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Wholeness, Hypocrisy, and Leadership

A Matthean Vision for Wholeness in Leadership

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Abstract

Theorists on Christian leadership on a broad scale embrace servant leadership theory (Åkerlund, 2015; Bredfeldt, 2006, pp. 88–89). There is, however, also an awareness of the deficiencies of the theory in light of Christian realism. This article looks at what may be called the dark side of leadership posed by the challenge of the problem of evil in theological anthropology. There are of course several dark sides of leadership and the one which is addressed here is the problem of hypocrisy in Christian leadership. Against this backdrop, Jesus' criticism of the hypocrisy of some Jewish religious leaders may be helpful with Matthew 23 as the central text. In this chapter which Benedict Viviano has called the least loved chapter in the gospel of Matthew (Viviano, 1990, p. 3), Jesus provides a scathing attack on the contemporary Jewish religious leaders. The criticism of the leadership gives several negative principles for Christian leadership and the overall problem may be identified as hypocrisy. This article analyzes the problem of hypocrisy in leadership in Matthew's gospel situated within the gospel itself and the overarching theological concern. Whereas hypocrisy is identified as Matthew's moral nightmare, the moral dream may be called wholeness, providing the consistency between the inward nature of a person which the hypocrite lacks. A distinct Matthean response to the problem of hypocrisy in Christian leadership is formulated both by way of identifying hypocrisy and by describing the path towards wholeness through repentance and God-centered living which is laid out in Matthew's gospel.

Keywords: Matthew's Gospel, leadership, hypocrisy, wholeness, authenticity, Jesus.

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INTRODUCTION

Modern leadership theories are acutely aware of the importance of the integrity of a leader. In Yukl and Gardner's global introduction to leadership in organizations, they observe that personal integrity is a universally endorsed attribute of outstanding leadership according to the Project GLOBE (Yukl & Gardner, 2020, p. 200).

This rise of leadership theories that include ethical considerations and behavior has been fueled by repeated reports of scandals involving corporate leaders. Yukl and Gardner remark that "Interest in ethical aspects of leadership has been growing as public confidence in political and corporate leaders continue to decline." (Yukl & Gardner, 2020, p. 250) Perhaps in response to this development, value-based and ethical leadership has been on the rise since the beginning of the millennium. Particularly Robert Greenleaf's concept of servant-leadership, which was already coined in the 1970s, is being embraced by several widely read authors including many on Christian leadership (Åkerlund, 2015; Bredfeldt, 2006, pp. 88–89). In these studies, Jesus has typically been presented as the prime example of servant leadership and thus an example to follow.

Value-based leadership involves a strong emphasis on the values and character of a leader which corresponds to that of the New Testament concerning a leader's character. For example, biblical scholars have pointed out that the main qualifications for a leader, according to the letters to Timothy and Titus, are not certain competencies but character (Carson & Moo, 2005, pp. 575, 583).

These high ideals however also present a danger, namely the danger of hypocrisy. D. A. Carson remarks: "It almost seems as if the greater the demand for holiness, the greater the opportunity for hypocrisy. This is why I suspect that the danger is potentially the most serious among religious leaders." (Carson, 1999, p. 59)

This study will explore aspects of Christian leadership through an analysis of the opposite of an ideal character presented in the New Testament found in Jesus' criticism of a part of the contemporary religious leadership in Matthew 23. This has been called the least loved chapter in the gospel of Matthew (Viviano, 1990, p. 3), where Jesus provides a scathing attack on the scribes and the Pharisees whom he describes as teachers with authority (23,2-3) and guides (23,16) and thus performed leadership. The criticism of that leadership indirectly indicates some pitfalls *also for Christian leadership* and the overall problem may be identified as hypocrisy which is a repeated charge in the chapter. So, the Jewish leaders are but one example of hypocrisy in leaders.

The criticized leaders in Matthew 23 can be said to represent what has been called one of the dark sides of leadership. Steven Crowther identifies this dark side of leadership in the allure of success and the potential development of narcissistic leadership. He remarks: "Often models of leadership do not include development in the internal areas of the person to overcome this narcissistic temptation." (Crowther, 2018, p. 164). This dark side of leadership is even present in ethical leadership models such as servant leadership. (Kessler, 2019) It has furthermore been pointed out that servant leadership as developed by Robert Greenleaf underestimates the power of evil which is firmly acknowledged in theological anthropology (Nullens, 2019, pp. 14–15).

It is the argument of this paper that Jesus' criticism of contemporary religious leaders functions as a warning for future religious leaders, the disciples, against one of the temptations of leadership. Simultaneously, it implicitly provides a call to inner transformation and wholeness as a fundamental feature of the servant leadership he calls his disciples to practice (Matt 20:25-27; 23:11).

What is Hypocrisy?

Although the words hypocrite and hypocrisy are derived from the Greek nouns *hypokrites* and *hypokrisis* and appear on the whole as direct transliterations, one should be cautious to assume that the word group has the same meaning in ancient Greek and the New Testament as it has in contemporary English. According to Marriam-Webster.com, the word is defined as "a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not: behavior that contradicts what one claims to believe or feel" (*Hypocrisy*, 2023). The entry especially points to "the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion." The definition thus indicates a conscious lack of integrity such that a hypocrite is someone who deliberately deceives others. That is however not always the case when *hypokrites* or *hypokrisis* are used in the New Testament.

There has been some discussion of the exact meaning of the word group in the New Testament. The discussion mainly concerns whether the word should be understood against a Greek background or a Hebrew background. In the earliest attestations of the Greek verb, it had the meaning "to answer" in the sense of passing a verdict or judgment on a question, similar to the verb *apokrinomai* (Silva, 2014). It came to be used for a certain kind of answering, namely that which is done by an actor in dialogue as part of a stage play (Liddell et al., 1996).

A hypocrite originally meant an actor but took on a particularly negative connotation in LXX, where it came to mean 'a godless one' (Job 34:30; 36:13). This use of the word in the LXX has led to the assumption that this is also the meaning of the word in the New Testament and that the Greek meaning of pretense is absent (Marshall, 2002, pp. 145–147). This assumption has been rightly rejected by Barr who suggests that although the meaning of hypocrisy in the New Testament has its background in the LXX the word nevertheless includes the notion of pretense and describes a person who very much behaves like an actor. Barr goes on to state that hypocrisy is close to self-righteousness, which indeed involves self-deceit (Barr, 1990, p. 321). In this way, hypocrisy may refer both to deliberate deceit as well as self-deception since self-righteousness may be due to ignorance of the true state of one's standing before God.

At the most basic level, hypocrisy signifies an inconsistency between a person's outward appearance and inward nature. According to Jonathan Pennington, "[d]oubleness is a good way to describe hypocrisy in Matthew, but it is a doubleness of actions and the inner person or heart, not of words and action." (Pennington, 2017, p. 91; See also Spicq, 1994, vol. 3 p. 411) It is then not necessarily a discrepancy between word and deed since both words and deeds may present a false image (Powell, 1995, p. 423).

Matthew uses the noun for hypocrite, *hypokrites,* 13 times in the gospel, six times of which is in Matthew 23. Besides Matthew 23, it appears four times in the Sermon on the Mount (6:2; 6:5; 6:16; 7:5) and 15:7, 22:18, and finally in 24:51. The noun for hypocrisy, *hypokrisis,* appears once in 23:28.

We will focus on its use in Matthew 23 but also draw insights from the use elsewhere in Matthew.

The Denouncement of the Scribes and the Pharisees

Matthew 23 can be seen as a further intensification of Jesus' confrontation with the religious leaders of the day. This conflict has been building up through the gospel and has increased in intensity in the few chapters leading up to chapter 23. Now Jesus finally denounces the Jewish leadership and pronounces judgment upon them before the confrontation culminates in the passion.

Modern readers may be astounded by the tone of Jesus in this chapter, and it seems particularly problematic on this side of the Holocaust. Without neglecting the dire consequences of the highly problematic reception history of these words against the Jews, the

harshness of Jesus' words should nevertheless be understood within the historical context of the culture he is speaking (Davies & Allison, 1997, p. 258; Keener, 1999, p. 536).[1]

The language found here follows the conventions of a polemical discourse of the day and is no more anti-semitic or anti-Jewish than the oracles of judgment found in the OT prophets or the harsh criticism of denouncements that are found for example in the Qumran scrolls as part of an inner-Jewish polemic (Davies & Allison, 1997; Garland, 2001; Keener, 1999). The text was never intended to portray Jews in any general way although it has regrettably been used that way and Jews have at times been seen as the prototypical hypocrites with this text in mind. Jesus speaks as a Jew to Jews and as such the message of the text is not that leaders belonging to a certain religious group are hypocrites. Rather, the message beyond the specific text is that there is a general danger of hypocrisy among religious leaders and Christians unfortunately fare no better in this case than others.

This is what makes this text worthwhile to explore as its application in the church today should be on the church's own leaders. Didactically and pedagogically the pitfalls of leadership which the text presents also serve as a continual warning and highlight the urgency to follow the positive teaching on personal integrity and authenticity as a requirement for Christian leaders. Davies and Allison also rightly observe that "Christian history has demonstrated that, whoever the polemical objects originally were, and whatever they might have done, contemporary application of Matthew 23 should target the church; for all the vices here attributed to the scribes and Pharisees have attached themselves to Christians, and in abundance" (Davies & Allison, 1997, p. 262). [2]

Accordingly, it is important to note that the first half of these words are said, not to the Pharisees and the scribes, but to the disciples and the crowds (23:1). As such, the judgments become a warning or a negative paradigm for them to avoid (Keener, 1999, p. 536).

Garland argues that the text is mainly designed as a teaching for the disciples who are in danger of committing the same sins as the scribes and Pharisees, the "scribes of the kingdom" (Matt 13:51) (Garland, 2001, p. 232)[3] He cites Johnson for support, "The purpose of polemic is not so much the rebuttal of the opponent as the edification of one's own school. Polemic was primarily for internal consumption." (Johnson, 1989, p. 433) In Matthew, it is also clear that hypocrisy is set up as a danger for the disciples. Jesus warns them concerning their practice of piety (6:1-18) against judging others (7,1-5) and although hypocrisy is not mentioned in the passage about false prophets (7:15-23), the concept is certainly present and relates to people who ostensibly believe in Jesus.

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[1] Both Davies and Allison and Keener give several examples of the harsh polemics of the day both in the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition and among Jews. The reception history is traced in Ulrich Luz's commentary (2005, pp. 108, 133)

[2] That this is true has sadly recently been evidenced by many high-profile scandals among Church leaders. One can mention the cases involving Mark Driscoll, Ravi Zacharias, Tullian Tchividjian, and Brian Huston.

[3] Garland thinks that Matthew may not only be warning but even criticizing trends already present in the Christian community. He cites a rhetorical strategy attributed to Demetrius of Phaleron: "Since great lords and ladies dislike to hear their own faults [hamartēmata] mentioned, we shall therefore, when counseling them to refrain from faults, not speak in direct terms; we shall rather blame some other persons who have acted in the same manner. For example, in addressing the tyrant Dionysius, we shall inveigh against the tyrant Phalaris and the cruelty of Phalaris.… The hearer is admonished without feeling himself censured."… (On Style, 5.292) (Garland 2001, 233)

Therefore, the modern Christian reader should not primarily come away from the text with a negative and judgmental view of the Jewish leaders. Rather the text calls for self-discernment and warning for ancient as well modern "scribes of the Kingdom".[4]

Leadership Lessons from Matthew 23 – the Pitfall of Hypocrisy and a Plea for Authenticity

We will now move on to an examination of the words of Jesus in Matthew 23. 23:1, which has already been discussed above, set the scene for the discourse which falls in two halves. The first part is 23:2-12 in which the disciples and the crowd are directly addressed while the Jewish leadership is described in the third person. In the second part, 23:13-36, the scribes and the Pharisees are addressed directly in the second person with seven woes and a concluding judgment on them and this generation (23:34-36). The whole chapter is rounded off with a saying of judgment not only upon the leadership but also upon Jerusalem. In the following survey, only 23:2-33 will be discussed since those verses specifically refer to the scribes and the Pharisees.

Although the direct indictment of being a hypocrite is not found in the first section of the chapter (Matt 23:2-12), this section introduces and governs the woes in which the Jewish leaders repeatedly are called hypocrites (Branch-Trevathan, 2020, p. 197).

Warning against Inconsistency between Words and Deeds

The first warning given is about the discrepancy between words and deeds. Matthew 23:2-3 is a puzzling and surprising statement concerning the authority of the Jewish religious leaders on the lives of the disciples. How can the disciples be told to hold and obey everything the scribes and Pharisees teach when earlier in the gospel they have been warned about that teaching? Even within chapter 23 itself, this statement is contradicted by the rest of the chapter.

Several proposals have been made, but in my view, the statement is best understood as irony. Otherwise, we have a major inconsistency on our hands (France, 2007, p. 859; Carson 1984, p. 472). Regardless of the interpretation of Matthew 23:3a, verses 23:2-4 as a whole serve as a classic example of what may also be called hypocrisy in the modern definition of the word. The scribes and the Pharisees do not practice what they preach. This basically disqualifies their role as teachers (Garland, 2001, p. 233). Jesus furthermore states that they may hold on to a burdensome interpretation of the law for others but find ways to avoid living up to this interpretation themselves. This final part brings the reader back to Matt 11:28-30 and Jesus' own invitation of rest to those who carry heavy burdens by instead pointing to his yoke and his teaching which will provide rest for their souls.

Warning against Seeking the Praise of Humans

The second warning Jesus gives to the crowds and his disciples about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees is that "everything they do is done for people to see." (23:5-7) The expression "for men to see" is reminiscent of Jesus' criticism of the religious leaders in the Sermon on the

[4] Commenting on the use of hypocrisy in the Sermon on the Mount, Allison draws fruitfully from the Christian tradition regarding the application of the charge of hypocrisy when he observes that Origen and Jerome contrasted wrong Christian practice with right Christian practice, not Christian practice with Jewish practice when they denounced hypocrisy (Allison 1999, 110).

Mount (cf. 6:1). The specific criticism here focuses on two related practices: wearing of religious garments and positioning for religious prominence. In Jesus' view, conducting religious performances to enhance reputation and status among the people will actually shift the focus away from God and eventually blot out God from the people's attention.

The religious garments of the leaders come in for the first criticism, "They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long" (23:5). Phylacteries are small leather cases of various shapes containing passages of Scripture written on parchment. They were worn as an attempt to obey the admonition in the book of Deuteronomy, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads" (Deut. 11:18; cf. Ex. 13:9, 13; Deut. 6:8). They were fastened to the left arm and forehead to be worn by adult males in the morning service.

On the four corners of a garment worn by men were "tassels" that had a blue cord, conforming to the admonitions of Numbers 15:37–41 and Deuteronomy 22:12. The tassels reminded the people to obey God's commandment and to be holy to God (Num. 15:40). Jesus accuses these religious leaders of enlarging their tassels as a display of their piety which is another way of saying that they try to gain the admiration of the people.

The religious positions of honor come in again for criticism. "They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues." Seating at special dinner occasions was granted to guests according to their rank or status. The warning is rounded off with a description of the way the scribes and Pharisees love to be greeted and acknowledged for their title and office.

True Honor comes from God, not Human Titles (23:8-12)

The last part of the second warning and description of the behavior of the scribes and the Pharisees leads to a direct warning to the disciples, emphatically contrasting them with the religious leadership. The disciples are then taught not to seek titles of position and power. Rather, Jesus calls his disciples to a basic equality before him as their master and teacher and God as their father. They are all first and foremost disciples, i.e. pupils of Christ and brothers and sisters. The point here is then not to deny anybody in the Christian community the function of teaching but a prohibition against taking pride in that by labeling oneself as a teacher and elevating some above others (Hagner, 1998, p. 660). Rather, Jesus calls his disciples to servanthood and humility in their calling with words that are in close parallel with Matthew 20:26-27. The final sentence of the section underlines the theocentric and Christocentric life that the disciples are called to live and provides an eschatological goal. It is God who does the final humbling or exalting in the final judgment, and it is that final horizon the disciples should have on their service.

Garland argues that verses 8-12 should be seen as a major clue for understanding the entire chapter since it contains direct teaching to the disciples and thus the ecclesiological application of the chapter. Jesus is pointing the disciples to live theocentric and Christocentric lives with the final eschatological judgment in view. This is a sharp contrast to the human-centered life of the scribes and the Pharisees (Matt 23:5-7).

In the second part of chapter 23 (23:13-36), Jesus pronounces seven woes on these Jewish leaders. It is in these woes we find the direct indictment of hypocrisy which has been implicitly present in the first half. The woes can be structured as three pairs of judgments with the seventh forming a climax (Davies and Allison 1997, 282; Hagner 1998, 666).[5]

[5] Verse 14 which is part of most modern translations is left out here since it was probably not part of the original text and thus left out of the main text in NA28.

Leading Others Away from Salvation

Woes one and two (Matt 23:13, 15) concern the consequences of the Jewish leadership on others. The first two woes may function as a summary of the consequences of the Pharisees' teachings and behavior. They were supposed to be leaders but, in their pride and rejection of the gospel of the kingdom, they have become misleaders. They have shut the door to salvation, which is the meaning of entering the Kingdom, and instead provide a path to damnation. The hypocrisy involved in this behavior may not be a conscious deceit since they believe that they are right in rejecting the message of Jesus as well as recruiting new followers.

Taking God and Neighbor out of the Equation

Woes three and four both discuss the interpretation of the law in the tradition of the Pharisees and the scribes (halakha). The third woe labels the Jewish leaders as "blind guides" and not hypocrites (Matt 23:16). This change fits well with the issue of misinterpretation of the law when, due to their fixation on the minutiae of the law, they neglect what matters. Their reasoning and attempts to distinguish between oaths can only be upheld if God is left out of the picture (Garland, 2001, p. 234). In the fourth woe, Jesus does not condemn their tithing practice as such (Matt 23:23-24). But they get the priorities wrong and neglect justice, mercy, and faithfulness probably in their relationships with other people and particularly the weak (Hagner, 1998, p. 670). This is similar to the prophets who criticized religion which focused on ritual and forgot what really matters (Is 58, Hos 6,6), a criticism that Jesus cites earlier in Matthew (9:13; 12:7).

On both accounts, the Pharisees are accused of forgetting the true meaning of their actions. Their oaths and their tithing ultimately concern the service of God and their neighbor. But although they attempt to follow the law correctly in its details, they practice neither love for God nor neighbor.

It is the Heart That is Corrupted

Woes five and six concern the contrast between the outside and the inside. Here Jesus points to a discrepancy between the inward nature of the Jewish leaders and their attempt to appear clean and righteous. Despite their best attempts, their deeds nevertheless expose them, and Jesus argues that they need to be changed from the inside out. It is their hearts that are the problem (Matt 15:11, 17-20).

Bloodguilt Cannot be Remedied Without Repentance

The final woe portrays the Pharisees as murderers. Although they try to remedy their forefather's sins by building monuments in honor of the prophets and the righteous, this nevertheless exposes them once again as hypocrites: although they may honor a *dead* prophet, they continue the practice of their fathers by persecuting the *living* prophets (23:34). By doing this the demonstrate that their focus on the power and prestige which their religious position gives them makes them deaf to the prophets which God sends to them.

Jesus ends the attack with a warning about impending judgment. In that way, the final words to the Jewish leaders in Matthew are the same as the first. When they come to John the Baptist, he warns them about the coming judgment (Matt 3) and Jesus does the same here. Thus, the second part of the discourse ends with the same horizon of final judgment as the first did (23:12). The outlook of the second part is however entirely pointing towards condemnation since the addressees have rejected the call to repent.

Summary and Implications for Christian Leadership

It is useful here to summarize the negative and positive leadership lessons of Matthew 23. Hypocrisy can generally be defined as an inconsistency between outward appearance and inward nature. With that in mind, we may overall describe the accusation of Jesus on the Jewish leaders as that they focus on what humans see rather than what God sees. In the first half, this was expressed through the ways they were seeking to appear as good teachers of the law and generally seeking honor and prestige. In the second half, the woes exposed the leaders as people who despite appearances lived lives without considering God and the neighbor. Rather, their focus is on their achievements, a meticulous upholding of the law, and a lack of awareness of their deep inner corruption which God only sees, characterized their behavior.

In the middle of these negative descriptions of the Jewish leaders, we find direct warnings and instructions for the disciples on leadership (23:8-12). The essence of what is taught in this passage is that the "scribes of the kingdom" should live theocentric and Christocentric lives and first assume a position as a brother, a child, and a disciple. What counts in the kingdom of God is service and humility.

The implication of this chapter for Christian leadership is the ever-present danger of seeking praise, prestige, and honor from men rather than living before God. This may be done by showcasing piety through outward visible symbols, burdening people with spiritual ideals that the leader does not follow, and meticulous upholding of rules for the sake of the rules themselves. All this may obscure the reality of God's presence (23:21), judgment (23:12), and one's deep inner corruption and need for salvation (23:13) and result in a lack of humility (23:12) and compassion (23:23).

In the next section, I will portray the opposite of hypocrisy in Matthew.

Wholeness

"The fact that the visible may lie – the possibility of hypocrisy – constitutes Matthew's moral nightmare." (Branch-Trevathan, 2020, p. 196) If hypocrisy is Matthew's nightmare what is then his vision or dream for human behavior? It is consistency between the inside and the outside of a person or what may be called wholeness which in turn constitutes righteousness (Oakley, 1985, p. 118), a righteousness that goes beyond that of the Pharisees and the scribes (Matt 5:20). In Matt 23:23 the Pharisees are accused of neglecting 'the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith'. This indicates the nature of the righteousness Jesus demands in Matthew.

The righteousness that is demanded in Matthew could initially seem like a call to obey a strict set of rules in which a bar of moral perfection is elevated compared to that of the Pharisees and the scribes. But the righteousness which Jesus demands is not simply quantitatively stricter, it is qualitatively different from that of the Pharisees and the scribes. Richard Hays comments, "Matthew's rigorous summons to moral perfection cannot be rightly understood as a call to obey a comprehensive system of rules. Despite his emphasis on the church's commission to teach obedience to Jesus' commandments, Matthew sees such teaching as instrumental to a deeper goal: the transformation of the character and of the heart." (Hays, 1996, p. 98)

This vision is expressed by using the heart metaphor.[6] Matthew's use of the heart metaphor closely corresponds with the use in the Old Testament: as the spiritual seat of a person. Eight of the nine uses of *kardia*, which are special for Matthew compared to Mark,

[6] The next six paragraphs are largely based on a chapter in my Ph.D.-dissertation (Holmgaard, 2018, pp. 221–222)

concern the 'quality' of persons (5:8; 5:28; 6:21; 11:29; 12:34; 13:15; 13:19; 18:35). The issue of the heart is also found in the near context of Matthew 23. In Matt 22:37 Jesus cites Deut 6,5 and the commandment to love God with all your heart. In Matthew 23 this commandment is also present through the mentioning of the phylacteries (23:5) which with the placement of one of them on the left arm symbolized the commandment to fix the commandments of God on the heart (Deut 6:4-9). Jesus indicts the scribes for only seeming pious without actually taking the word to heart and on the inside they are corrupt. (Matt 23:27-28)

Matt 18:35 can be seen as the clearest expression of the importance of the heart metaphor in Matthew: "So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart." (Matt 18:35). In this conclusion to the parable of the unforgiving servant, it becomes clear that a change is expected in the person who receives the forgiveness of God (cf. Matt 6:14-15). (Müller, 2012, p. 37) Significantly, the heart is here connected with judgment. This is also the case in 12:34b-37:

> For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words, you will be condemned.

The use of *kardia* in the Sermon on the Mount underlines the importance of the heart. The eschatological promise of seeing God is given to those who have a pure heart (5:8), while also pointing to the problem of adultery in the heart (5:28) and the struggle in the heart between the treasures of the earth and the treasure of heaven (6:21). The heart is easily deceived.

The plight of the people is described in terms of a heart that is not perceptible to the word of God (13:15), a heart that is far away from God despite outward appearances (15:8-9), a heart that is the root of evil (15:19). In Matthew 7:11, even the disciples are described as evil. It is thus correct when Stephen Westerholm (2007, p. 129) concludes, "It is axiomatic for Jesus that people, in contrast with God, are evil, and that the human heart is bent on evil."

The plight of humans, therefore, is fundamentally not a lack of conformity with God's commandments externally, but a heart that is far away from God (15:8-9). This corresponds to Matthew 7:21, where Jesus is honored with his lips, but with it, the will of his heavenly father is not done. To do God's will, a transformation of the heart is required.

Without an inward transformation, ostensibly right actions and words are of no use. Branch-Trevathan (2020, p. 112) notes: "[I]f the roots of those expressions are not right, they thwart it. They constitute, in Matthew's words, 'lawlessness'." This point is particularly clear in Matthew 7,15-23 where even those who say lord, lord and have performed miracles in the name of Jesus are rejected as lawbreakers. Their words and deeds although appearing to be right do not qualify as doing the will of the heavenly father. The context makes it clear that the problem is a lack of consistency between the inside and the outside of a person, which is the definition of hypocrisy.

In Matthew 7,15-23 another metaphor for the need for inward change is used; the metaphor of the tree and the fruit (3:7-10; 7:15-20; 12:33; 13:23; 21:43). It becomes clear that although fruits are outward actions, the prerequisite for bearing good fruit is to be a good tree. This correspondence between the inward nature and outward actions is also present in Matt 12:33-34, where the heart metaphor is combined with the language of people as trees that bear fruit. A good heart is equivalent to a good tree:

> 33 Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

In this passage the tree and the fruit parallel the heart and the words. Elsewhere in Matthew, the two metaphors are also combined. Thus, in the parable of the sower (13:1-23) the word is sown into the heart (13:19) and the one who understands the word is likened to good soil, where the word grows and produces fruit (13.23). Furthermore, Jesus cites Isa 29:13 in Matt 15:8-9: "This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me". He then continues to talk about plants that are not planted by his heavenly father (15:13 cf. 13:24-30.36-43) and the heart as the source of evil (15:19).

To do God's will, a transformation of the heart is required, which accepts the Word and grasps it (13:23). The tree must become good for it to bear good fruit. The image of fruits and trees stresses the organic connection between the inward nature of a person and his/her actions. It points to the need for wholeness. This is Matthew's dream in contrast to the nightmare of hypocrisy.

This of course applies to all believers. However, in terms of Christian leadership and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 23 this ideal is particularly urgent for those who serve as teachers and guides in the community since their actions can have dire consequences not only for themselves but also for their followers. A fundamental transformation of the heart is needed since the ultimate results of one's actions depend on one's inward nature and motivation. A good tree bears good fruit.

This does not, however, provide us with a solution to the problem of hypocrisy. And at least two questions need to be answered: how is hypocrisy discerned, and what is the path to wholeness?

How is Hypocrisy Discerned?

When true righteousness has to do with wholeness and conversely hypocrisy can be described as duplicity, how can one discern whether there is consistency between the inside and the outside of a person when no one truly has access to the inward nature of another person?

In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus says that we may know the inner state of people by their fruits – i.e., by their actions. But how does this work logically? When people apparently do good things – prophesying, casting out demons, performing mighty deeds, how are the disciples then able to identify the wolf under the sheep's clothing or the diseased tree bearing the fruit?

Part of the answer lies in the metaphor of the tree and the fruit. The metaphor points to the eventuality in the ability to discern hypocrisy. (Pennington, 2017, p. 278) A tree does not bear fruit immediately it will come eventually and even when the fruit is there the quality of the fruit cannot be discerned simply by looking at it, a closer examination is necessary. This calls for patience and a close examination before judging. The truth will eventually become apparent and definitely in the eschatological judgment, people will be shown for what they truly are (cf. Matt 24:42-51).

The component of final judgment is important here because it means that hypocrisy in some cases remains hidden and is only known by God. In Jesus' denouncement of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 and elsewhere when he calls people hypocrites one could ask – how does he know these things? How does he know the hidden motives of people? And the answer to this is of course because of his divinity. As the Son of God, he knows the hearts of people. As such the danger of hypocrisy also calls for self-discernment knowing that God sees the things that are hidden before one's fellow humans.

This is the point Jesus makes in Matt 6:1-18, where he makes it clear that true piety is not what is done when other people are watching but what is done in secret, where only God sees. Concerning Matthew 23, Jesus denounces the Pharisees for only doing things to be seen

by men (Matt 23:5-7). This narcissistic tendency is a danger that is prevalent for leaders since a position of authority is often linked with honor and prestige. This point links up well with the next section about the path to wholeness.

The Path to Wholeness

We saw above that the overall charge of Jesus on the contemporary religious leaders is that they focus on what humans see rather than what God sees. They display something in public to gain and increase their status which they are not in reality. Their demonstrative actions and their inward state/attitude do not match. While they may be able to impress their fellow humans, God knows their hearts! He cannot be fooled.

The same feature connected to hypocrisy appears in Matthew 6 and finally in the parable in Matthew 24:42-51 the bad servant who will be put with the hypocrites is the one who acts without considering the judgment of God. What does this knowledge of living life before a God who eventually judges entail? It involves living a God-centered life instead of a human-centered life. The essence of this life is summarized in Matt 23:12: "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." In this context, the disciples are called to humble themselves both before God and humans. It is in the acknowledgment of God's judgment and ultimate service for him that they are to serve others.

This humbling before God can in other terms be described as a life that is characterized by repentance. Although other virtues such as love, justice, mercy, and faithfulness are prominent in Matthew, I will argue that repentance in Matthew functions as the center for growth and character building. In that humble position before God his love, justice, mercy, and faithfulness are received so that it can be extended to others. This is the lesson of the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:21-35) and Jesus repeatedly faults the Pharisees for failing to show mercy (9:13; 12:7; 23:23).

It is instructive to begin where the announcement of the Kingdom begins in Matthew, with the preaching of John the Baptist. John announces the coming of the Kingdom which is the rule of God and in the word of Isaiah it is announced that God will come (Matt 3:1-3). That means that people must be ready to face God's judgment, and thus the announcement of the gospel of the Kingdom is accompanied by the call to repent and be baptized. The call to repentance prefaces the offer of the gospel. And this is also where the first confrontation with the Pharisees and the scribes is found. The first rejection of the Pharisees and the scribes concerns their unwillingness to truly repent. This rejection is repeated in Matthew 23 and in both passages, the Jewish leaders are called the brood of vipers (Matt 3:7; 23:33). And already here they exhibit hypocrisy as they come to be baptized by John, but it is clear that they are only doing that to be seen by people. John scolds them for not bearing the fruit of repentance (Matt 3:8). So here we have repentance and the demand to bear fruit mentioned together. True repentance is then the most basic requisite for transformation and fruit-bearing – i.e., doing the will of God.

This point is underlined by the fact that Jesus repeats the message of John by calling people to repent considering the dawn of the Kingdom. And it prefaces the ethic of the Kingdom, the ethic of Matthew's gospel which is outlined in the sermon on the mount. "By virtue of its placement within his narrative, Matthew presents chs. 5-7 as instruction for the repentant." (Branch-Trevathan, 2020, p. 205)

And if that was not enough, the sermon opens with the pronouncing of blessing on the ones who are spiritually bankrupt (Matt 5:3). Repentance is the doorway for God's healing and transformation (Matt 13:15) and characterizes the one who hears the word and understands it so that he may bear fruit (Matt 13:23).

This is true for the leader, although it is essentially not different from the life of a disciple. And that is exactly the point. A leader is always first and fundamentally a disciple. Jesus admonishes his disciples to refrain from being called by leadership titles. This does not mean that no one leads or that a Christian should not lead. The basic identity and the formation of the character, however, is based on a life as a disciple, a person who follows Jesus. This means that Matthew presents a Christian leadership ideal that fits very well with Kessler and Kretzschmar's definition of Christian leadership: "A Christian leader is a person who follows Christ and whom other persons follow." (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015, p. 2)

This section began by pointing to the knowledge of God's judgment as part of living a God-centered life, and judgment is emphasized throughout Matthew. In the larger framework of the gospel narrative, Matthew points to the presence of God with his people both at the beginning (Matt 1:23) and end of the gospel (Matt 28:20). Not as the one who judges but as the one who has come to save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21) and abide with his people to the end of the age (Matt 28:20). To follow Christ means to follow him as an example of servanthood as presented in the Christian appropriation of the theory of servant leadership. But importantly it also involves following him in dependence of his forgiveness and empowerment.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have addressed what may be called one of the dark sides of leadership by addressing the problem of hypocrisy in Matthew's gospel and Matthew 23 in particular. It was shown that hypocrisy in Matthew signifies an inconsistency between a person's outward appearance and the inward nature. In Matthew 23, the contemporary religious leaders who are called hypocrites by Jesus exhibit this inconsistency and focus on what humans see rather than what God sees. Jesus nevertheless exposes their true inner nature despite their appearance.

In contrast to the hypocrites, Jesus in Matthew calls his disciples to wholeness by employing two key metaphors – that of the heart and that of the fruit and the tree. Both metaphors demonstrate the need for inward transformation to live a righteous life. For Christian leadership today this means there needs to be a focus on internal issues and character development which guard against the narcissistic temptations leaders face and maintain integrity or what I have termed wholeness.

It was argued that the path to wholeness at its center involves a life in repentance. Repentance is the prerequisite for inward transformation and character-building. Furthermore, per Matthew 23:8-11 this shows that the Christian leader is always first and fundamentally a disciple before being a leader. The leader's life and service should be God-centered. Centered upon the God who according to Matthew sees and judges but also forgives and abides with his empowering presence to the end of the age.

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