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CHAPTER

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The Gospel of Matthew

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INTRODUCTION

A scribe trained for the implementation of the inclusive *basileia* vision of Jesus draws out of a treasure of past and present, the new and the old toward a rereading of the Jesus story for a particular historical situation! (Matt 13:52)

THIS FIRST-CENTURY IMAGE provides an analogy for this present late twentieth century feminist-ecumenical reading of the same story, a task that is also captured symbolically in the image of "revisioning" employed by Adrienne Rich. She describes it as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction." Such a revisioning needs to take account, therefore, of both the "old text" and the "new critical direction."

OLD TEXT/NEW CRITICAL DIRECTION

Returning again to the first-century image of the scribe trained for the implementation of the *basileia* vision who brings out from a storehouse both the new and the old, we are provided with a key to the narrative and theological worlds which the Marthean Gospel constructs.

The particular story of Jesus, who is introduced to the reader in the opening sentence of the narrative, is set within the story of Israel contained within its scriptures. The Gospel opens with the designation of Jesus as "son of David" and "son of Abraham" (1:1). The subsequent patrilineage (1:1-17) situates Jesus more deeply within this story, and throughout the Gospel the narrator reiterates this link by means of both explicit fulfillment quotations (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9-10) and continual allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures. For the Marthean reader, therefore, the theme of promise/fulfillment, which is integral to the unfolding of the Jesus story, enables the reader to expect fulfillment of those promises that point beyond the story itself (24:14; 26:13; 28:20).

From the beginning of the narrative, however, a polemical note is introduced, as Herod the king is set over against the infant Jesus and seeks to slay him among the many innocent children he orders killed (2:16–18). John the Baptist preaches specifically against the Pharisees and Sadducees, the leaders of the Jewish people, and it is these same leaders who, as the plot develops, become the chief opponents of Jesus—finally, together with the chief priests, bringing about his death. They represent the Israel that the Gospel presents as rejecting Jesus, the Israel upon whom all the righteous blood shed upon the earth will come (23:35–36). Finally, in 27:25, it is no longer representatives but the people who are characterized as drawing down on themselves and their children the blood of Jesus whom they wish to have crucified.

Tension exists, therefore, in the symbolic universe the narrative creates, as Israel is source of the promise on the one hand and yet enemy on the other. Such tension finds a possible explanation, however, in the rhetorical situation encoded in the text: an early Christian community seeks to establish itself with a new and emerging identity in continuity with Israel and yet struggles with its Jewish sisters and brothers “across the street” who claim a very different identity and yet the same continuity. It is in such a situation that polemic arises and is sharpened. The history of reception of the Matthean text has, however, created a “politics of otherness” in relation to Judaism far beyond the polemic encoded in the text.

The tension also results from another central theme of the narrative, namely, Jesus’ mission of preaching the *basileia* of God, the just and righteous purpose of God for all humanity (4:17). As with all other prophetic or renewal movements within Israel’s history, Jesus’ mission to call God’s people back to God’s purpose symbolized as *basileia* would probably be met with resistance, would create tension. Some would accept, but many more would reject. When Israel is characterized as rejecting the prophet Jesus, this is but another example of those of the dominant culture failing to be changed by their prophets. Readers will, however, through this tension, be challenged to identify with either those of Israel who reject Jesus or those of remnant Israel who accept.

The *basileia* which Jesus preached and which the Matthean Gospel proclaims was characterized by other aspects that brought it into conflict or tension with the dominant culture. The Sermon on the Mount names blessed those whom society despises—the meek, the merciful, peacemakers, and those persecuted on account of righteousness (5:1–12). The miracle stories speak of the wholeness that is possible for all humanity, and hence the inclusiveness of the *basileia* is made manifest as outsiders such as lepers, Gentiles, unclean women, and the demon-possessed are pronounced “clean” in a society that considers them pollutants (chaps. 8–9 and elsewhere). Jesus’ vision of the *basileia* as symbolically presented in the parables, entails hearing, understanding, and doing the word of the *basileia* (13:23); selling all for its sake (13:44);

and being compassionate toward those considered least (23:40)—all of which create tension with the dominant cultural ethos. This vision is enfolded in the life of Jesus as related in the Gospel story. He eats with tax collectors and sinners (9:10–13), touches an unclean leper (8:3) and is touched by a menstruating woman (9:20), has his vision of God’s just purposes expanded by a Gentile woman (15:21–28), enters Jerusalem with a band of women and men from Galilee (21:1–11; 27:55), and finally gives his very life for the sake of the *basileia*.

The challenge such a vision and praxis offered to one early Christian community and the tension it created in relation to the prevailing ethos are encoded within the Matthean narrative. The tension is visible, on the one hand, in relation to ethnicity. Although the final mission is to make disciples of all nations (28:20), and although the prediction of 21:43 places the *basileia* in the hands of the nation producing its fruit—be that Israel or a Gentile nation—the narrative twice mentions a more exclusive mission on the basis of ethnicity (10:5–6; 15:24).

The tension is also visible, on the other hand, in relation to gender, which is the significant concern in this commentary. Indications have already been given of the inclusion of women within the *basileia* vision and praxis of Jesus. Yet the Matthean Gospel constructs a symbolic universe that is androcentric and encodes the patriarchal constructs present in its sociohistorical location. The text creates a world in which the male norm is coterminous with the human, and this presupposition finds expression in the grammatical and narrative strategies of the text resulting in the marginalization of women. In the Matthean Sermon on the Mount, for instance, we find the repeated use of terms such as “son(s),” “man/men,” “brother,” “father,” and “he” (5:13, 15, 19, 22, 45; 6:1, 16, 18; 7:3–5, 8, 9, 12, 21) reflecting a narrative world from which women appear to be absent. The experience of sonship, fatherhood, and brotherhood is considered universal and hence adequate for the expression of human experience.

Similarly, patriarchal constructs that are both within the text and within the community that shaped the text function to marginalize or to obscure women. The paritillage with which the Gospel text opens provides an example of such a construct in which women are omitted from the prehistory of Jesus except where they are problematic (1:3, 5, 6, 16). Female gender also functions to prevent women being named among the group called “disciples.” These constructs, especially those of “father” and “son,” also provide the dominant metaphors for God and Jesus throughout the narrative.

This gender inflection of the Gospel text is reflected in much of the history of its reception, which contributes further to the “politics of otherness” inscribed in the text. There is no monograph, for instance, that provides a detailed analysis of any of the pericopes in which women are significant char-

acters except in relation to other theological interests such as infancy narratives or passion and resurrection. In other studies, focus on the disciples, who are presumed male, tends to obscure the significant role of the women characters in the text. Likewise, the designation of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba ("wife of Uriah" in the text) as sinners by Jerome and as outsiders or foreigners by Luther raises the question of the extent to which cultural ideologies present in the interpreter's own reading situation have influenced particular interpretations.

The current women's movement, together with recent studies in feminist critical theory and literary theory, has underscored both the historical and narrative subjectivity of women. Women's own experiences, cultural and sociopolitical locations, economic status, education, and belief systems make them particular historical subjects in the unfolding drama of human existence both now and in the past. Similarly, a recognition of the subjectivity of female characters within literary texts is guiding many new readings of "canonical" texts, which in turn are beginning to subvert the hegemony of their traditional history of reception. The canon, which has been controlled by a monopoly, is now beginning to be repossessed.

A twofold process has characterized this movement in its various manifestations. Generally, it began with a "deconstruction" of our received heritage—cultural, historical, intellectual, and religious—which revealed the gender biases inherent therein. This, in turn, has allowed for the task of a feminist reconstruction encompassing both theoretical and practical dimensions. Feminism, therefore, as understood in this work, involves a critique of human reality on the basis of its gender biases and the development of strategies for cultural and ideological change for the sake of and on behalf of women, involving therefore not only gender considerations but also race and class, whatever is oppressive of women.

There are, therefore, new reading sites or new critical perspectives from which feminist critics may enter the "old text" of the Matthean Gospel with its genderized hierarchy and worldview. They give rise, however, to significant biblical and theological questions that must be addressed in relation to the particular reading being undertaken here, a reading I would call a feminist critical reading.

REVISIONING THE MATTHEAN TEXT

Just as the twofold perspective of deconstruction and reconstruction has characterized contemporary feminism generally, so too has it guided the particular field of biblical studies and biblical readings as these have been undertaken from a feminist perspective. A hermeneutics of suspicion seeks to unmask the androcentric ideology and patriarchal constructs implicit and

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explicit in the biblical text, in its context and in its history of reception. A hermeneutics of remembrance or reclamation, informed by a feminist ethics of reading, undertakes new readings of the text from a gender perspective while considering the function of these readings and interpretations especially in the contemporary sociopolitical contexts of women and men. These two aspects of the feminist critique will guide the subsequent reading of the first Gospel. Recent biblical studies have been characterized by a shift from a historical to a literary orientation. The biblical text is no longer considered a window onto the "world behind the text" but a particular or perspectival reading constructing its own world and symbolic universe. Consideration needs to be given, therefore, to the gender ideologies that function in the text especially in relation to female characters. A comprehensive feminist reading of the Gospel of Matthew would entail detailed examination of the entire Gospel. Since this is not possible in this commentary I have chosen to focus on the female characters but always in the context of the Gospel story as a whole and the narrative world it constructs with only brief reference to these other aspects of a feminist reading when appropriate.

Initially, stories will be analyzed in terms of character presentation, with attention being directed to the gender codes surrounding the women characters, codes that alert the reader to the ideology the text supports. These codes include the silences in the text, disjunctions, contradictions, gaps and omissions, as well as the gender biases supported by the text, because it has become clear to feminist scholars that female culture is found in support of patriarchal culture as well as in conflict with it. Consideration will also be given to the comparisons and contrasts made between characters on the basis of gender.

Closely related to, even inseparable from, character is an analysis of plot. What characters do, the actions they perform, are constitutive elements in the unfolding of events that constitute the story. From a gender perspective, it will be important to consider the tasks that women are permitted to perform and those that are denied to them. Further, the setting of their actions will be significant. Are they confined to domestic space, or do their actions take place in the public arena? Consideration will also be given to the way such locations contribute to the construction of the text's symbolic universe, and this will be further supplemented by attention to the symbolic function of gender in the text and the creation of its narrative world.

Such a *first stage* analysis is of its nature literary, drawing on insights from narrative and reader-response criticism. It enables us to proffer a reading of the text that gives narrative subjectivity to the female characters as well as the male. To conclude here, however, would be to deny historical subjectivity to the women who participated in the shaping of the traditions constituting the Matthean Gospel story and in its final articulation. At a *second stage* of analy-

sis, we will turn, therefore, to the more traditional historical-critical methodologies, especially redaction criticism, but they will be employed in the light of the historical paradigm shift that has taken place. No longer will they be used directly to discover the actual historical situation of early Christianity, or in particular of the Matthean community, but the data thus obtained will assist in reconstructing the sociohistorical situation inscribed within the narrative. By focusing on the stories of women using these diachronic methodologies, we can discover glimpses of the development of the traditions that formed and informed the final rhetorical presentation of these stories in the Gospel text. From this, information can be gleaned toward a restructuring of the "historical subject," the story of women and men within the Matthean community.

This information, however, will need to be supplemented at a *third stage* of analysis by other historical and sociological data. Such a feminist historical reconstruction of an early Christian community is a difficult task and a limited task because of the paucity of our sources and yet a very necessary task. It will need to be collaborative, drawing on theoretical models from history, anthropology, and sociology as well as the study of a wide variety of literary texts beyond those considered normative for Judaism and Christianity. It is therefore beyond the scope of this particular commentary, but the results of our literary analysis will offer some initial signposts toward future studies of the inclusive history of the Matthean community.

Such a *threefold* analysis, which seeks to discover the inclusion of women within the text of the Matthean Gospel, their inclusion within the formation of that text, and hints of their inclusion within the community that produced and used the text, is, however, but one aspect of the feminist task. It is the work of the scribe or the "re-visioner" described in our introduction, but it will only be completed when it is appropriated by contemporary communities of believers who seek an expression of the inclusive *basileia* vision appropriate to our world. This work is offered, therefore, to those communities.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EARS TO HEAR:

A SUBVERSIVE STORY

Until very recently, interpreters of the Matthean Gospel have been deaf to aspects of this story because of the particular set of presuppositions they have brought to their task, one of which is an androcentrism that considers men central to history and women's participation an anomaly. As a result, therefore, the stories about women in the Gospel have been subordinated to what has been read as central: the story of Jesus and his male disciples, supplicants, and opponents. That the Gospel opens with the patrilineage of Jesus (1:1-17)

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and closes with the commissioning of eleven male disciples to a universal mission (28:16-20) while the male disciples and opponents are some of the key players in the story's last great dramatic movement (chaps. 26-28) means also that the interpreter's own perspective finds resonance with aspects of the text itself.

Within the last decade the story has begun to be heard and read in a new key with particular focus being directed to female characterization as well as to feminist interpretations of particular texts. These recent studies have enabled hitherto hidden or forgotten aspects of this Gospel story to be heard.

By comparison with some new voices in this key, however, the ones raised in relation to the Matthean narrative may seem subdued and could readily be blotted out by the "official" interpretations which abound. The present reading seeks, therefore, to continue and to supplement what has already begun. It will be a reading against the grain of the text, especially its androcentric ideology and patriarchal constructs. It will move toward a "countercoherence," which links the "official" reading to "what it leaves out." Since women have been virtually ignored, they will be the focus of attention. Since the "politics of otherness" inherent within the androcentric text and its history of interpretation excludes women, inclusion will function as a significant feminist critical principle in this reading of the Gospel text. Finally, since the text has often been structured according to a theological perspective directed toward Jesus and male discipleship, the countercoherent reading will seek a structuring that is shaped by attention to the women's stories.

FOREMOTHERS (CHAPTERS 1-2)

The repetition of the patriarchal pattern "male was the father of male" thirty-nine times within the first fifteen verses of the Gospel, which is introduced as "an account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1), invites the reader at the outset of the Gospel story to enter into the androcentric worldview of the narrator. Within such a perspective, Israel's history as the prehistory of Jesus is considered ordered and male. It is no surprise, therefore, when Joseph is introduced in v. 19 as "righteous" in a way that inclines the reader toward further identification with his androcentric perspective especially in relation to Mary's pregnancy (1:19). As male, he sees himself authorized to interpret the law in relation to a woman without her participation. He alone receives the divine revelation (1:20); and it is he who names the child according to the divine command establishing him firmly as "son of David" (1:25). The story of the early infancy of Jesus is likewise dominated by Joseph, his receiving of divine revelations and his obedience to them (chap. 2).

This dominant narrative obscures the function of female characters within

the same text. The foremothers of Jesus are rendered invisible by virtue of the patriarchal construct which considers women merely vehicles of reproduction and hence insignificant as historical subjects. The dissonant note of v. 16—Mary of whom Jesus was born—is quickly silenced in vv. 18–25, where Mary's story is subsumed into Joseph's. Readers are not given her point of view in relation to her pregnancy, nor is she the recipient of a divine revelation. In fact, she is marginalized within the story. She is spoken about by both the narrator and the divine messenger, but she is given no speech herself and no independent action of hers is recorded.

But when the narrative is heard with new ears—ears critically attuned to the gender inflection of the text—a different story is brought to life. The reader becomes aware of the tension created in the narrative by the four patterned breaks that occur in vv. 3, 5, and 6 when the names of four women are introduced as foremothers of Jesus—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, whom the androcentric narrator designates as “the wife of Uriah.” An even more significant break occurs in v. 16, where the expected pattern—Joseph was the father of Jesus—is replaced by a most extraordinary reference to Joseph that characterizes him in relation to a woman: “the husband of Mary.” It is then Mary who is designated as the one of whom Jesus is born, not a male progenitor according to the pattern for previous generations in the genealogy. Since the narrator has already established a certain authority by means of the opening reference to the “book of the genealogy” drawn from Gen 2:4a and 5:1 and the subsequent naming of key male ancestors, these breaks in the ordered pattern bear the same authority. The reader is thereby alerted to the presence of women in Israel's history and Jesus' ancestry and their presence breaks the orderly pattern given to this androcentric history.

The names of the foremothers in the genealogy evoke their stories. Within these stories, they are not sinners (reflecting the biblical and cultural linking of women, sexuality, and sin) or foreigners (manifesting the perspective that places women outside the patriarchal world and culture) as androcentric interpretations have determined. Rather, each is a woman who at some point in her story is in a situation that renders her dangerous to the patriarchal system, an anomaly, because she is not properly related to man either in marriage or as daughter. To single out such women for inclusion, however, or to explain their situation as “extraordinary or irregular” can support a form of gender politics in which women are recognized only when they are problems. Furthermore, to claim that such “problems” are important within “God's plan,” especially when that God is identified with the patriarchy of the genealogy, is to support the androcentric perspective of the biblical stories in which the four women's dangerous situation is brought back under patriarchal control. It is also to fail to recognize that in none of the women's stories does God intervene on their behalf as so often happens in the stories of male heroes.

Read from a feminist critical perspective, the Israelite foremothers' anomalous or dangerous situations certainly place them outside the patriarchal marriage or family structure, but in such a way that their position provides a challenge or a threat to this structure as their actions indicate. Tamar puts off her widow's garments and sits by the roadside awaiting Judah (Gen 38:14). Rahab, named harlot, dwells in her own home outside her patriarchal family structure (Josh 2:2). Ruth goes down to the threshing floor, where she uncovers the feet of Boaz (Ruth 3:7); and the wife of Uriah comes to David, one of the few actions attributed to her in the entire story (2 Sam 11:4). While the patriarchal narrative quickly domesticates these actions, they can also be seen to encode aspects of women's power. God's messianic plan unfolds in and through such power. The women's presence functions, therefore, as a critique of patriarchy and introduces a point of tension into the narrative that must guide the reader as the story unfolds. As noted above, this tension is augmented by the seemingly anomalous conclusion to the genealogy, which focuses attention on Mary.

Anomaly continues to characterize the subsequent narrative (1:18–25) as the focus shifts to Joseph, and yet despite the narrator's attempt to restore the androcentric perspective, the conception and birth of Jesus from the woman Mary must be considered a “kernel” within the narrative. Without it, the story would not proceed. Also, v. 16 together with the twofold reference to the child being conceived “of the Holy Spirit” (vv. 18, 20) and the implication in v. 19 that the child is not “of Joseph” provides for the reader an account of Mary's conception of Jesus without reference to male begetting. A woman who is named *virgin* is with child, and the child is named holy. The reproductive power of woman and her role in the birth of the Messiah are affirmed outside the patriarchal structure. This is further emphasized by linking the woman and the child she conceives to the fulfillment quotation of vv. 22–23. It is this “endangered woman's” child who is Emmanuel and in whom God is present not only to Israel but to the indefinite multitudes who are the subject of the verb in the phrase: “They shall call his name” (1:23).

Such a reading functions to deconstruct the androcentric perspective of the genealogy and birth narrative which symbolized woman as vehicle of reproduction. It enables the remembering and claiming of the unnamed women who belong to Jesus' lineage, but it also goes beyond the earlier evocations, claiming that God stands with the anomalous woman and her child to the point, in fact, where they are the fulfillment of the divine promise. The conclusion of the narrative (vv. 24–25), however, incorporates this subversive aspect of the story back into the patriarchal framework in which Joseph dominates, and this perspective continues into chapter 2.

Tension in the narrative, however, also characterizes chapter 2. The plot is advanced by way of the obedience of both the wise men and Joseph to a divine

command given through a star or a dream. Brief reference is made to Mary, but except for v. 11, where the wise men find the child with Mary his mother, throughout the remainder Joseph is presented as the agent and the mother and child are passive (2:13, 14, 20, 21). A recent study suggests that the "house" was the primary metaphor in the Matthean Gospel, the center of the economic, political, religious, and ecclesial life depicted in the narrative. Read from this perspective, v. 11 may continue the tension found in the beginning of the narrative. The woman Mary is found with her son, who is being worshipped by the foreign wise men in the first "house" context within the Gospel. It is here that new structures of relationship are established, goods or resources are exchanged, and a central metaphor of the Gospel narrative is evoked. Woman is linked from the outset to this new house metaphor and hence to its central significance in the construction of the symbolic universe of the narrative.

The androcentric quality of that symbolic universe as it has already been constructed within the first two chapters of the narrative is further subverted by the Matthean use of the image of Rachel weeping for her children in 2:18. This female image of the compassionate inconsolable mother provides a counterpoint to the extreme violence of the holocaust of the male children at the hands of the male ruler, Herod. It evokes the "womb compassion" of God that is imaged in the poem of Jeremiah (Jer 31:20) and is metaphorically linked to the female imagery of Matt 23:37, when Jesus-Sophia as sorrowing mother laments the destruction of Jerusalem and of her children within it. The image here is, however, but a quiet voice raised as a counterpoint to the dominant symbolization of Jesus in the opening chapters, where he is named "son of David," "son of Abraham," "king of the Jews," and "son."

Our reading against the grain of the narrative has alerted us as readers to the tension within the prologue when traditions that affirm the power and presence of women within Israel's history and the birth of its Messiah are introduced into a narrative that is predominantly androcentric, supports patriarchal familial structures and laws, and tends to render women invisible. This reading recognizes the symbolic significance of female gender whereby woman is considered anomalous, to be brought into the patriarchal order and under patriarchal control, but at the same time, the reader is aware that the narrative affirms a power and presence of women that begins to deconstruct patriarchal power, which is exclusive and destructive. Significant narrative clues are therefore provided that will guide the feminist reader through the rest of the Gospel.

WOMEN OF GREAT FAITH IN THE BASILEIA MINISTRY (3:1-20:34)

The major plotting device of the acceptance/rejection theme employed in the narrative from 1:18 continues to characterize the *basileia* ministry, which is

prepared for by John the Baptist and which Jesus himself carries out in Galilee and en route to Jerusalem. Within this section, the narrator introduces the reader to many *characters* and, more significantly, *character groups* whose boundaries are not clearly defined early in the narrative but who are characterized in terms of their relationship to Jesus. The fluidity of character creates a certain suspense for the reader and is intended to guide the reading process especially in chapters 8 and 9, in which individual characters, their response to Jesus, and his response to them are central to the narrative.

The first group to whom the reader is introduced is the group of four fishermen, whom Jesus calls and who *follow* him (4:18-22). This group is supplemented by the great *crowds*, who also *follow* (4:25). In 5:1, a group called his *disciples* is distinguished from the crowd as the possible audience for the Sermon on the Mount, but this distinction is blurred again in 7:28, where it is pointed out that it was the crowd who "heard all of these teachings." At this point there seems to be little gender inflection within the text in relation to characterization. The crowds could be presumed to comprise women as well as men. As indicated earlier, however, the symbolic universe created by the sermon itself is androcentric. The ancestors are referred to as "the men of old" (5:21, 33). The recipients of the teaching about adultery and divorce are constructed as male: "every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" and "whoever divorces his wife" (5:28, 31-32). Moreover, the illustrative imagery is predominantly androcentric: a man responding to his son (7:10), the wise or the foolish man building a house, the brother in need of reconciliation (5:22-24). Hence, an implicit gender inflection exists in the text, creating a symbolic universe characterized by this gender bias even though the text does not explicitly support patriarchy.

A feminist critical reading will, therefore, seek to highlight the inclusive nature of the crowd as recipients of the sermon. In the light of this inclusion, it will read as inclusive that androcentric language which functioned as generic language. The masculine plural adjective "blessed" will include both the female and male listeners (5:1-12). The "brothers" who are to be greeted (5:47) or reconciled (5:23-24) will include both sister and brother. Even the ancestors will include the foremothers of Israel's history as well as the forefathers. In this way, a new symbolic universe will be created by such an inclusive reading of the text, which will itself be inclusive. (It should be noted here that each of the sermon texts referred to in the introduction has been translated inclusively in the NRSV.)

Chapters 8 and 9 begin with the *crowds* continuing to follow Jesus. Out of these crowds, certain individuals and groups emerge: those sick with all kinds of diseases, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics, who are brought to Jesus in groups (8:16; 9:35; cf. 4:24) or as individuals (9:2, 32), or who themselves come to Jesus for healing (8:2, 9:20, 27). Of this large group

of supplicants some are lepers, others are blind or dumb, some are Gentiles, and they include both women and men. The number of male supplicants is, however, significantly larger than female supplicants. Each person emerges from the crowd and stands before Jesus, who responds in a variety of ways. It is this response which guides the reader's reaction to each character and group, and this guidance is enhanced by the implied author's arrangement of episodes and the comparisons and contrasts set up between characters and groupings as indicated below in figure 1.

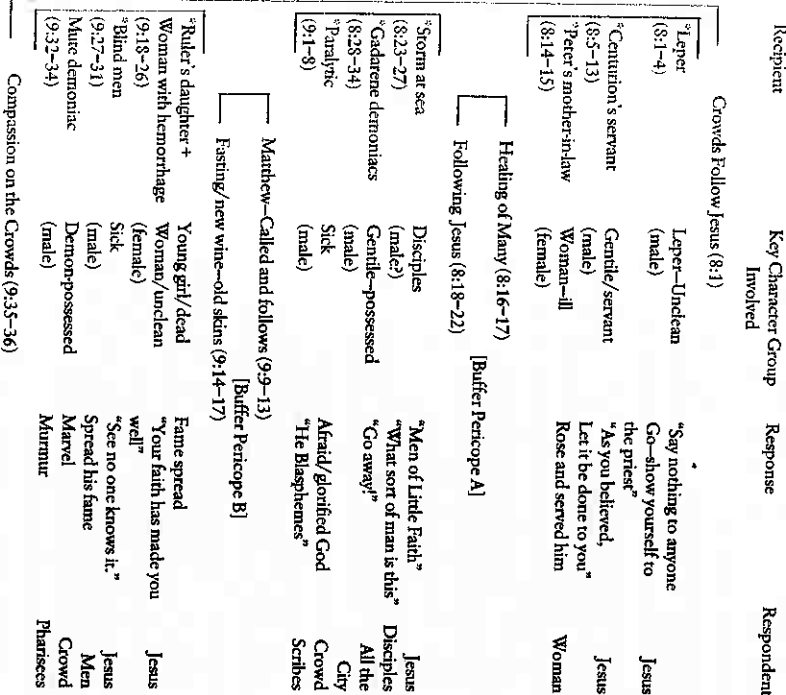


Figure 1

The juxtaposition of these various groups and the reactions/responses of various people to the miracles of Jesus become the vehicles whereby the narra-

tor's point of view is communicated, particularly in these two chapters. The reader encounters three groups of three miracle stories. A collection of small narrative units and sayings forms a "buffer" pericope between each section. The two miracle narratives concerning the healing of females occur in strategic positions—at the end of the first group of three and at the beginning of the third. The reader's understanding and interpretation of these two miracle accounts, therefore, are influenced not only by the group to which each belongs but also by the "buffer" pericope alongside which it has been placed.

The first part of Buffer Pericope A (8:16-17) is a combination of a summary of healings and a fulfillment quotation, both direct commentary by the narrator. The summary points to Jesus' healing of "all" who were sick, indicating the inclusive nature of this aspect of Jesus' preaching of the *basileia*, while the fulfillment quotation links it to the liberation trajectory already visible within the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Scriptures and evoked at the very beginning of the Gospel in relation to the birth of Jesus (1:23; 2:6, 15, 18). The two stories concerning the following of Jesus in 8:18-22 illustrate that such following of this preacher of the *basileia* means a break with the patriarchal household as the basic economic and social unit of society. The inclusive and liberating nature of the *basileia* is thereby linked to a break with a particular patriarchal construct. This would seem, however, to introduce a further note of dissonance into the narrative world since the patriarchal family appeared to be an implicit construct in the Sermon on the Mount.

Inclusion and liberation are also significant themes in Buffer Pericope B. The calling of Matthew (9:9) and the table companionship with tax collectors and sinners (9:10-13) illustrate further the inclusive nature of the *basileia*. Not only those who are sick but also those whom the dominant culture considers unclean or pollutants are included in the circles around Jesus. The liberating nature of this activity of Jesus is emphasized for the reader by recalling the text from Hosea: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hos 6:6; Matt 9:13). The metaphorical language of unshrunk cloth and new wine in relation to old garments and old wineskins suggests that such inclusive and liberating activity brings tension, even rupture or discontinuity, in relation to the prevailing ethos.

Matthew 8:14-15

The very simplicity of the story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law shapes the reading of it, as does the fivefold repetition of the connective "and." This links the five finite verbs, which focus attention on the action and the characters involved. Jesus is the subject of the first two verbs; the healing forms the climax and the woman who is healed is the subject of the two concluding verbs, as illustrated in figure 2.

And	he saw his mother-in-law	)	
And	he touched her hand	)	Jesus
And	the fever left her	)	Fever
And	she arose	)	
And	she served him	)	Woman

Figure 2

As in the previous two miracle accounts, Jesus stands out as the chief actor, and the focus is on his capacity to heal (8:2-3, 5-7). He sees the woman with a fever and touches her hand. The woman is not named but is identified simply in terms of her place in the patriarchal familial structure: she is the mother-in-law of Peter. She is also described as lying sick with a fever and hence is a possible pollutant, especially if this sickness is connected to her time of ritual uncleanness. Jesus' simple action in reaching out and touching her breaks open the boundaries that defined "clean" and "unclean," thereby liberating the woman from her infirmity. But it is even more extraordinary that the narrative itself breaks open the pattern the reader expects in a miracle story, because here Jesus takes the initiative. Normally in miracle accounts the person to be healed approaches Jesus and asks for healing, or someone approaches on his or her behalf and makes the request. As we saw in the genealogy, here also a woman's story breaks a narrative pattern.

Like the characters in the previous two miracle accounts, this woman is an outsider in terms of the socioreligious patterning of society, and her marginalization is represented in the narrative. Hers, however, is a twofold marginalization on the basis of both gender and illness, which is represented by her silence and her inability even to approach Jesus. This twofold marginalization is highlighted for the reader by the breaking of the narrative pattern. In the preceding miracle stories, Jesus' action in response to the supplicants' requests broke through the socioreligious barriers around them. In this story, his extraordinary taking of the initiative in reaching out and touching this woman points to the more than ordinary barriers to be broken. His action, therefore, highlights her incorporation into the liberating wholeness of the *basileia* as one healed of illness and as woman. God is present with God's people when the marginalized, who include women, are incorporated into the group around Jesus, having been freed from their infirmities.

Following the healing, the woman *serves* Jesus. This could be understood simply as the woman's service of Jesus at table, but the narrative context suggests otherwise. The same verb is used earlier in the narrative to indicate the angel's service of Jesus after the temptations (4:11), where it seems to have a symbolic significance. There is, therefore, for the reader the possibility of a

symbolic use of the verb in this context also, which is confirmed as the story progresses. In 20:28, the verb "to serve" is used to characterize the mission and ministry of Jesus, and in 25:44 it provides a summary of the particular life-style definitive of the one who belongs to the inclusive and eschatological *basileia* of Jesus. Significantly also, this is the second narrative scene that takes place in a house, and once again there is a reordering of relationships and perhaps even resources denoted by the symbolic use of "to serve." If "house" is indeed the primary metaphor for the Matthean community, then the use of the verb "serve" in relation to the healed woman in the context of not just a house but the house of Peter underscores the metaphorical significance of the conclusion to the miracle story. The healed woman ministers to Jesus at the center of the new religious community he is inaugurating.

Matthew 9:18-26

A broken narrative pattern likewise characterizes this pericope, in which the healing of a woman with a hemorrhage is placed within the framework of the story of the healing of a ruler's daughter. Both are stories of female supplicants, and the linking of their stories enables the reader to interpret one in the light of the other.

The story opens with an extraordinary request made on behalf of a female supplicant. A ruler requests that Jesus come and lay hands on his daughter who has died, that she might live. The request is made by the father, so we hear nothing of the mother's point of view, and the daughter is introduced as one of the most severe pollutants—a corpse.

Parallel to the request made on her behalf, however, is the approach of the woman who is introduced as having suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years (9:20). She stands alone in the narrative, as the young girl is alone in her condition. She is given no name, nor is she presented to the readers in terms of her human environment. She encounters Jesus in the public arena outside the confines of both the patriarchal household, from which she is most likely excluded because of her condition, and the reordered vision of the household. She is described in terms of her physical status: she is ritually unclean, a pollutant like the young girl.

With considerable initiative and placing herself at risk socially, she reaches out and touches Jesus' garment saying to herself: "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well" (9:21). Here, for the first time in the narrative, we have a woman's point of view. She recognizes Jesus as one who can save her, can free her from her infirmity, while at the same time she seems to internalize her social marginalization. Her muted thoughts are, in fact, a statement of belief, a power that enables her to reach out beyond herself, beyond socioreligious restrictions, and not only to seek but to claim wholeness.

Her request is parallel to that of the ruler, and that parallel highlights the contrast between them. The ruler approached Jesus directly, knelt before him, and made his request. The woman, who was doubly marginalized within the society, was afraid to approach Jesus directly but came up to him from behind. Together, however, her story and that of the ruler's daughter provide a development in the narrative theme linking the female characters. Peter's mother-in-law could not make a request; the young girl has a request made on her behalf; and then a woman approaches Jesus from behind touching his garment and thereby formulating her request indirectly. The story of the woman with the hemorrhage also contains a further narrative development in that the faith of the woman is mentioned explicitly (9:22) and salvation is said to be effected by Jesus in response to that faith.

This faith of the woman who took the initiative and risked crossing socio-religious boundaries in order to come into contact with the healing power of Jesus places her in contrast to the flâneur players and professional mourners who laugh mockingly at Jesus' attitude to death with no faith in his capacity to heal or to restore life. Her faith is likewise contrasted with that of the disciples, who are called "of little faith" (8:26), and with the lack of response of the scribes, who see the healing power of Jesus only as a basis for accusation (9:3, 11, 34).

Each of the females who enters this combined story is encountered as a pollutant, outside the boundaries of ritual cleanliness, and the woman with the hemorrhage is anomalous in relation to gender boundaries. In neither story, however, does the restoration entail return to the patriarchal familial structure as a source of salvation. Within the proclamation of the *basileia* enacted within the miracle accounts, woman as well as man shares directly in the benefits of the *basileia*, the saving, life-giving power of Jesus. It is little wonder, therefore, that these stories are placed beside the buffer pericopes which speak of liberation and inclusion.

Matthew 15:21-28

The narrative theme of women of faith in the *basileia* ministry of Jesus is further developed by the story of another unnamed woman. Her story, together with the controversy regarding tradition to which it is linked, forms the focal point of a chastic structure.

Within this limited context, the gender inflection of the narrative is significant. The narrator specifies that the five thousand numbered in the first feeding story and the four thousand in the second are male (14:21; 15:38), but goes on to point out that the crowd also included women and children. Women, therefore are recipients of the bread, one of the fruits of the *basileia*. The inclusion of women among those healed earlier in the story also leads the

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reader to count them among the many healed here (14:36; 15:30). Finally, a woman seeking healing for her daughter stands out as a woman of great faith (15:28) in contrast to the elders who question and the "disciples" who show little faith.

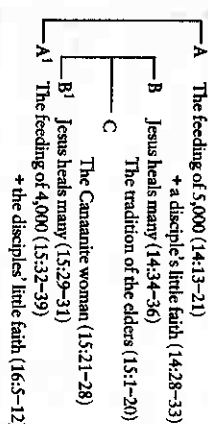


Figure 3

One of the most extraordinary aspects of this story is that for the first time in the narrative the voice of a woman is heard. In fact, one of the key characteristics of this story is the dialogue—or, one might say, debate—that it contains. Speech or lack of it is therefore a key element in the structuring of the story as seen below.

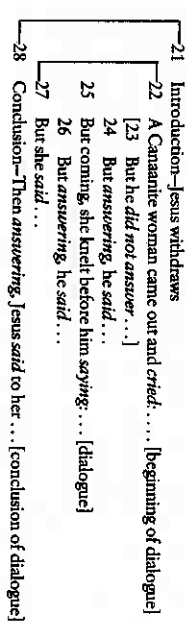


Figure 4

The reader's introduction to this woman closely parallels that of the woman with a hemorrhage. Attention is focused on both by the use of the typical perispectival phrase: "Behold!" Neither is given a name, and each is identified by a category that renders one an outsider. The woman healed was identified by a physical disability that made her unclear. The woman in this story is categorized ethnically as "Canaanite," a term that makes her an ethnic and religious outsider to Israel. She too enters the narrative outside the patriarchal familial structure. She is alone, identified only with her daughter. Each woman, therefore, is doubly marginalized; she is female in a male world outside the patriarchal family structure, and she is ritually unclear.

From this position, the woman makes a request in words that already characterize the Gospel story but cross gender and ethnic boundaries. Her cry—"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!"—parallels that of the two Jewish

men who requested the removal of their blindness (9:27). Her statement—"my daughter is severely possessed by a demon"—echoes the words of the centurion—"my servant is lying paralyzed at home" (8:6).

Disjunction enters this story, however, when the narrative pattern of earlier miracle stories is broken by the reaction of Jesus: "he did not answer her a word" (v. 23). The uniqueness of such a response makes one wonder whether we have here more than the usual opposition that can characterize a miracle story so that overcoming this opposition can become the key to an understanding of the story.

Read from an androcentric and patriarchal perspective, the severe response of Jesus can be seen to typify the purist's or the traditionalist's reaction to a Gentile woman who is unclear on the grounds of ethnicity and gender. But from a feminist perspective, the fact that Jesus, the miracle worker, is himself the opposition to the woman's request heightens her eventual triumph, which functions deconstructively to subvert the androcentrism of the text. Indeed, one could ask of this story whether it represents others not included in the final text because they did not contain the redeeming feature of the Gentile mission to counteract the woman's extraordinary "success."

The response of the disciples—"send her away"—strengthens the opposition of the earlier part of v. 23 and could be linked with v. 24 in terms of its redeeming value in the face of this scandalous approach of the woman and her appropriating of the confessional or theological language of the insider. It introduces the already-typical Gospel theme of lack of understanding of the disciples, taking up the language of 14:15. Verse 24 supplements this with the explicit articulation of the theme of Gentile mission repeating the restrictive perspective of 10:5-6.

Such opposition functions, however, to highlight the continued and more persistent demand of the woman as the dialogue is renewed with more vigor. As both disciples and daughter merge into the background of the story, the reader or listener is drawn into the struggle between Jesus and the woman as she demands help. In response to this request, Jesus again offers further opposition. The implied author's structuring of these three oppositions highlights the significance of the struggle involved in this story, a struggle that surrounds not only Jesus' mission to the Gentiles but also the very legitimacy of the woman's request.

As a third opposition, Jesus draws on a traditional or proverbial saying: "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (15:26). The symbol of bread is introduced into the story, a symbol that is already associated with conflicts—what is eaten, by whom, and how (12:1-8, 15:1-20). On both of these previous occasions Jesus preached against a human tradition that was contrary to the desires of God. Here a similar struggle regarding human tradition and the desires of God is taking place, but this time it is Jesus'

own struggle. What constitutes "mercy" rather than "condemnation of the guiltless" (12:7), "human precepts" rather than "word of God" (15:6-9) in this situation?

The woman, for her part, takes the parable as applying to herself in her twofold marginality as woman and Gentile, as her "Yes, Lord" indicates, but she courageously crosses the barriers placed before her asking for the crumbs from the master's table. She claims at least some of the fruits of the *basileia* which Jesus is preaching, claims them for herself and her daughter after her. The exclamation of Jesus—"O Woman, great is your faith!"—points to his recognition of the woman's insight into the inclusive nature of the power and presence of God in Jesus' preaching and healing ministry and her fidelity to that insight. His granting of his own call beyond traditional gender and racial boundaries as a result of his dialogue with this woman. The conclusion to this story, therefore, brings Jesus' point of view expressed in his oppositions to the woman into line with the narrator's point of view and hence the divine point of view already heard in 12:17-21.

In this section of the narrative, the great faith of this woman also acts as a foil to the lack of understanding of the disciples who would have sent her away without compassion (15:23) as well as to the little faith and lack of understanding of both Peter and the disciples. Peter's cry, "Lord, save me" (14:30), is similar to that of the woman, "Lord, help me" (15:25). But one is followed by the accusation "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (14:31). The other leads, through a dialogue, to Jesus' affirmation: "O woman, great is your faith!" (15:28). Furthermore, Peter's own act of faith (16:16) could not be sustained in the face of the passion prediction, and yet this woman was able to overcome the threefold opposition placed before her because of her belief in the power of Jesus and her preparedness to face rejection for the sake of the realization of life that such a belief held out to her. It was a faith, therefore, that far exceeded the "little faith" of the disciples who failed to understand the symbolism of the bread (16:8).

As a result of our feminist critique and rereading, it has become clear that female power has once again endured against all the barriers the patriarchal culture had erected against it, and the words of Jesus recognize and celebrate this. The woman's great faith makes possible a life free of oppressive restriction for herself and her daughter. The subversive power of this story goes far beyond the traditional boundary breaking with which it is associated—namely, Gentile mission. It invites the hearer to break the bonds of gender stereotyping and bias and demand miracle in human life, particularly in female human life. This woman stands, therefore, at one of the pivotal points in the Matthean narrative and in the Matthean vision of the Jesus-event. She is the cata-

lyst and hence the "foremother" not only of Gentile Christians but also of women freed from all restrictive and oppressive socioreligious bondage.

The Basileia Imagined as Inclusive

Within the Marthean narrative, the following of Jesus as "disciple" means belonging to the community gathered around Jesus and being committed to the vision he preached. In relation to this theme, the reader first encounters four fishermen called to follow Jesus (4:18-22) and then subsequent references to a group called "disciples," whose membership, and hence genderization, is not clearly defined. As the narration of the miracle stories in chapters 8 and 9 draws to a close, however, those four fishermen are named at the head of a list of twelve male disciples whom Jesus commissions to share in his *basileia* ministry (10:1-15). This group includes also the tax collector Matthew, whom Jesus called during his healing ministry (9:9). Given the fluidity of character grouping already noted in chapters 5-9, it is not clear whether these are all the disciples, whether they are the group referred to previously (5:1; 8:21, 23; 9:10, 11, 14, 19, 37), or whether this group is limited by gender.

As the following chapter (11) opens, Jesus, who will be revealed as the Wisdom of God, is seen with these twelve male disciples (11:1). Subsequently, however, Jesus-Sophia calls *all* to come to her, to take up her yoke, and to learn from her (11:28-29), a call not governed by gender restrictions. This inclusive membership of the community of Jesus-Sophia is not, however, named as discipleship. Later again in the narrative, following a lengthy controversy between Jesus-Sophia and the Pharisaic opponents, membership within a patriarchal family is dramatically replaced by membership within the family of disciples gathered around Wisdom. They are the ones who live out one of the central responses to the *basileia* preaching—doing the will of God symbolized as Father (7:21; 12:50)—and the metaphors used for this discipleship are inclusive—brother and sister and mother (12:46-50). Since these words are those of the one who has become authoritative in the narrative, the reader can presume that discipleship of Wisdom is inclusive and that those who are given to know the secrets of the *basileia* (13:11), who have eyes that see and ears that hear (13:16, 23, 43), who indeed become scribes trained for the *basileia* (13:52) include both women and men despite the androcentric language in which these passages are cast.

There is disjunction or dissonance in the narrative, however, when those specifically named as members of the character group called disciples and those definitively called, even though the stories of their call may be intended to function paradigmatically, are male. Discipleship, however, can be read as inclusive, indicated by the imagery used to describe it and also the discipleship

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qualities exhibited by the women as well as the men who have come to Jesus as supplicants, who have listened to his teaching and who have followed him.

Inclusive imagery extends also to the metaphorical and symbolic designation of the preacher of the *basileia*. The parallel between 11:2 and 11:19 identifies the Marthean Jesus with Wisdom, the female gestalt of God within the Hebrew Scriptures, and this identification extends to the conclusion of the chapter (11:28-30). These texts occur, however, in the broader unit constituted by 11:2-13:68. Jesus' teaching and his deeds—healing the blind, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf; and raising the dead—are identified with personified Wisdom. The symbol of Wisdom and the myth in which it is narrated are used, therefore, to interpret the person and ministry of Jesus. In retrospect, the earlier preaching and healing of Jesus can likewise be understood within this framework, and it will be a significant interpretive key as the narrative unfolds. Marthean Christology, therefore, holds in tension the male symbol of the obedient son and the female divine gestalt, Sophia, and it is the latter that is linked with the call to an inclusive community. This, however, is often overlooked in the christological debates that characterize Marthean scholarship, although particular studies have given attention to it. A more detailed work is needed that could integrate the Sophia Christology more fully into a feminist rereading, but for the moment we can simply catch glimpses of the possibilities such a reading might offer to our re-visioning.

A Countertradition

Within the ministry of Jesus, two stories of women seem to interrupt the narrative development that has become clear in our analysis above. The first links two women, Herodias and her daughter, to the developing theme of opposition to Jesus which characterizes the second half of the Galilean ministry. The women, however, are not central characters in the story (14:1-12) but merely instruments. Herod is introduced at the start of the narrative; his perspective on the ministry of Jesus is given (v. 2), and the reader is given insight into his thoughts and feelings, even his desire to put John to death (vv. 5, 9). Herodias, on the other hand, is presented as deeply embedded in the patriarchal family. She is introduced as "his brother Philip's wife" (v. 3) and as his property—it is not lawful for you to have her (v. 4). The focus of the story is, therefore, the breakdown of a patriarchal family structure.

This rupture of the familial context is not, however, that which might be demanded by Jesus' preaching of the *basileia* (10:34-36), but rather a human action censured by John as opposed to the *basileia* message. Within this conflict story, Herodias functions behind the scene as murderess, and her daughter within the action as seductress—two of the typical depictions of female evil. The unlawful rupture of the patriarchal family structure is therefore symboli-

cally linked to females. Similarly, violence and opposition directed toward John and, by implication, toward Jesus are likewise symbolized as female in a context where such opposition is predominantly male. A countertradition to the great faith of the women who receive the message and power of the *basileia* has been introduced, and the reader is alerted to its possible development.

Another mother is introduced into the narrative at 20:20. She appears out of the crowd together with her two sons, an indication perhaps that she is among those "going up to Jerusalem" with Jesus (20:17). She is, however, deeply embedded in the patriarchal family structure, identified in relation to three significant male family members as "the mother of the sons of Zebedee." She is depicted as the "typical" mother, whose sole concern is for her sons.

Her request indicates her failure to understand the nature of the *basileia* that Jesus has been preaching. Already he has shown that family membership is no basis for discipleship (10:34-39; 12:46-50). Hence, a mother's request on behalf of her sons is not a sign of faith, as was the persistent request of another mother on behalf of her daughter. Jesus, however, does not reject this woman but challenges her understanding. He asks: Can you accept the suffering that will be entailed in membership of the *basileia* being preached. The woman, together with her sons, responds: "We are able" (20:22). The reader is left in suspense with regard to the outcome of this affirmation, as the movement of the narrative leads toward Jerusalem, the location foreshadowed in the narrative for Jesus' own suffering.

The call to a deeper discipleship offered to this woman finds its location within a section of the narrative that is significantly androcentric. Peter stands out as spokesperson for the disciples (16:15-16), for Jesus (17:24-25), and on his own behalf (18:21-22); Peter, James, and John witness the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain (17:1-8); a man's son and two blind men are healed (17:14-18; 20:29-34); and a young man with many possessions questions Jesus regarding the attainment of eternal life (19:16-22). In such a context, the reader is easily seduced into understanding the references to the disciples from the androcentric perspective of the implied author and into hearing the teachings on discipleship within this section in exclusive rather than inclusive terms.

The feminist reader, however, who meets this woman as she approaches Jesus is once again reminded that the followers of Jesus include women as well as men and that the teaching of Jesus regarding discipleship that has dominated this section of the Gospel is not gender specific. For this reader, the woman is representative of fallible discipleship just as the male disciples are, and when she is invited, together with her sons, to a more authentic response, the reader awaits this with anticipation. This and many other prolepses find their fulfillment or completion in the final section of the Gospel, in which the various narrative streams reach their climax.

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WOMEN OF PASSION AND COMPASSION (21:1-28:20)

The Jerusalem ministry of Jesus (chaps. 21-25) is dominated by male characters, most particularly the Jewish leaders with whom he comes into conflict as well as the disciples, of whom twelve males have been specifically called and missioned. Similarly, the symbolic universe created by this section of the narrative is significantly androcentric, and the vehicle for this construction is the imagery of the parables. It is drawn from the agricultural world—a man with two sons working a vineyard; a householder with servants, who lets out his vineyard to tenants—the political world—a king giving a wedding feast for his son; a king pronouncing judgment—and the economic realm—a man entrusting his property to agents. It is a world in which female experience is not seen as symbolic of the *basileia* being preached.

There is an exception, however, in 25:1-13, the parable of the ten young women or virgins, which draws on female experience—but female experience in a patriarchal world. The women are at the service of the bridegroom, and the bride is invisible in the scene. As in previous parables, the reader is led to identify with one group of women rather than the other because of the designation "foolish" and "wise" (7:24, 26; 24:45). It is unlikely, however, that the inclusion of this parable, which draws its symbolic content from the world of women, has any significant impact on the symbolic universe that this portion of the narrative constructs. Rather, with the parable of the leaven (13:33), the only other Matthean parable that draws its imagery from this same world, the parable of the ten young women points to elements of an alternative symbolic universe which differed from that preferred by the implied author of the Matthean Gospel. Like many other hidden clues in the narrative, this parable provides the possibility for imagining a more extensive world of women that could be described in parables in relation to the inclusive *basileia* Jesus was preaching.

Suggestions have also been made that earlier hints of the interpretation of Jesus and his life work in terms of the Wisdom myth are again present in the account of the Jerusalem ministry. A wisdom saying in 23:34-35 is spoken directly by Jesus: "Therefore I send you. . . ." This is followed by the use of the female image of the hen gathering her brood under her wings (23:37). Such female imagery used in relation to Jesus is further extended if the eschatological discourse in chapter 24 is seen as Wisdom's discourse. This symbolization does not seem to be strong, but it is clear that it can at least begin to subvert the son Christology that dominates the narrative. Again, those half-buried clues point to a rereading of the Gospel in terms of inclusive symbolism for the interpretation of Jesus, the community he gathered around him, and the mission he gave. Included within such a reading, however, must be the ethnic critique of Sophia's judgment on Israel contained in 23:36.

As the reader is introduced to the passion narrative, the androcentric pattern of characterization that dominated the previous section continues. The scene opens with Jesus instructing his disciples (26:2) and being plotted against by the Jewish authorities (26:3-5); it closes with the authorities' continuing to plot against Jesus even after his death (28:11-15), and with Jesus' final commissioning of the eleven male disciples (28:16-20). Within this frame, the narrative moves from Jesus' last meal and evening with his disciples to his violent death at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities.

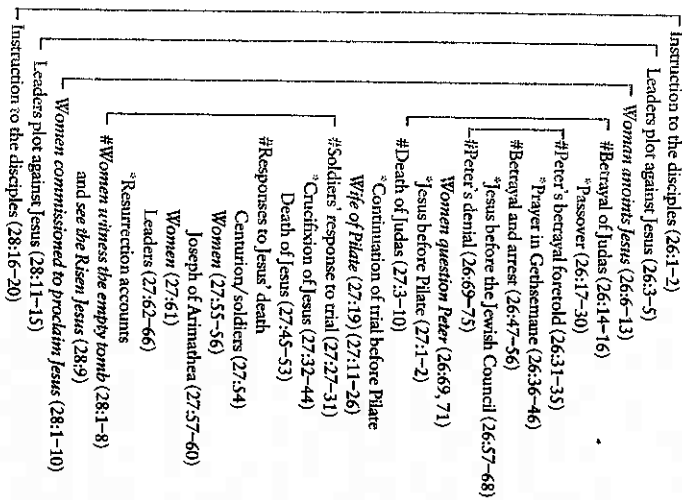


Figure 5

The gender inflection of this final section of the narrative seems clear, yet a closer examination shows that it is offset by significant stories of women (26:6-13, 26:69, 71, 27:19, 27:55-56, 61, 28:1-10). As figure 5 makes clear, the central focus of the passion narrative is the person of Jesus, who celebrates with his followers, prays in the garden, is arrested and brought before the Jewish Council and the Roman governor before being condemned to death by

crucifixion. The last great moment in the christological development of the Gospel is the proclamation of the crucified Jesus having been raised. Interwoven within each of these moments of christological significance is the response of the disciples in the first half of the narrative and the response of both opponents and faithful followers in the second half. Among those who respond appropriately to Jesus at this crucial moment are women.

As figure 5 (above) demonstrates, the entire passion narrative is framed not only with stories concerning the disciples and the leaders but also with stories of women. Each character group is therefore integral to the narrative as a whole. The response of each to Jesus reaches a climax in the passion narrative, as does the contrast between them, which has been developing throughout the narrative. Against such a backdrop the individual stories of women must be read.

Matthew 26:6-13

The scene for the first of these stories is Bethany, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, a haven during Jesus' last days in Jerusalem. He retreats there after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem is marred by the indignant reaction of the chief priests and scribes; and, following the plotting among the chief priests, elders, and the high priest to kill Jesus, the narrator has him again in Bethany, the place of refuge. The setting is the house of Simon the Leper, and, as in the first house setting in the Gospel (2:11), so too here there is an exchange of goods or resources indicative of new relationships. In both, the symbolic representation of Jesus is that of king.

In this house situation, a woman approaches Jesus. She comes not as supplicant but as actor. This comes as a surprise to the reader, who is already familiar with the introductory phrase "came up to him" as a way of bringing others into an encounter with Jesus but generally as supplicants. Here, however, the introductory formula is followed not by a request but rather by a definitive action directed toward Jesus: "she poured it [expensive ointment] on his head." Apart from the significance of the action itself, it represents a development in the narration of the stories in which women function as significant characters. First, the mother-in-law of Peter does not even dare to ask anything of Jesus; the woman with the hemorrhage fearfully approaches him from behind merely to touch his garment; the Canaanite woman openly approaches with a request and enters into dialogue with Jesus; and now an unnamed woman not only approaches Jesus but offers him the honorable gesture of anointing his head.

The language in which the woman's action is described is not that of cultic anointing but rather of an honorific gesture in the context of a meal. The action itself, however, especially the pouring out of the ointment onto the

head signifies a cultic act acclaiming Jesus as Messiah. The latter interpretation is strengthened when this pericope is read in relation to a previous scene in which Jesus was acknowledged in messianic terms, namely, his entry into Jerusalem. There Jesus entered Jerusalem as king but "humble and mounted on an ass" (21:5) and was acclaimed by the crowds as "Son of David" (21:9). Jesus' response to this welcome and acclamation was to drive the money changers and sellers out of the Temple and to claim it for the blind and the lame whom he healed. In response to these actions of Jesus as well as to the acclaim he had received, the chief priests and scribes became indignant (21:15). As Jesus enters into his passion, a woman pours oil over his head, an action that in itself could be construed as further messianic acclaim. In response to such a messianic acclaim at the hands of a woman, the disciples are indignant, as were the chief priests and scribes at the strange kingly acclaim Jesus received from the crowd on his entry into Jerusalem (26:8). Both groups misunderstand the person and the mission of Jesus and react with a question to Jesus: "Do you hear what these are saying?" (21:16) and "Why this waste?" (26:8).

At this point it is of interest to notice the function of the disciples' question in the structuring of the pericope. It is the first reaction to the woman's action that is the focal point of the scene, and their question is accompanied by an explanation introduced by the connective "for." In a subsequent verse, their question is paralleled by a similar question asked of the disciples by Jesus. His question is accompanied by three explanatory phrases introduced by the connective "for," which interpret the action of the woman. The scene concludes with an extraordinary statement made by Jesus in relation to the woman's action.

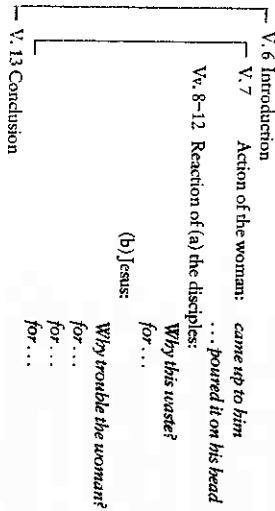


Figure 6

The disciples' misunderstanding of the woman's action is conveyed to the reader by way of the reason for their question: "For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." They have completely missed

the significance of this moment in Jesus' life, a moment he has just indicated to them is two days before his being delivered up to be crucified (26:1). Simon offers Jesus the hospitality of his house and his table. The woman pours ointment over Jesus' head with a sensitivity whose full import is still not yet clear to the reader. The disciples are sensitive neither to the time in Jesus' unfolding life story nor to the action of the woman. They simply interpret the outpouring of the ointment as "waste."

The attentive reader is already aware of the Matthean teaching in relation to "the poor." The first Matthean beatitude was addressed to the poor in spirit (5:3). The preaching of the gospel to the poor was one sign among many that Jesus gave to the disciples of John to indicate that he was the Coming One (11:5); and the call which Jesus offered to the rich young man (19:21) indicated that giving to the poor was constitutive of discipleship of Jesus. In fact, in his last great sermon, Jesus identified himself with those in need of compassion, among whom the poor could be numbered (25:40). The objection raised by the disciples therefore calls the action of the woman into question.

For the reader, the indignation of the disciples and their question are a reminder of their reaction to the Canaanite woman's persistent approach to Jesus (15:23). The contrast that the narrator has already established between the group called disciples and the women characters is strengthened. From 10:1 on, when the character group called "disciples" has been more clearly defined as male, the disciples have appeared in conflict with or in contrast to the women in each of the stories in which women function as central characters.

At the beginning of the passion narrative, Jesus speaks plainly to his disciples of his approaching passion: "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man ['Human One'] will be delivered up to be crucified." The stage is set, therefore, for all that follows. On the one hand, the chief priests and the elders gather in the palace of the high priest and plan how they can kill Jesus. Jesus, on the other hand, gathers with his disciples in the house of a leper at Bethany and here is anointed by a woman. The action of the woman is set, therefore, in direct contrast to the action of Jesus' opponents. The reaction of the disciples puts them also in direct contrast to the woman. The irony of their reaction—"Why this waste?"—is further emphasized when, immediately following this scene, Judas, one of the disciples, goes to the chief priests asking for money in return for the betrayal of Jesus, whereas the woman has poured out expensive ointment for his anointing.

Jesus' question in v. 10 turns the focus of the narrative back to the woman. The use of the noun "woman" is clearly a narrative device for this very purpose. Jesus then, in giving reasons for his reproach of the disciples, also offers an interpretation of the woman's act from three different perspectives. They are interpretations in a male voice. The woman herself has no voice in the nar-

native, but the interpretations are prophetic and directed toward her action. They are also in the voice of the most authoritative character in the narrative, Jesus.

As a counter to the disciples' accusation, which designates the woman's action as "waste," the words of Jesus claim it as "a good work or deed done to me." This takes the reader into the oppositional language used to characterize the human response to the gift of the *basileia*. The language used by the disciples, "waste," occurred earlier in the narrative in the context of a way leading to destruction rather than leading to life (7:13-14). Similarly, the language of Jesus—"good" as opposed to "bad"—is reminiscent of another oppositional category used to characterize the way of discipleship (7:17-20; see also 3:10; 12:33; 13:8, 23, 24, 27, 37, 38, 45, 48). Hence, Jesus claims the woman's action as belonging to the response called forth by his preaching of the *basileia*. This claim is further strengthened when he adds that this good deed is done "to me." This recalls for the reader the great eschatological discourse that has just preceded, in which Jesus proclaimed: "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (25:40). The eschatological judge, the triumphant Messiah (25:31), will consider as done to himself those good deeds that are done to the least among humanity. The woman has anticipated this coming when she performs her good deed directly for Jesus. In her action, right ordering of relationships and resources occurs in the last narrative scene located in a house. Her action is truly symbolic of the *basileia*.

In responding to and countering the second aspect of the disciples' accusation, namely, the failure to give this resource to the poor, Jesus shifts the focus to the significance of the woman's action in relation to time: "you always have/you will *not always* have" (26:11). The woman, in performing the anointing of Jesus, rather than selling the ointment and giving the money to the poor, has truly understood Jesus' words that after two days he would be delivered up to be crucified (26:2). She has recognized what Jesus gives voice to, namely, the importance of the remaining time that he has with his followers when, in fact, "good deeds" will be directed toward him.

The language of the narrator (v. 7) is changed in the mouth of Jesus (v. 12) as he gives his own interpretation to the woman's action. It is not just his head that is anointed but his whole body, and it is for burial. This woman has anticipated Jesus' death by crucifixion, which will deny him the normal burial customs. She has indeed carried out the task that loved ones do for their beloved or disciples for their teacher (14:12; 27:57). At this point, the reader's attention is directed back to the action of the woman, and now it is not only the action that speaks with a voice that cannot be silenced even though the woman herself has no voice in the narrative, but her most extraordinary action is affirmed in the authoritative voice of Jesus as constitutive of the *basileia*, as

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acknowledgment of the Anointed One and his coming, and as the final act of discipleship. It is all this that draws forth the declaration of Jesus.

"Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (26:13). Once again the authoritative voice of Jesus acclaims a female participant in the Gospel story. The solemnity of this declaration, however, exceeds that made in relation to the Canaanite woman (15:28). It begins with the solemn statement—"Truly, I say to you"—which alerts the reader to both the authority and the significance of what is to follow.

The paralleling in the statement of Jesus strengthens its impact. The verbs "preach" and "tell" are almost interchangeable, and hence they can function interactively. Jesus claims that whenever the gospel is preached, the story of the woman's action will be told as a remembrance of her. The reader should also understand by implication, however, that if her story is not told to her memory then the gospel is not being truly preached in the whole world. The statement of Jesus that concludes this woman's story links the remembering of her action inextricably with the remembrance of him and his actions. The unique prophetic action of the woman at Bethany takes its place, therefore, alongside of and complementary to the actions of Jesus. The preaching and telling of both comprise the gospel, which will be proclaimed in the whole world.

This story of a woman at the beginning of the passion narrative is a story of female power, a power that recognizes suffering and reaches out courageously to bring the touch of mercy and compassion to the one suffering. As the words of Jesus at the end of her story indicate, it is the most extraordinary story of one of the followers of Jesus, and hence it is to be continually proclaimed as gospel. Female gender therefore symbolizes faithful discipleship at this point in the narrative. The force of this symbol is, however, blunted by the androcentric narrative. This woman of compassion is given no name, nor is she given a voice in the narrative. Her prophetic action is interpreted by the male voice of Jesus. Further, like the Canaanite woman, there is no story of her call within the narrative, and she is excluded from the group called "disciples" because of its patriarchal construct. Her action, however, functions to subvert that very construct.

As the story of Jesus' last days continues, the reader sees him entering more deeply into the world of betrayal, denial, rejection, and annihilation—symbolized in the narrative as a male world. Only for brief moments do women break the hegemony of this world. During Jesus' trial before the high priest, two women recognize Peter as having been with Jesus, and their affirmation, which symbolically places them on the side of Jesus, sets them over against Peter and his denial of Jesus (26:69, 71). Later, Pilate's wife is referred to by the narrator (27:19). Like Herodias, she does not appear as an active character, but her

words of warning, which claim Jesus as a righteous man, stand out in stark contrast to the sea of accusations surrounding him. These faint female voices are, however, drowned out by the male voices of denial and condemnation.

Matthew 27:55–56, 61

Although their voices are no longer heard in the narrative, women appear in the two scenes that constitute its climax. They are present at the cross and the tomb and are the first to encounter the risen Jesus. In both situations, they are witnesses, as the use of a particular form of the verb "to see" only in these two verses of the narrative indicates (27:55; 28:1). They witness the manifestation of divine power that surrounds both the crucifixion (27:51–53) and the resurrection (28:2–3).

The second half of 27:55 directs the reader's attention to the long-term association of the women with Jesus, thus authenticating their witness. They have *followed* Jesus from Galilee and have *ministered* to him or served him. It has already been shown that the following of Jesus is constitutive of discipleship and that service, especially of Jesus, is central to the inauguration of the *basileia*. These women are therefore disciples, even though not explicitly named as such, and they are faithful to their teacher and friend to the very end.

This fidelity is further emphasized for the reader by the presence of "the mother of the sons of Zebedee" among the group. Earlier Jesus invited this woman and her sons to drink the cup of suffering with him, an invitation they accepted (20:20–22). The woman has shown herself faithful to her affirmation and stands at the foot of Jesus' cross. She is still not named, although two of her companions are—Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (27:56). Apart from Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Mary (the women named in the prologue) and Herodias (14:3), these are the only women who are identified by name in the entire Gospel. They are linked to the cross (27:56) and to the tomb (27:61) and appear in the symbolic narrative of the resurrection (28:1–10). Women characters emerge from anonymity, and their very naming at this point of the narrative emphasizes their significance.

Matthew 28:1–10

Both the naming of the two women and their undertaking, their going to see or to observe the tomb of Jesus, link this story to that of the women who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion. In both instances the women are designated as witnesses. The focalizer "behold" in v. 2 directs the reader's attention to the phenomena surrounding the tomb, as did the verb "to see" in connection with the crucifixion. In the face of this manifestation of divine power, the guards become like dead men. In contrast, the message the angel gives to the women

is that the crucified one whom they seek, the one whom in fact they saw die, has been raised (28:5–6). The women are surrounded by these signs of reversal, signs of a new age, and their very presence and encounter with the angel are among those signs.

These faithful women are then given a commission by the angel. They are to proclaim to the disciples that Jesus has been raised. They are indeed commissioned with the proclamation of the resurrection. In addition, they are to be the intermediaries who make possible the absent disciples' reconciliation with Jesus. The fidelity of the women to this twofold commission is indicated by the repetition in v. 8 of the adverb "quickly." The angel commanded, "Go quickly," the narrator relates, so they departed quickly.

As in v. 2, the focalizer "behold" is used once again at the beginning of v. 9 by the narrator to direct the reader's attention. This time it is toward Jesus, the risen Jesus, who meets the obedient women as they are undertaking their commission. The greeting—"Hail"—continues the reversal motif that characterizes this scene. The word used by Judas to betray Jesus (26:49) and by the soldiers to mock him (27:29) now becomes the first word given by the implied author to the risen Jesus as greeting to the women who have witnessed the empty tomb. The great joy of the women (28:8) meets the joyful greeting of Jesus (28:9), and their response is worship. It is only after this encounter that Jesus reiterates the commission given to the women earlier by the angel. They are to be the messengers of reconciliation to the absent disciples. The risen Jesus, however, does not commission the women with the resurrection proclamation. His commissioning will be reserved for the eleven male disciples as the narrative closes (28:19–20). One wonders whether here, once again, female gender becomes a limitation, this time in relation to Jesus' own commissioning of the resurrection proclamation. This story, however, together with others within the passion/resurrection narrative, offers significant clues for a feminist rereading of the text.

Within the final movement of the Gospel story, the account of Jesus' passion, significant stories of women link them as women of passion to this central story. The power of their love and compassion overcomes fear and defamation and enables them to remain as faithful followers and companions of Jesus through his last days and hours. They are, however, not merely followers but competent actors who bring their resources and their own person into relationship with Jesus at this point in a way that is indicative of the *basileia* that Jesus has preached and whose very radicalism and inclusiveness have led to his death. They stand, therefore, as unique witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is to be proclaimed to all nations so that *all* may be discipled. They are, therefore, the foremothers of the gospel proclamation, and their story will be told as a constitutive part of it. At the close of the Gospel story, as in its opening, female power and female presence function to subvert

the patriarchal constructs and androcentric worldviews that both frame the narrative and find expression throughout.

CONCLUSION

In our narrative reading, we have encountered a subversive story for those who have ears to hear the voice from the underside of the narrative which speaks against the grain of the text. It has been a story of women's participation in the *basileia* mission and ministry of Jesus, God with us. A woman's participation in the birth of Jesus outside the patriarchal familial structure is claimed as holy, her female power linked to the divine power and presence that characterize her son, Jesus, and his story (1:23; 18:20; 28:20). Into this woman's story, brief though it is, are drawn the memories of women's participation in Israel's history. As the story develops, a woman who is an outsider on the basis of gender and religious law is invited into wholeness and life by Jesus and responds in a way that characterizes her as belonging to the *basileia* community being established by Jesus' preaching and way of life. Two other women who are among the most dangerous of pollutants are enabled to cross the boundaries that exclude them. For the young woman, Jesus' touch restores her to life, as it did for Peter's mother-in-law, but the woman with the hemorrhage takes the initiative herself, claiming healing and wholeness. Her initiative prepares the reader for an even more extraordinary instance of female insight, belief, and courage, when the Canaanite woman in her debate with Jesus extends the *basileia* mission beyond the confines of Israel to the Gentiles and beyond gender boundaries to fully include women in the life of the community. As the story moves to a close women are significant actors in the unfolding drama. A woman prophetically anoints Jesus in recognition of his messianic ministry and in compassionate and faithful love of him as he approaches death. Other women manifest a similar compassion and fidelity when they stand with Jesus in his death and remain beyond death and burial to witness the power of God made visible in the raising up of Jesus. They are then commissioned with a resurrection proclamation and are the first to encounter the risen Jesus being further commissioned by him to be the agents of reconciliation with the absent disciples.

Such a story has been augmented by Jesus' preaching of an inclusive *basileia* where all will be healed and made whole, where all learn wisdom and Torah, and where male and female image this *basileia*. This is the message of Jesus-Sophia, who reaches and heals and whose identity and mission are interpreted in the light of the Wisdom myth with its central female images.

Within the Matthean story, therefore, female power, whether reproductive power or the power of faith-filled seeing, understanding, and acting, was many times affirmed by the authoritative voice of the narrator or Jesus. Female gen-

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der was symbolic of faithful participation in the *basileia* vision that Jesus preached in much of the story. The symbolic function of female gender was, however, two-edged. In addition to symbolizing faithful participation, femaleness functioned as a limitation preventing the women's participation in the character group called "the Twelve" or perhaps even in "the disciples." Female power was presented as anomalous within the androcentric perspective of the narrative and hence was continually brought within the confines of this perspective. Female experience was virtually excluded from the symbol system drawn upon to image the *basileia*.

Our reading of the Matthean story, however, from the perspective of a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion enabled the subversive story to function deconstructively in relation to the androcentric perspective and patriarchal structures within the text. This made possible the hermeneutics of remembrance and reclamation, which led to an inclusive reading of the Gospel text. Within such a reading women together with men stand at the heart of the Gospel story. Both women and men are active participants in Israel's history, just as Mary and Joseph are such in the birth story. Women together with men receive the fruits of the *basileia* with a faith that calls forth the life-restoring power of Jesus. This healing brings both together in the inclusive community around Jesus. The struggle toward full discipleship is manifest in the lives of women and men, and gender is not determinative of opposition to Jesus. Finally, women together with men are central to the mission of resurrection proclamation both within Israel and beyond its geographic confines. The stories of women are restored to the biblical text so that it must now be read as the story of women and men who participated in the Jesus-event recounted in the Matthean narrative.

TO BRING OUT OF ONE'S TREASURE THE NEW AND THE OLD: THE ART OF SUBVERSIVE TRADITIONING

The narrative and reader-response critical tools employed in the previous section have enabled us, from a reading site that is explicitly feminist, to restore to the Matthean text the stories of women, the vision of the *basileia* as inclusive particularly from a gender perspective, and a wisdom Christology. A contemporary reading of this text, therefore, that seeks to be accountable in relation to an ethics of inclusion will give consideration to the significance of such a reading and to the dangers inherent in the patriarchal and androcentric readings that are possible from different reading sites.

A feminist ethics of inclusion as it functions in the arena of biblical studies is not limited, however, to the countercoherent reading which gives attention to

gender perspectives and which revisions old texts from the new critical direction of women's lives and experience. It is also concerned with reading the story of the formation of the text in its historical context and the appropriate reconstruction of that context. There is an awareness that the text itself is a reading of a particular historical and ideological reality and that it encodes the perspectives of the authorizing agent, whether an individual or a community. We know that women were members of early Christian communities, and hence our reading of the traditioning process that led to the compilation of the Matthean story of Jesus will ask the question of women's inclusion in this process. Do we find women's perspectives, even women's traditions, included in and therefore functional in the shaping of the final story?

The tools that enable this stage of investigation are predominantly historical-critical. They will be employed in some detail in relation to the Matthean story of the Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus as an illustration of the traditioning process and its possible encoding of women's perspectives and traditions, or at least those perspectives and traditions that included women and their experience. Brief indications will then be provided of both similar and differing processes in relation to other major stories examined in the preceding section.

A READING OF MATTHEAN TRADITIONING (15:21-28)

A number of source-critical factors lead to the conclusion that the Matthean story of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28) is an adaptation of a similar story found in Mark 7:24-30. Although there is very little evidence of direct literary dependence, as seen in figure 7 (the reference to Tyre, a woman's daughter in each, and the interchange regarding bread being thrown to dogs), there are significant content relationships. A woman intercedes on behalf of her daughter who has an unclean spirit, prostrating herself before Jesus only to be rebuffed by an apparently familiar parabolic saying about throwing the children's bread to the dogs. In each case, she extends the parable to include herself and her daughter and thus wins Jesus' admiration and his compassion, which extends to her daughter through her. The Matthean account would seem to be a development of the Markan account in that a literary pattern found in Mark, namely, petition followed by difficulty, is repeated but also reproduced in Matthew. Second, in Matthew the woman is given direct speech, whereas her request is indirect in the words of the narrator in Mark (Mark 7:25b//Mat 15:22b; Mark 7:26//Mat 15:25b). A final factor that would point to development of the story within the Matthean community is the emphasis on the dialogue or debate rather than on the more traditional miracle aspect of the story.

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Mat 15:21-28

21 And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And

behold a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried,

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David, my daughter is severely possessed by a demon."

23 But he did not answer her a word.

And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

25 But she came and knelt before him

saying,

"Lord, help me."

26 And he answered,

"It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

27 She said,

"Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

28 Then Jesus answered her,

"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire."

And her daughter was healed instantly.

Figure 7

Mark 7:24-30

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre [and Sidon]. And he entered a house and would not have anyone know it; yet he could not be hid.

25 But

immediately a woman

whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit,

heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

26 Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrochocian by birth,

and she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

27 And he said to her,

"Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

28 But she answered him,

"Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the children's crumbs."

29 And he said to her,

"For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."

30 And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone.

One of the key characteristics of the Matthean account that suggests a significant traditioning process within the Matthean house-churches is the use of words and phrases which are indicative of that community's tradition and which occur elsewhere in the Gospel story. It seems, therefore, that this particular story developed around the two sayings taken directly from the Markan account, but these were augmented by Matthean tradition. This is seen in the

opening verse of the story, where Jesus "withdraws" following the controversy with the Jewish leaders over questions of tradition. Each time previously that this verb was used in relation to Jesus (2:14, 22; 4:12; 12:15; 14:13), he had been seeking refuge from controversy with the Jewish political or religious leaders, and each time his withdrawal was associated with explicit Gentile territory or was in the context of reference to the Gentiles. The question of insider/outsider on ethnic grounds is thereby signaled at the outset of the story.

Interestingly, given the Matthean use of the house metaphor with which we are already familiar, the location of the encounter with the woman inside a house, which typifies the Markan account, is absent from Matthew. The encounter takes place in the public arena, which was traditionally assumed to be the domain of men, and it is here that the woman makes her demand and obtains a favorable response to her request. Her success as woman in this arena will have profound implications for the house-churches, but the location itself, which was strongly gender-inflected in first-century Mediterranean culture, may be an indicator of a significant gender question within this story as well as a Gentile mission issue.

The designation of the woman as Canaanite underscores her status as outsider on a presumably ethnic basis. Within the Matthean traditioning process, however, this woman is given the language of the insider. Her cry "have mercy on me" is one familiar within the Gospel (9:27, 20:30, 31; 17:15) and has the format of prayer or a traditional liturgical formula in Jewish tradition, as indicated by its presence in many psalms (Pss 6:2; 9:13; 30:10; 41:4, 10 . . .). It may reasonably be assumed that it was representative of the liturgical language within the Matthean house-churches. The two titles used by the woman—"Lord" and "Son of David"—are typical of the traditions developing within those house-churches as they reflected on the person and work of Jesus, and they occur significantly throughout the Matthean Gospel. The words given to the woman represent, therefore, developing liturgical and theological formulations within the Matthean communities. This gives weight to the earlier hint that this tradition may be concerned not only with ethnic questions but also with gender questions—and even further, how these impinged on the liturgical and theological life.

For many within those communities, the woman's words would have struck at the heart of a number of their socioreligious boundaries, both ethnic and gender. One wonders, therefore, whether these audacious words given to the Canaanite woman within the traditioning process capture the perspective of at least some of the more egalitarian Matthean house-churches, in which women were active participants in the community's liturgical and theological life. Perhaps these communities were coming into conflict with other house-church communities who excluded women from these activities or were seek-

ing to restrict activities women had undertaken as a result of an inclusive interpretation of the Jesus vision.

That conflict is represented at the core of this tradition's development is suggested by the heaping up of oppositions to the woman's request. The opening phrase of v. 23—"he did not answer her a word"—is the most radical opposition and does not find an echo anywhere else in the Gospel. It functions rhetorically, therefore, as the encoding of a very strong objection to the possibilities inherent in the development of this tradition within certain Matthean communities that would allow the participation of women and Gentiles in the liturgical and theological life of the community.

The introduction of the disciples into the scene may have had the same rhetorical function. It may, however, have been representative of a more general trend that opposed an egalitarian form of household structure that was legitimated by the traditions preserved in the stories of women. We saw earlier that the disciples as opponents of women occurred in both this story and that of the woman who anoints Jesus. Both are redactional additions.

The third opposition, v. 24—"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—represents a tradition that was present within the Matthean communities, as suggested by the occurrence of a very similar statement given to Jesus in the missionary discourse. There he commissioned his disciples to avoid Gentile and Samaritan towns and to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:5-6), and here this same restrictive mission is claimed for Jesus himself. Thus, three traditional objections are heaped up over against the woman's petition in such a way as to suggest the struggle occurring in the very traditioning process itself. It surrounds the two questions of female and Gentile participation within the life of the new Christian communities, and we could reasonably assume that women were involved in this struggle, especially if the future of their participation was at stake. The Canaanite woman may well have been symbolic of their struggle, especially as the tradition developed within their midst.

In v. 25, the woman is once again given direct speech, and again her words—"Lord, help me"—have theological and liturgical overtones. The request is reminiscent of the psalms (Pss 43:27; 69:6; 78:9; 108:26, 117). Taken together, her two requests closely resemble the petition of Ps 108:26: "Help me, Lord my God, save me according to your mercy." This psalm is the cry of an oppressed person in the face of severe adversities. It is significant, therefore, that it is the same cry for "help" and "mercy" that is given to the woman who calls out to Jesus from a position of exclusion and oppression.

The Markan opposition, which seems at first glance to be simply retained in the Matthean redactional process (v. 26), functions with much greater impact because of the threefold opposition in vv. 23-24. This impact is even further strengthened by the omission of the Markan relativizing statement: "Let the

children first be fed." It seems, therefore, to parallel the very particularist statement of v. 24. We have already suggested that the development of this Matthean tradition touched not only on the question of Jesus' mission to the Gentiles but also on the role of women within the Christian community. While it seems that the Markan use of "dogs" in the context of that story is understood as a derogatory reference to Gentiles, in the Matthean context it may have a broader referent.

In Isa 56:10, those who are blind and without knowledge are likened to "dumb dogs." Knowledge in this case is inclusive of Torah knowledge and, as well as applying to Gentiles, later included the "poor of the land," whose lack of knowledge of Torah rendered them unable to keep its precepts. In later rabbinic writings, the term "dog" is also used to refer to those not versed in the Torah. If such an understanding may have been current within the Matthean community, then the Markan parable may have been used to categorize the woman as "dog" not only because of her ethnic status but also because of gender. It is a particularist statement like that of v. 24, but the Matthean text can function as such on two counts. The woman is not eligible to receive the bread of the insider not only because of her Gentile status but also because of her lack of access to the Torah because of being a woman.

Within the development of a tradition that was incorporating opposing theological perspectives within the Matthean church, the slight change made to the Markan text in v. 27 is significant. The "Dogs" are not placed in the demeaning position "under the table," and the crumbs are those that fall from the table of the "master" or "lord," the title that has been used for Jesus by the woman in her two requests. The woman claims for herself as Gentile the right to receive the benefits of the *basileia* that Jesus preached directly from him and not secondarily from those who claimed the sole right to these benefits. Second, as a woman within the Christian community, she claims the right to learn and to scrutinize the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, a benefit not reserved solely for the male members of the community but available to all from the table of the Lord.

The greeting found on the lips of Jesus at the conclusion of the Markan story is unique. The exclamation "O" may indicate the strong emotion involved in this culmination of an emotionally charged story. The full greeting "O woman" acknowledges the woman respectfully in contrast to the rejection that has characterized the story. Greeting is followed by exclamation, as Jesus proclaims the greatness of her faith. We have already seen earlier the contrast between the great faith of the woman and the little faith of the disciples. It should be pointed out that this is the only time in the entire story that the faith of a supplicant is qualified in this way. The woman's approach to Jesus has thereby been vindicated over against the accusations and oppositions set up against her. As the story concludes, the particularist statements of vv. 24 and

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26 are overturned and it is woman and those whose theological perspective she symbolizes who are acclaimed in the authoritative words of Jesus.

By way of summary, it seems that within the Matthean community, the Markan story has provided a basis around which two groups of countertraditions developed. A natural development from the Markan story would have been the highlighting of the extension of Jesus' mission to the Gentiles by doubling the pattern of petition and difficulty. Our particular reading of the developing tradition, however, has suggested that the conflict existed not only in relation to the Gentile mission but also toward women's participation in the liturgical and theological life of the community hinted at by the words of petition given to the woman. As the tradition developed, the particularist statements of vv. 24 and 26 took on new significance and provided a counter to those community perspectives that supported the active participation of women in the community's religious life. Verse 23 may have been a later addition to add greater weight to the particularist position, which was gender restrictive.

It is this story with tradition and countertradition that has been incorporated into the Gospel story in a way that functions to support and legitimate women's active role in liturgy and their participation in the community's theological reflection on the life and ministry of Jesus in the light of their scriptures. It is difficult to imagine that women alone were responsible for the development of the story, but within the house-churches that seem to have been in conflict, women would certainly have been members. The developed tradition would, however, have been very significant to women within the community, and hence they may well have been active in its preservation and incorporation into the Gospel story. This story's formation is illustrative, therefore, of the art of subversive traditioning which characterizes at least certain aspects of the Matthean Gospel.

THE NEW AND THE OLD

What was new, the result of bringing the Jesus traditions into new situations, certainly characterized the development of the story of the Canaanite woman. Other stories within the Matthean Gospel, however, are a preservation of the old in what may well have been a very early form. A redaction-critical study of the story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law suggests such a process.

The earlier narrative-critical reading of this story alerted us to the fact that it did not follow the expected pattern for a miracle story. Comparison with Mark and Luke indicates that in both of these Gospels the story is typical of a miracle account. One of the aspects unique to the Matthean account is the presence of the verb "saw" in v. 14. This verb is a significant indicator of an-

other story type, namely, the vocation story, typified in 9:9. When a comparison is made between 8:14–15 and 9:9, it appears that the Matthean story combines elements of both vocation stories and miracle stories, as seen in figure 8.

INTRODUCTION		Matth 8:14–15	Matth 9:9
Coming of the caller		And when Jesus entered Peter's house he saw his mother-in-law	And Jesus passed on from there he saw a man called Matthew
Sees one to be called			
EXPOSITION			
Description of one to be called		lying sick with a fever;	sitting at the tax office
MIDDLE			
Call-word or action		he touched her hand, [and the fever left her]	and he said to him, "Follow me"
CONCLUSION			
Response to call		and she arose and served him	And he arose and followed him.

Figure 8

Such a story form represents early traditioning within the Christian community, when models from the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., 1 Kgs 19:19–21) were used to give shape to their memories of Jesus and to enable their telling or traditioning of these memories. It could be argued, therefore, that the tradition regarding Peter's mother-in-law preserved within the Matthean community was the early memory of her call to the discipleship of Jesus occasioned by her healing. It was told in the typical mode of vocation stories, with the brief account of her healing included. That this was an old memory seems likely on further grounds in that it is more difficult to imagine that a community whose traditions reflected a struggle surrounding women's participation would readily have changed a story of a woman's healing to a story of a woman's call to discipleship.

Within the Matthean community, therefore, this story may well have been symbolic of women's discipleship. The retention of the healing aspect of the story may also have symbolized the gender barriers that had to be overcome to enable women's full participation in the *basileia* ministry of Jesus continued in the life of the community. Such a story would have been told among women within the community. Perhaps too it was they who preserved the story's vocational aspect through the traditioning process, keeping what was old when that best enabled the inclusive nature of the *basileia* vision to be both preserved and enhanced.

Likewise, a detailed redaction-critical study of the stories of the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and the raising of the young woman who was a ruler's daughter suggests that they too have been preserved in a concise early

form that differed from the Markan and Lukan source. Little has been added to the early story of the hemorrhaging woman in the traditioning process. Significantly, however, the woman is not dismissed, but the story concludes by highlighting the salvific aspect of the healing for the woman. This parallels the climactic conclusion of the framing story: "the girl arose" (9:25). In neither story is the female returned to the oppressive social structure, whether it be the patriarchal family or socioreligious context.

During the course of the shaping of these two stories within the Matthean communities the most significant developments surrounded the emphasizing of parallels between them. This is especially clear in the initial verses of the combined pericope, where the ruler's request is paralleled with that of the hemorrhaging woman, as can be seen in figure 9.

18Behold a ruler		20Behold a woman
came in and knelt before him saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live."		who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment for she said to herself
		"If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well."

Figure 9

Such parallel structure highlights the boundaries the woman had to cross to obtain healing. As the focal point in the story, therefore, it suggests that these stories would have been significant for those communities which may have been struggling with attempts to exclude women socially or religiously and that such communities may have been responsible for the preservation of these stories in an early stark simplicity. The telling of these stories not only recalls but generates hope, expectation, and a vision of new possibilities for all females of whatever age. They speak to the community of the channels of salvation that Jesus opens up to women as well as men beyond the boundaries of gender, and of life offered to young women beyond the confines of the patriarchal family.

In the final redactional shaping of chapters 8 and 9, three stories involving women taken from early written sources have been retained. Each of these stories has been preserved with the simplicity and directness that reflect the early Christian memory preserved within the Matthean community. By means of the interaction of miracle and teaching, the interplay of christological, sociological, and discipleship motifs, and attention to the interaction between Jesus and suppliant, a paradigm for women within the community has been presented. They are recipients of the fruits of the *basileia*; they serve as disciples of Jesus within its parameters; and they believe, despite all obstacles, that Jesus has the power to cross the boundaries established by various forms of human

limitation. This paradigm seems to encode a vision that had been kept alive by the community itself, but its preservation within this final stage of redaction and its skilful incorporation into the text would also function to challenge other paradigms of discipleship and of participation in the fruits of the kingdom that were present in the community and were likewise encoded in the Gospel. This explains something of the tension that we find in the Gospel surrounding these stories, a tension that has not been avoided but is in fact at the heart of the stated purpose in redacting—to bring out the new and the old.

It is more difficult to determine the traditioning process that shaped the infancy narrative, but in the absence of any extant evidence of the linking of the four women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba—it could be claimed that their presence in the genealogy is the result of a Marthean community tradition. As the Isaian text (7:14) was used to interpret the extraordinary action of God in the birth of Jesus to Mary outside patriarchal family structures, so too were other biblical traditions recalled to enhance this tradition. These were new traditions developed within the Marthean house-churches and we are left to question whether such traditions as these were not the result of women's traditioning.

Perhaps the most subtle evidence of Marthean community traditioning is seen in the stories that linked women to the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, to his death, and to the proclamation of the resurrection. In each of these stories the Markan text seems to provide the source for the development of the traditions in the Marthean communities with only minor changes that incorporate the story more fully into these communities' particular theological emphases. The most significant modification is the development and inclusion of what appears to be an earlier tradition surrounding the appearance of Jesus to the women at the tomb.

This brief glance at the complex traditioning process within the various house-churches which constituted the Marthean Christian community has enabled us to reread not just the text but also its subtext, which includes the inscribed historical situation and the rhetorical function of the story within such a situation. It has alerted us to the tension involved as new traditions were created while old traditions were both preserved and developed in order that the Jesus story and Jesus traditions might be told in such a way that they legitimated certain aspects of the life of this Christian community while challenging it to a vision beyond its present. Gender played a significant role in this shaping and fashioning of the story, since a focal point was the proclamation of the *basileia* vision of Jesus seen as inclusive. The suggestion of subversive traditioning has certainly been borne out in a way that suggests that women were significantly involved in the traditioning process within the Marthean community. Our earlier narrative study also revealed that it is not only the subversive traditions but also strong patriarchal and androcentric traditions that have been developed and preserved in this community. We have not been able

to observe the redactional process in relation to these traditions, but this too is a necessary part of a comprehensive feminist critical reading of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

We began with the image of the Marthean scribe trained for the implementation of the *basileia* vision of Jesus in a new age. As twentieth-century women, we have claimed this image as our own and have undertaken the task of reading the first Gospel, bringing out what is new because the Gospel is read with a different vision for a different time in history. We have also examined the old through these same lenses and have brought a gender critique to bear on the text and its context so that both text and subtext have been read from the new reading site of feminism.

Such a reading is not complete; it has indeed barely begun. The difficult task of reconstructing the history of the Marthean community so that it is a history of women and men has merely been suggested. The implications of our reading for Marthean theology, Christology, ecclesiology, and discipleship still remain to be explored. What has emerged, however, from both the narrative and redactional reading of the Marthean text is that tension and ambiguity surround the stories of women when they are incorporated into a patriarchal and androcentric text. Our revisioning of this old text from a new critical direction reminds us today that tension and ambiguity will surround our retelling of the Jesus story so that it subverts patriarchy and shapes a vision of an inclusive *basileia*. The stories of women in the Marthean Gospel—the women who traditioned those stories and the women who are storied—companion us on our journey toward this vision.

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