 29 in particular) where there is also a reference to the Torah (the will of the Father) in the image τὸ ζυγὸν, the disciples’ receiving of the ‘keys’ refers to their sharing in the authority of the obedient Son of God. This authority refers to teaching ‘the right way to enter the kingdom... the way "to do the will of God", to "do justice" - a burning concern of Matthew’ (Meier 1979:113). The security that the disciples thus confer on the ἐκκλησία is protection from the onslaught of the πύλαι οἴδου (Mt 16:18). 'Hades could mean the realm of punishment for sinners and so the kingdom of Satan' (Meier 1978:112, note 111). And this danger, the danger that the ἐκκλησία will be overpowered, finds expression in the role of the antagonists, the Jewish leaders (cf Mt 11:12).

The confession of Peter is thus on the one hand the acceptance of Jesus’ invitation to take up his τὸ ζυγὸν (cf Mt 11:28-30) – a rabbinic expression that presents the law as a yoke (cf Gundry 1982:218ff). On the other hand there is a danger that the disciples will respond like the Jewish leaders, which indeed happens shortly after this in Matthew 16:21-23 (the third sub-unit). The danger consists therein that Peter has not included the Jesus logion ‘...learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart’ (Mt 11:29b) in his confession. The portrayal of Peter is thus expressed in Matthew 16:13-20 and Matthew 16:21-23 respectively, by the use of two contrasting designations: The role of Πέτρος and the role of τὸ σκάνδαλος. Matthew 16:21 begins a new pericope, without there being a change in Matthew’s portrayal of the disciples, as there was in Mark.

Kingsbury, among others, is therefore correct in stressing the fact that the temporal formula in Matthew 16:21, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡρῴου..., indicates a directional turn in the narrative. He, however, errs in considering this temporal formula a radical hiatus in the Gospel of Matthew. Seen topographically, the place where Matthew 16:13-20 and 16:21-28 are both acted out remains the same, namely near to
Caesarea Phillipi – it is only from Matthew 17:1 that there is a change in topography. The caesura found between Matthew 16:20 and Matthew 16:21 is the result of 'a literary and psychological point of view. Matthew...holds on to the bright and dark sides of Peter without dissolving and blurring the tension' (Meier 1979:115, note 115).

The Petrine confession and the πέτρος designation which conclude the second sub-unit (Mt 14:34-16:20) certainly function as a peak of 'insight' on the part of Peter (the disciples). It is, however, preceded in the remainder of the sub-unit by typical Matthean expressions:

- Jesus said to them: ‘You are still no more intelligent than the others. Don’t you understand?’ (Mt 15:16f);
- Jesus said to them: ‘Take care; be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees’ (Mt 16:6);
- Jesus knew what they were saying, so he asked them: ‘Why are you discussing among yourselves about not having any bread? How little faith you have! Don’t you understand yet?’ (Mt 16:8f);
- ‘How is it that you don’t understand that I was not talking about bread? Guard yourselves from the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!’ (Mt 16:11).

7.3.2.4 The third sub-unit – Matthew 16:21-17:27
This section begins with the advance knowledge that the imminent danger referred to earlier is now acute. Peter is equated with Satan when he refuses to anticipate the Son of God’s obedient way of the cross (Mt 16:21-23). The guarantor of the church against the powers of the underworld becomes the puppet of Satan, the confessor becomes the tempter (Kamphaus 1971:50).

Shortly afterwards, at the ‘transfiguration on the mount’ (Mt 17:1-13), this low point is neutralized by the disciples’ ‘insight’ (cf Matthean redaction – τότε συνήκαν) that the Jewish leaders are responsible for the death of John the Baptist, the ‘prototype’ of Jesus (Mt 17:13). The pattern of faith/lack of faith is surprisingly repeated in Matthew 17:17 when Jesus refers to the disciples as γενεὰ ἀπιστῶς καὶ διεσπραμμένη (Mk 9:19 has a shorter designation: γενεὰ ἀπιστῶς). The disciples’ inability to heal the sick in the Jewish crowd is explained here as being the result of their ὀλιγοποιτία (Mt 17:20). Although the response of the disciples (redaction material) to the subsequent (second) passion prediction (Mt 17:23b) is certainly not as negative as that of Peter to the previous (first) passion prediction (Mt 16:22), it does however represent the negative pole of Matthew’s portrayal of the disciples.
I thus differ from Meier who is of the opinion that this reaction, καὶ ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα, displays ‘insight’ on the part of the disciples. If we take into consideration that the formal passion predictions in the Gospel of Matthew have basically the same function as the reference to the parallel between the death of John the Baptist and the death of Jesus (Mt 17:9-13) and that the disciples have shown insight into this (τότε συνήκαν – Mt 17:13), the redaction material, καὶ ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα (Mt 17:23b), as a response to the second passion prediction, is indeed an anticlimax. It does not attest to obedience to the imperative ἀράτω τοῦ σταυρόν (Mt 16:24) which, as far as Jesus is concerned, follows Peter’s negative response to the first passion prediction. The concluding pericope of the micro narrative under consideration, the payment of the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27), in contrast, ends with the tense expectation that Peter (the disciples) has indeed heard and understood.

The pericope about the payment of the temple tax has so far received little serious attention in Matthean studies in regard to its meaning within the context of either Matthew 13:53-17:27 or the gospel as a whole. We agree with the following comment by Daube (1972:13) in this regard: ‘The literature seizes on details of the incident but considers the incident as a whole rather pointless. This is a mistake; on a closer examination, a profound teaching does emerge.’ What we basically have to deal with in this Matthean redaction as the concluding pericope of Matthew 13:53-17:27 is the opposition between Peter (the disciples) and the Jewish leaders concerning Jesus’ point of view regarding the temple.

The expression οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες (Mt 17:24) refers to Jewish officials (Meier 1979:125). This can be derived from their name for Jesus, namely διδάσκαλος (17:24b). The second person plural pronoun ύμων is also indicative of the ‘distance’ (cf Walker 1967:35) between the ‘receivers of the temple tax’ and Jesus. The topographical situation of Matthew 17:24-27 at Capernaum further emphasizes the opposition to Jesus (cf Mt 11:23; Lategan 1977:170). Capernaum is identified with Jerusalem, the seat of the temple and the origin of the ‘receivers of the temple tax’. In the Gospel of Matthew (as in Mark) Jerusalem is the theologische Ort of Jesus’ opponents (cf Lohmeyer 1942:106f; Marxsen 1959:33-76; Trilling 1964:132 – see later).

The pericope on the payment of the temple tax can be regarded as a foreshadowing of the purification of the temple (Mt 21:12-17), in which Jesus overturns the tables of the money-changers in the temple, quoting from Jeremiah’s temple discourse (Jr 7:11), and he heals the ‘blind and lame’ (v 14) inside the temple, while ‘children’ inside the temple (v 15) call him ὄσοννα τῷ ἄνω Δουλεία. In Matthew 17:24-27 Jesus emphasizes the freedom of the οἱ ύμοι of God with regard to any such
formalistic and particularistic temple service. Jesus is the ‘real temple’ (Mt 12:6); the consequence of his obedience to God’s will replaces formalistic temple service (Mt 24:2; 27:51). On the other hand, Peter has ‘insight’ (Mt 17:25a); he stands diametrically opposite the perspective from which the Jewish leaders are presented; he shares Jesus’ point of view: ‘...they both know and do the will of the heavenly Father’ (Kingsbury 1973:473).

The end of the third sub-unit, like the conclusion to the other two sub-units, is characterized by Peter’s ‘insight’ regarding the υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ motif. This ‘insight’ has actually reached a higher level than in the others; it coincides with Jesus’ own point of view. The micro narrative Matthew 13:53-17:27 thus ends in high tension. It appears that the disciples indeed have heard and understood!

Despite the ‘insight’, the ὀλιγοπιστία nature of the disciples is again in evidence at the third passion prediction (cf Mt 20:17ff with 20:20-25); it culminates in the passion narrative and continues even after Jesus’ resurrection – unlike the Marcan gospel where lack of understanding changes into ‘insight’ at the resurrection (cf Petersen 1978a:78). When the Jewish leaders wish to conceal the fact of the resurrection (Mt 28:11-15), Matthew has the following to say regarding the disciples (Mt 28:17): καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδότασαν. It is significant that the contrasting words προσεκύνεω and διστάζω appear both in Matthew 14:31, 33 and Matthew 28:17. The ‘insight’, as well as the ὀλιγοπιστία of the disciples is thus expressed in a particularly striking manner (cf P I Ellis 1967/8:576; Sheridan 1973:244, 246ff; Kingsbury 1979a:63-69). Giblin (1975:72) formulates this as follows: ‘Little faith (oligopistia), expressly noted inMt 14:31, seems to be implied in Mt 28:17a...[L]ittle faith’ is a failing curiously characteristic of disciples (cf Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:30; 16:8; 17:20)...Notwithstanding this characteristic limitation and deficiency, the disciples do eventually understand....’

7.3.2.5 Conclusion

We can summarize the result of our study regarding the narrator’s redactional activity and portrayal of the disciples in Matthew 13:53-17:27 as follows.

Matthew 13:53-17:27 has been formally constructed in accordance with the narrator’s redactional activity in particular, as well as his image of the disciples. This micro narrative has three parts. The conclusion of each sub-unit is Matthean redaction by means of which the disciples’ ‘insight’ regarding the υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ motif is made known – each time at a higher level. This ‘insight’ is however repeatedly preceded by a lack of understanding. Matthew has thus altered the framework of the Gospel of Mark by not taking over the turn of events in the plot of
Mark, expressed in the description of Peter’s confession and his reaction to the subsequent passion prediction. These two pericopes do not represent a turning point in the plot of the Gospel of Matthew. They emphasize on the one hand the disciples’ total insight and on the other their ὀλιγοπωτία nature. This image of the disciples prevails in the Gospel of Matthew.

At the beginning of the narrative (Mt 4:18-22) we find that the disciples respond positively to their call to be Jesus’ helpers in his mission as Emmanuel. In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 4:23-7:29) they hear, among other things, that they are ‘the salt of the earth’, but if the salt has lost its saltiness it is no longer worth anything (Mt 5:13). This danger applies to their possible role as ‘false prophets’ (Mt 7:15). In the commission discourse (Mt 9:36-11:1) we encounter them executing their mission to the Jewish crowd along the lines of Jesus’ mission in Matthew 8:1-9:35 (cf Mt 10:6ff). The successful completion of the mission is not, however, told – as it is in the case of the Gospel of Luke. In the parable discourse (Mt 13:1-52) the ‘insight’ of the disciples, as the ‘sons of the kingdom’, is emphasized as ‘sowers in the field’ (cf Mt 13:38, 51). This role is contrasted with the opposing role of the unbelieving and demonically inspired Jewish leaders in the micro narrative Matthew 11:1-12:50 (cf Mt 13:39). These two character traits, insight and opposition, merge in the portrayal of the disciples in the micro narrative Matthew 13:53-17:27:

* In their mission the disciples have the intermediary function of conveying Jesus’ love to the Jewish crowd (and the Gentiles).
* The disciples have ‘insight’ regarding the role of Jesus as the obedient ‘Son of God’ and their own role as ‘sons of God’.
* The disciples have ‘insight’ regarding the danger that formalistic exclusivism holds for the Jewish leaders.
* The disciples do not understand, on the other hand, that the Jewish leaders are ‘blind leaders’ of ‘the blind’; in other words, they do not understand the danger that formalism holds for the Jewish crowd.
* The disciples are inclined to respond like the Jewish leaders, in that their perspective threatens to show characteristics that are more fitting to the Jewish leaders’ point of view. The potential consequence of this inclination is treated in the rest of the Gospel of Matthew: In the community discourse (Mt 18:1-19:1) and the subsequent micro narrative (Mt 19:2-22:46) there seems to be an acute danger of the disciples looking down on and neglect the underprivileged among themselves, in that they do not forgive their sins as ‘brothers’ would (cf Mt 18:10; 19:13). In the judgment and parousia discourse (Mt 23:1-25:46) there is a grasping forward towards the completion
The disciples in Matthew's story

of the pre-paschal mission (cf Mt 10:40ff; Mt 23:34ff) and the post-paschal mission (cf Mt 28:16-20). This 'post-paschal mission' of the disciples is characterized by their 'faith' as well as their 'lack of faith', which are expressed by the verbs προσκυνεῖω and διστάζω respectively (Mt 28:17). The disciples' commission continues until the plot reaches its dénouement at the συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος (Mt 28:20), when the Son of man will separate the 'sheep' from the 'goats' (Mt 25:31-46).