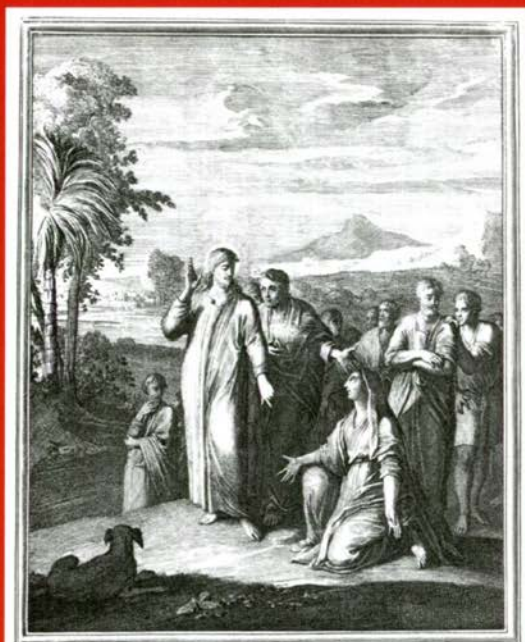


The Whitley Lecture 2011

Wrestling with the Word

A Woman reads Scripture

E. Anne Clements



MATHE XV.

Dum clamat Chananæa, rogatq; urgentq; salutem
Obtinuit nate nec sine laude tua.
Difce Deus tua fi non impleat illico vota,
Speq; Fideq; diu Te cupit efse pium.

*In dem das Weiblein ſchreyt und nachtetz mit dem Lehrer,
So kriegt Sie eyn Lob, und druff, was Sie bechire,
Sern: Wann Gott is verzieht, Es muß darun verzeihen,
das Glaub und Hoffnung nur, durchs Schmecht, flasset herent*

Introduction by Peter Shepherd

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(2011)

Whitley Publications
Regent's Park College, Oxford

Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies
Occasional Papers Volume 3 and Whitley Publications

The Whitley Lecture 2011

**Wrestling with the Word
A Woman reads Scripture**

E. Anne Clements

Whitley Publications



Regent's Park College, Oxford

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First published 2011

Whitley Publications,
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Oxford,
OX1 2LB.

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Pusey Street,
Oxford,
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90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.*

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-9565006-0-1

Front cover illustration: 'The Canaanite woman asks Jesus to heal her daughter', copper engraving by Caspar Luiken (1672-1708), from his *Historiae celebriores Veteris Testamenti Iconibus representatae* (1712). Digital Image Library provided by E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, and used by courtesy of the Digital Image Archive, Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

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Typeset by Troon & Croft
Printed and bound in Great Britain
by AlphaGraphics Nottingham
www.alphagraphics.co.uk/centres/nottingham-uk007/index.html

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*To my three beautiful daughters,
Bethan, Emma and Shona,
with love.*

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THE WHITLEY LECTURE

The Whitley Lecture was first established in 1949 in honour of W.T. Whitley (1861–1947), the Baptist minister and historian. Following a pastorate in Bridlington, during which he also taught at Rawdon College in Yorkshire, Whitley became the first Principal of the Baptist College of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, in 1891. This institution was later renamed Whitley College in his honour.

Whitley was a key figure in the formation of the Baptist Historical Society in 1908. He edited its journal, which soon gained an international reputation for the quality of its contents – a reputation it still enjoys nearly a century later as the *Baptist Quarterly*. His *A History of British Baptists* (London: Charles Griffin, 1923) remains an important source of information and comment for contemporary historians. Altogether he made an important contribution to Baptist life and self understanding in Britain and Australia, providing a model of how a pastor-scholar might enrich the life and faith of others.

The establishment of the annual lecture in his name is designed as an encouragement to research and writing by Baptist scholars, and to enable the results of this work to be published. The giving of grants, advice and other forms of support by the Lectureship Committee serves the same purpose. The committee consists of representatives of the British Baptist Colleges, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, BMS World Mission, the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship and the Baptist Historical Society. These organizations also provide financial support for its work.

This year the committee is delighted that Anne Clements has agreed to be our lecturer. Anne studied theology at King's College, London University, before going into secondary school teaching. After starting a family, she and her husband, Ronald, spent ten years in mainland China (1986–1996) teaching at a university in Fujian province. On their return, alongside helping her husband run the China department for OMF International, she cared for her family and two elderly parents. After starting a part-time masters at Spurgeon's College in 2001, she felt called to the ministry and continued to train at Spurgeon's for the Baptist ministry. She has been the pastor at West Kingsdown Baptist in Kent for the past six years and is currently completing a PhD, having benefited from a sabbatical funded by a Baptist Union Scholarship. Anne has three grown daughters, two of whom are married, and to her delight has recently become a grandmother. As well as cuddling her new grandson, she enjoys cooking, reading and country walks.

Her lecture addresses the vitally important question of how to hear the voices of women in the male-centred world of the Bible. She describes her journey into ministry, and how she is developing a reading strategy that is able to explore the significance of stories involving women in the Old and New Testaments. An

exposition of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15 provides a powerful example of how this can be done.

Peter Shepherd

Secretary, Whitley Lectureship Management Committee



William Thomas Whitley (1861–1947)

Wrestling with the Word: A Woman reads Scripture

Introduction

How does a woman who does not wish to reject the authority of scripture, but who increasingly becomes aware of the male centered nature of the text and the patriarchal backdrop to its stories, come to terms with the word? To a greater or lesser extent all Christians wrestle with God's word as they seek a blessing. This lecture considers the options open to those aware of the gender distortion of scripture and traces one woman's formulation of a hermeneutical stance and reading strategy. When we listen to the voices of women's stories we discover that women's stories serve to counter balance the dominant androcentric¹ patriarchal narrative. This has often been obscured by patriarchal interpretations of scripture that have either overlooked or interpreted women's stories in such a way that women remain at the margins. This lecture will provide an example of how a gender attentive reading of Matthew's Gospel can yield fruitful results.

The Context of the Reader

Reader response theory has brought to the fore the subjectivity of the individual reader who approaches the text. It is only as readers come to the text that meaning is created. The reading process is complex and multifaceted. Warren Carter provides a helpful summary of what readers do as they formulate meaning from the text:

We notice features of the text. We construe words and fill gaps. We supply content and understandings that the text assumes of us. We attend to the actions, conflicts, characters, setting and point/s of view ... We discern and evaluate different points of view, different behaviors and values. We link scenes, attend to settings, construct sequences, identify causality, determine temporal relations, and create unity.²

No individual is value free, but possesses ideologies and stances (even if not recognized or acknowledged) as they come to the text. As they read, they create meaning from the text in the light of all that makes them who they are. Consequently, contrary to modernist assumptions, there is no such thing as an interest-free reading that is completely objective in its interpretation. Individuals make up communities and interpretative communities also determine meaning, which, in turn, influences the individual as they read. Since no reading is innocent, we all need to acknowledge of what reading we are guilty.

¹ The adjective androcentric describes a focus on men. By using the term in this context I do not mean a piece of writing is exclusively male but that its main focus is masculine.

² W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), p. 2.

I come to the biblical text as a reader from within the Christian Baptist community (of which I am a minister) and as a woman. My journey into ministry has left me acutely aware that God's word has not only illocutionary force but perlocutionary effects.³ A brief summary of my journey will illustrate this point.

An Autobiographical Aside

My calling to ordained ministry came during a ministerial vacancy in the lively Baptist church we were attending where women took the traditional roles of teaching children, organizing refreshments, arranging flowers, etc. In the services women led prayers and sang, but never preached or presided over communion. I had no wish to 'rock the boat' during a vacancy. However, I could not disobey the increasingly persistent voice of God's Spirit and finally approached the leadership telling them of my sense of calling. One member of the leadership responded out of his *a priori* conviction that ordained ministry was only for men. Since I was a woman, the gifts God had given me must be channeled elsewhere; since I was a woman, God could not be calling me into ordained ministry. It is hard to describe what hearing that response did to me as a woman. I was shocked and saddened by the non-negotiable stance and, although I held my silence, I became angry. My anger increased when I was reminded of a few key verses (1 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Cor 14:34-35; Col 3:18; Eph 5:22-24) – had I forgotten them or not read them properly? More acutely than ever before I realized the vital importance of hermeneutics: just how do we read, interpret and make sense of God's word? I also realized more than ever before how the word of God could be used to justify the marginalization and silencing of women simply because they were women. The situation highlighted the dangers of using some texts whilst ignoring others: I have never been told I will be saved by bearing children (1 Tim 2:15). However, the counter strategy of pointing to positive texts about women can lead to a situation where competing proof texts are hurled into the arena and no headway is made. My anger turned to prayer and prayer was the start of an intellectual engagement with issues of interpretation and the nature of God's word that led to the formation of a hermeneutical stance that has shaped the basis for my research.

The conviction that God was calling me into ordained ministry converged with starting a course in feminist theology at Spurgeon's College where I was pursuing a part-time masters degree. I came to feminist thought and gender studies late in life. Whilst rejecting much of what I read, nevertheless important issues were being raised and I found the discussions forced me to think in new ways and face questions that needed to be addressed. As someone who had been brought up to read

³ These two terms are taken from speech-act theory. A basic definition provided by K.J. Vanhooser, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), p. 228, is that the illocutionary dimension stands for what the writer does in telling the plot, for example, the Gospel evangelists display a world and testify to Christ. The perlocutionary dimension refers to the effect the text has on its readers.

my Bible daily, to cherish it as God's liberating, life-giving word, it was only at this point I was really made aware that the biblical text was both androcentric and patriarchal. The scales had fallen from my eyes; they could not be put back on again.

Listening to Feminist Critique

As evangelical Christians we are uncomfortable with any fundamental criticism of scripture. As soon as one adds the adjective 'feminist' to biblical critique suspicions are immediately aroused: I suspect many in evangelical circles would dismiss feminist critique of the Bible out of hand. We can no longer afford to take this stance. The gender issue and gender awareness is now a mainstream topic both within the academy (gender studies are an integral component within academic discourse, particularly in social sciences and the arts), the church and at popular cultural levels.

It is important that we listen to the feminist critique of the biblical text, honestly acknowledging both the breadth and depth of the Bible's patriarchy and androcentrism that their critique has exposed. This is seen most clearly in the Old Testament Hebrew narratives where, for example, stories of YHWH's dealings with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob dominate the Genesis text. Women's stories are few; the women remain in the background often without voice or independent action. From Eve onwards, the woman is often portrayed as the one who snares men, 'whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains' (Eccl 7:26). The legal codes of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy enshrine patriarchal values, where women are regarded as either the possessions of fathers or husbands.⁴ More problematically still, Jeremiah portrays YHWH as a violent abuser of unfaithful Israel:

And if you ask yourself,
"Why has this happened to me?" –
It is because of your many sins
That your skirts have been torn off
And your body mistreated ...
I will pull up your skirts over your face that your shame may be seen.
(Jer 13:22, 26)

Patriarchy and androcentrism are not limited to the Old Testament. The vast majority of the stories in the New Testament focus on men and Paul's views on women are well known, in particular 1 Timothy 2:14 makes woman responsible for

⁴ P.A. Bird, 'Images of Women in the Old Testament', in N.K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 252-88 (p. 259): 'The basic presupposition of all the laws, though modified to some extent in the later period, is a society in which full membership is limited to males, in which only a male is judged a responsible person. He is responsible not only for his own acts but for those of his dependants as well. These include wife, children, and even livestock, in the extended and fluid understanding of household/property that pertained in ancient Israel'.

sin coming into the world: 'And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.' One does not have to read for very long to realize the extent of androcentrism and patriarchy in the biblical text. The situation is further compounded by patriarchal interpretation of the biblical text that has often made the biblical text appear even more one sided and oppressive towards women.

Feminist readings against the grain of the text, resisting its dominant ideology, reveal not just the extent of patriarchy but also its depth. Phyllis Trible was one of the first women scholars to articulate a feminist literary stance in biblical studies. Her *Texts of Terror* (1984) drew attention to four passages that narrate the abuse of women in ancient Israelite society. The slave girl Hagar flees from ill treatment and later experiences banishment along with her child; Tamar the princess is raped by her half brother; the Levite's concubine is raped and dismembered; and Jephthah's daughter is ritually murdered (Gen 16:1-16; 21:9-21; 2 Sam 13:1-22; Judges 19:1-30; 11:29-40). However, the 'terror' of these texts lies not just in their subject matter, but in the way they are told. At the heart of the problem is the issue that there is no explicit judgement of the characters and that, furthermore, sometimes YHWH himself, as actant⁵ within the stories, does not act to protect these women or condemn those who abused them. The abusers' actions are legitimated by the text.

The story of Jacob wrestling one night at the River Jabbok has provided the metaphor for my journey to discover a way forward in interpreting scripture. The identity of the being with whom he wrestled was unknown to Jacob, yet the text implies that the 'man' was divine (Gen 32:28, 30). Coming to scripture, like Jacob we can be puzzled by the ambiguous identity of the text with which we sometimes have to wrestle. Is it human or divine? The answer in this case is that it is both. As Christians we confess the Bible is the divinely inspired, liberating word of God. Yet it is also a book that is fully human, written against the backdrop of the particularity of many different patriarchal contexts. As a woman this poses difficulties in being able to hear the Bible as God's word to us today.

A number of different hermeneutical options, methodologies and reading strategies have been adopted by women as they wrestle with the nature of the biblical text. For some, the answer has been to establish a canon within the canon so that only liberating texts are read and texts of terror are put to one side. Others have sought to reinscribe⁶ the text by telling the biblical stories from a woman's point of view, for example, Sarah's story of the sacrifice of Isaac. Some have looked for counter-traditions within the Bible, voices that must be teased out to be heard, that offer alternatives to dominant biblical voices. More radically, feminists such as Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have rejected the canonical primacy of the text and drawn in non-canonical texts that focus on women. For Fiorenza and many others, the locus of interpretative authority lies not with the reader and the text but with the

⁵ This term is used in literary theory of an individual who plays an active role in the narrative.

⁶ A technical term used by feminist biblical scholars to describe the rewriting of the text from the point of view of a female character.

interpretative community of which they are part. Those who theologically recognize the liberating nature of God's word have argued that praxis should determine interpretation. Women's lived experience must be the starting point for interpretation.⁷ Broadly speaking all these different methodological approaches could be termed revisionist.

Finally, some have rejected the biblical text *per se* as a patriarchal text that demeans women by legitimating the domination of women by men; consequently it holds no authority. Radical feminists such as Esther Fuchs argue that a hermeneutics of resistance is the only way forward because 'the Bible's rhetorical art and its patriarchal ideology are inseparable and complementary'.⁸ She starts from the position that the Bible comprises literary texts that are 'pernicious'⁹ in the way they portray women and their power relations with men. All pictures of biblical women are male constructs that represent a particular cultural understanding of the place and role of women, such constructs are used to subvert and subdue women.

While learning from what women in the rejectionist camp have written, as a Christian woman I work from a very different starting point about the nature of the text with which we wrestle: whilst the Bible has been used as a tool of patriarchy I do not accept that that is its ideological purpose. Primarily it is a theological text revealing the truth about the God whom we worship. Jesus promised the truth would bring freedom and that in his person he was the truth. His words serve as an important reminder that God's word is not ultimately the text, but Jesus, God's son made flesh. However, God's revelation is textually mediated through the canonical scriptures and therefore 'We are tied to these texts'.¹⁰ How then should we read? It is important to establish an interpretative stance before going on to develop reading strategies. I offer my conclusions in the hope it will help others formulate their views.

A Hermeneutics of Hospitable Awareness

I adopt a position contrary to that taken by many feminist scholars who approach the text with distrust and suspicion. I come to the text with an essential trust that desires

⁷ This is the stance taken by Kate Coleman, *Being Human: A Black British Christian Woman's Perspective* (The Whitley Lecture 2006; Oxford: Whitley Publications, 2006), p. 31, who illustrated how her interpretative framework was 'specifically concerned with how our unique subjectivities as black British Christian women in church leadership shape the task of biblical interpretation'.

⁸ E. Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative: Reading the Hebrew Bible as a Woman* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 310; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), p. 29.

⁹ Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*, p. 21.

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* V/1.2 *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (eds G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance; London: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 36: 'In this question of revelation we cannot, therefore, free ourselves from the texts in which its expectation and recollection is attested to us. We are tied to these texts.'

to be open to the text, alongside an awareness of its patriarchal ideology. I do not accept that to engage with the text is to enter a struggle for power between the conflicting ideologies of text and reader; nor that one's task is simply to uncover and critique the androcentric language and patriarchal worldview of the biblical stories. Rather the text gives us an invitation to an encounter, to 'respond to what is there'.¹¹ I accept Kevin Vanhoozer's proposal that we are called to respond to the textual 'covenant of discourse' with an ethics that attends 'to the text's overture of meaning'.¹² Vanhoozer argues that 'our duty to receive the textual stranger as a welcome guest is an obligation implied in the covenant of discourse'.¹³ As a counter to a hermeneutics of suspicion¹⁴ I adopt what I shall call a hermeneutics of hospitable awareness. By this I mean I come to the text with a desire to understand the illocutions of the text, not in an uncritical way that accepts everything at face value but with a desire for an encounter. My hospitality to the text is not naïve (although in Paul Ricoeur's terms it might be called a second naïvety) but seeks to move beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion that so often leads to a negative outcome.¹⁵ Frequently feminist scholarship of the Bible has not moved further than the problems inherent in a patriarchal text to see the possibilities that lie beyond. Margaret Beirne expresses this approach well:

In a broadened feminist exegetical approach, it may be best to avoid starting at the signpost 'be suspicious', and adopt instead Ricoeur's recommendation that the first step ought to be 'a naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole', followed by the critical interpretative stage, and concluding with a return to the text with what is now a 'sophisticated, empathic understanding'. Within this process, suspicion may well have a place, especially as a balance to uncritical affirmation of an androcentric text. But as with all other exegetical tools, it is useful only inasmuch as it contributes to the overall goal of increased understanding.¹⁶

¹¹ Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?*, p. 395.

¹² Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?*, p. 395.

¹³ Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?*, p. 397.

¹⁴ A hermeneutics of suspicion is commonly employed by feminist critics who systematically apply a critique of suspicion to the biblical text, seeking to expose its ideological stance.

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 27, whilst advocating a hermeneutics of suspicion also insisted on the need to move beyond this: 'Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience.'

¹⁶ M. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), p. 16, quoting P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 74; and D.A. Lee, 'Reclaiming the Sacred Text: Christian Feminism and Spirituality', in M. Joy and P. Magee (eds), *Claiming our Rites: Studies in Religion by Australian Women Scholars* (Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1993), pp. 79-97 (p. 83).

Reading Strategies

We must be honest in acknowledging that some texts with regard to women are irredeemably texts of terror. Read in isolation, certain passages objectify women's bodies in pornographic and unacceptable ways or appear to condone terrible abuse and violence. It is not sufficient simply to dismiss or ignore this element of the biblical text. Indeed it is important to hear stories of women's abuse for they hold up a mirror to the horror and reality of life. The proposal that the Baptist Assembly of 2010 endorsed concerning violence and human trafficking bears sad witness to the fact that very little has changed.¹⁷ Women still experience abuse, violence and sexual exploitation. As Tribble comments, 'If art imitates life, scripture likewise reflects it in both holiness and horror.'¹⁸ However, read within a wider biblical context we can find a critique of these stories of terror. Fundamental to the reading strategies that I and many other women have adopted is the conviction that scripture subverts itself. The polyphonic nature of the text enables it to provide its own self-critique in a number of difficult areas including patriarchy and androcentrism. This I believe is an aspect of its inspiration.

Biblical scholarship of the twentieth century was dominated by the male voice and modernist assumptions. In the search for coherence a premium was placed on discovering the univocal, 'true meaning' of the text. Twenty-first century postmodern approaches have become much more aware of the multiplicity of voices in the biblical texts. The multivocal nature of the biblical text enables us to hear it in many different keys. Underlying my argument is the view expressed by Watson that feminist consciousness has made it possible to discern elements that have been present in the text all the time that resist oppression: the text contains an internally grounded critique.¹⁹ A challenge to patriarchal values comes most fundamentally in the opening chapter of the Old Testament, 'So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' (Gen 1:26). This verse in the opening chapter of the Bible provides an alternative vision of men's and women's relation to each other and God. It

¹⁷ The proposal, Baptist Union of Great Britain leaflet, *Listening to God* (2010), states, This Assembly affirms those who are part of campaign protests such as "Thursdays in Black" that witness against abuse and violence, particularly as experienced by women and children, and calls on Baptists to look for ways of acting in solidarity with such movements.

This Assembly recognizes that one severe form of violence is caused by human trafficking for economic and sexual exploitation.

This Assembly supports the practical steps being taken by partner organisations, including the European Baptist Federation and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, to help those who are trafficked and under threat of being trafficked.

¹⁸ P. Tribble, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narrative* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn, 2002), p. 2.

¹⁹ F. Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 190.

'places patriarchal ideology in potential crisis'²⁰ because it indicates that patriarchy is not part of the original divine intention. The New Testament, too, contains egalitarian texts that provide a theological critique of patriarchy and point to an eschatological future where humanity will be undivided (Gal 3:28). In her groundbreaking article, 'Depatriachalizing in Biblical Interpretation', Tribble similarly argued that depatriachalizing was 'a hermeneutic operating within Scripture itself'.²¹ A number of feminist scholars since Tribble have made the same observation; for example, Ilana Pardes notes that 'while the dominant thrust of the Bible is clearly patriarchal, patriarchy is continuously challenged by antithetical trends'.²² David Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell also note that 'The Bible shows us not merely patriarchy, élitism, and nationalism; it shows us the fragility of these ideologies through irony and counter-voices'.²³ A dynamic of self critique, not just of patriarchy but other dominant ideologies such as Israel's exclusive calling, can be seen to be at work either in the immediate context of a narrative or broader biblical context. It is often, however, the stories of women, those sidelined from the public, patriarchal discourse, that challenge the dominant voice of the text.²⁴

In the past women's stories have frequently been overlooked or ignored, their characters have been reduced 'so that they have been lost to the story'.²⁵ Foucault talks of 'subjugated knowledges' that he defines as 'a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges located low down on the hierarchy ... a particular, local, regional knowledge'.²⁶ One could argue that often within the biblical text stories of women are 'subjugated knowledges', which have been 'insufficiently elaborated' within the larger narrative and, therefore, missed within the wider frame of theological discourse. Their stories might appear relatively insignificant, 'particular and local', confined to the margins, yet by focusing on them one begins to realize their importance within the narrative whole. This can be illustrated by a consideration of Matthew's Gospel, where the role played by women is generally considered to be minor in comparison to Luke or John.

²⁰ Watson, *Text, Church and World*, p. 194.

²¹ P. Tribble, 'Depatriachalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41.1 (March, 1973), pp. 30-48 (p. 48).

²² I. Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 51.

²³ D.M. Gunn and D. Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 204.

²⁴ E.g., the significance of the story of Rahab in the book of Joshua (Josh 2), is often underestimated. It is Rahab who enables Israel's entry into Canaan and who challenges Israel's understanding of her exclusive calling to be God's chosen people as they enter the promised land.

²⁵ Walter Brueggemann in his Forward to Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, p. x.

²⁶ M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (Sussex: The Harvest Press, 1980), p. 82.

A Gendered Reading of Matthew's Gospel

A gendered reading of Matthew reveals that there are relatively few stories about women. Occasionally mentioned as present in the crowds (Matt 14:21; 15:38), stories of individual women are mainly confined to the minor characters who come to Jesus seeking help. Male characters have the dominant narrative role and do the speaking. Jesus' main dealings are with the Jewish male leadership and his disciples. The first named and chosen disciples are all male and the Gospel closes with the eleven male disciples being sent out for mission by the risen Jesus. Furthermore, the Gospel story's setting embodies patriarchal assumptions about the position and role of women. Even Jesus' teaching often assumes a male audience and perspective (Matt 15:28, 32). The opening chapter of the Gospel, with its focus on Jesus the Messiah's patrilineal genealogy, indicates that the focus of the Gospel is both christocentric and androcentric. A table listing the named persons (excluding the genealogy) illustrates the point.

Named Persons in Matthew

1:16	Joseph
	<i>Mary</i>
	Jesus
2:3	Herod (the Great)
2:22	Archelaus
3:1	John the Baptist
4:18	Simon (Peter)
	Andrew
4:21	James
	John
	Zebedee
9:9	Matthew
10:3-4	Philip
	Bartholomew
	Thomas
	James son of Alphaeus
	Thaddaeus
	Simon the Cananaean
	Judas Iscariot
13:55	James
	Joseph
	Simon
	Judas
14:1	Herod (Antipas)
14:3	<i>Herodias</i>
	Philip (Herodian)
26:3	Caiaphas
26:6	Simon the leper

- 27:2 Pilate
 27:16 Barabbas
 27:32 Simon of Cyrene
 27:56 *Mary Magdalene*
Mary, mother of James and Joseph

Apart from Mary, Jesus' mother, no woman is named (besides Herodias, an indirect opponent of Jesus), until the closing verses of the Gospel when two other Marys are mentioned. Women, it seems, are of little significance or importance in Matthew's telling of the Jesus story. Yet a second look shows that surprisingly, in the opening verses of the Gospel, within a patrilineal genealogy three Old Testament women are named and a fourth is referred to.

The Woman in Matthew's Genealogy

Like the genealogies in Genesis and 1 Chronicles 1–9, Matthew goes beyond the bare essentials by adding more than just the names of a succession of fathers; he annotates his genealogy. Five women are included in Matthew's annotations, indicated in italics:

- Judah the father of Perez and Zerah *by Tamar*. (Matt 1:3a)
 Salmon the father of Boaz *by Rahab*. (Matt 1:5a)
 Boaz the father of Obed *by Ruth*. (Matt 1:5b)
 And David was the father of Solomon *by the wife of Uriah*. (Matt 1:6b)
 Jacob the father of Joseph *the husband of Mary*. (Matt 1:16)

The reader's attention is caught by the five women because their naming interrupts a repeated pattern of father begetting son. Whilst Mary's presence is explicated in the ongoing narrative, the narrator gives no reasons for the inclusion of the four Old Testament women. Traditionally, Christian thought has placed at least three of these women on the margins of 'acceptability', yet Matthew explicitly recognizes them as mothers of sons who are in direct line to Christ, the Messiah. Perhaps most surprising of all is the inclusion of the Canaanite prostitute, Rahab. Why are they here? Matthew need not have included these women; a patrilineal genealogy would have been perfectly intelligible without them. We might ask, have these women been brought in from the margins to appear in the annals of salvation history simply because of their motherhood? If so, why not name the four ancestral mothers of the Jewish faith, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah? Significantly, Rahab's Old Testament story makes no mention of motherhood, indicating her inclusion and that of the other women goes beyond the fact that each woman bore a male child to a man in the line of Abraham. What was it about their stories that Matthew wished readers to recall as they came to read the story of Jesus the Messiah?

This question is not a new one and a brief glance at the history of interpretation shows that the earliest suggestion in Christian interpretation and one that has

exercised a powerful influence in the way the four women have been viewed in Christian thought is that these four women were included because they were sinners.²⁷ Much more recently Johnson has asked whether in including the four women there was good enough reason 'for the author to introduce blots into the genealogy of the Messiah',²⁸ and, in their magisterial commentary on Matthew's Gospel, Davies and Allison characterize the four women in terms of their questionable sexual activity, their 'irregular and potentially scandalous unions'.²⁹ Yet a close reading of their Hebrew stories in the Old Testament presents these women in a very different light. The three named women are explicitly praised by others within the Old Testament: Tamar as 'more in the right' (Gen 38:26), Rahab 'because she hid the messengers' (Josh 6:17), and Ruth as a 'worthy woman' (Ruth 3:11). Whilst 'she of Uriah' (Bathsheba) does not receive direct praise, her story in 2 Samuel closes with the message from Nathan that her son Solomon is loved by the Lord (2 Sam 12:24, 25). Furthermore, in consequent Jewish interpretation the women are not held up to moral censure, in fact the opposite is the case.³⁰ This is reflected in the New Testament's assessment of Rahab in Hebrews 11:31 where she is praised for her faith, and James 2:25 that lauds her as righteous because of the help she gave to the spies. The line of interpretation³¹ that has focused on their sinfulness and has characterized them as morally questionable women is an example of an observation made by Francis Watson that 'oppression thus attaches not so much to the narratives themselves as to an interpretation'.³² A woman's reading of

²⁷ Notably Jerome (d.420 A.D.) in his commentary on Matthew, *Commentaria in Matthaeum* 9, *Patrologia Latina* 26.21D–22A, expounds the view that the genealogy included those women that were reprehensible to demonstrate that Jesus had come on behalf of sinners in order to blot out their sin and John Chrysostom (d.407 A.D.), Homily 14 in *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospel According to St. Matthew Patrologia Graeca* 13.1873, in his homilies on St. Matthew muses on why Matthew includes only women 'that are famed for some bad thing'.

²⁸ M.D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969) p. 155.

²⁹ W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: Volume 1. Introduction and Commentary on Matthew 1–7* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004 [1988]), p. 187.

³⁰ Johnson, *Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, pp. 159–75. examines a whole variety of intertestamental and later rabbinic literature relevant to the four women. He concludes, p. 159, that in general the four women were highly thought of. He notes that there is a tendency 'to exonerate each of the women and to picture at least Rahab and Ruth as exemplars of conversion and faith'.

³¹ The other two main explanations for their presence that scholars have offered is that firstly, all four women were included because they were Gentiles. Matthew wanted to include four Gentile women in Jesus' line of descent to emphasize the universal nature of the Gospel. The second explanation argues that the four women foreshadow Mary in their unusual or scandalous unions, so preparing the way for Mary's apparently scandalous conception.

³² Watson, *Text, Church and World*, p. 187.

their stories and the significance of their placement within the genealogy leads to very a different conclusion.

Matthew's Gynocentric Counternarrative

I suggest that the four women of the Old Testament, along with Mary, are the first indication of a positive gynocentric counternarrative that runs throughout Matthew's Gospel. At the margins of the text, and seemingly insignificant, Matthew is nonetheless saying something important about the role played by women. The table below lists both the named and unnamed women of the Gospel.

Named and Unnamed Women who appear in Matthew's Gospel

<i>Women in the genealogy</i>
Tamar 1:3
Rahab 1:5
Ruth 1:5
She of Uriah 1:6
Mary 1:16
<i>Women in the main narrative</i>
Mary 1:18, Jesus' mother 12:46
Simon's mother-in-law 8:14
Woman with haemorrhage 9:20
Leader of synagogue's daughter 9:18
Herodias 14:3
Herodias's daughter 14:6
Canaanite woman and daughter 15:22
Mother of the sons of Zebedee 20:20
Woman who anoints Jesus 26:7
Servant girl 26:69 and another servant girl 26:71
Pilate's wife 27:19
<i>Many women at the cross including</i>
Mary Magdalene 27:56
Mary mother of James and Joseph 27:56
<i>Women at the tomb when Jesus buried</i>
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary 27:61
<i>Women at the empty tomb</i>
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary 28:1

The opening two chapters (Matt 1–2) and the closing two chapters (Matt 27–28) frame the Gospel and, interestingly, women are named in both sections. The final verse of the genealogy that is explained in the narrative of Matthew 1:18–25 bears witness to the reality that Jesus is adopted into the Davidic line by Joseph, while his

divine origins lie elsewhere. Matthew's witness to Mary's virginal conception through God's Spirit shows that God can choose to act outside of patriarchal norms of which male begetting is one of the most fundamental. The virgin birth functions as the most profound critique of the genealogy's androcentric perspective. This woman-focused counternarrative continues with the stories of women that break the androcentric pattern. It reaches its climax in the stories of the last two named women of the Gospel, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph. The two Marys, along with many women who have followed Jesus from Galilee (Matt 27:55), are present at the cross when all the male disciples have fled (Matt 26:56). These women are also the only individuals in Matthew's Gospel to witness both Jesus' burial (Matt 27:61) and the empty tomb (Matt 28:6). They are the only human participants at the resurrection and, contrary to patriarchal expectations of God dealing solely with men, it is they who meet with the risen Christ and receive the commission to "go and tell" (Matt 28:10). They are the apostles to the apostles as they go and tell the eleven disciples of Jesus' resurrection and his desire to meet with them in Galilee (Matt 28:10, 11a). Male and female roles are reversed as women are given priority as recipients of revelation and entrusted to take it to men. In Matthew's Gospel there are no male disciples at the cross or the tomb, it is solely these two women who can affirm the essentials of the early fourfold Christian kerygmatic confession that Jesus had died, been buried in the tomb, was risen, and had appeared to them (1 Cor 15:4-5).

Apart from Mary mother of Christ and these two Marys there is another woman who plays a key role theologically in the Gospel. In terms of narrative labelling, like the Marys, the Canaanite woman is a minor character. She appears for a brief narrative moment and then disappears. Like other minor characters she is given no ongoing narrative life. Yet, although only a minor character, in terms of Matthew's overall narrative rhetoric her story contributes to the important issue of the inclusion of Gentiles into God's kingdom. A literary, narrative reading of her story, read alongside the story of the second named woman of the genealogy, will illustrate some of the dynamics of Matthew's gynocentric counternarrative. The Canaanite woman's story both subverts and challenges the dominant androcentric narrative of the Gospel and, in this case, Israel's claims to an exclusive calling.

Two Canaanite Women: An Intertextual Narrative Reading

Of all the intertextual echoes between the four Old Testament women of Matthew's genealogy and the stories of women in the Gospel, the stories of Rahab in Joshua 2 and the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15 present a number of striking similarities. The text itself invites comparison. Whereas in Mark she is referred to as a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:26), in Matthew's account she is located geographically in

more Hebraic terms as ‘a Canaanite’.³³ Her designation is surely meant to draw attention to the Canaanite woman already named in the genealogy, Rahab.

The story of the Canaanite woman is told in just seven verses (Matt 15:21-28). The narrative outline falls into three sections: an introduction that provides the setting for the story (Matt 15:21-22a); the main section of extended dialogue between the woman and Jesus (Matt 15:22b-28b); and the conclusion (Matt 15:28c). Although Rahab’s story (Josh 2:1-24) is much longer, a comparison of the two narrative outlines reveals a marked similarity between the structures of the two stories.

The Canaanite Woman	Rahab
Setting Matt 15:21-22a: Jesus goes into foreign territories and encounters a Canaanite woman.	Setting Josh 2:1: The spies go into foreign territory and encounter a Canaanite woman.
Main section of extended dialogue Matt 15:22b-28b.	Main section of extended dialogue Josh 2:2-21.
Matt 15:28c Conclusion The Woman’s daughter is healed.	Josh 2:22-24 Conclusion The spies return to Joshua.

The two stories start with Israelite men travelling into foreign territory. The spies go to Canaanite Jericho and Jesus to the region of Tyre and Sidon. It is on the borders of these Gentile territories that both women are encountered and where the ensuing action of the story takes place.

The two Canaanite women are the main protagonists in the plot. They initiate the action, and enter into dialogue with the men who find themselves in unusual situations; in conversation with a foreign woman. Both women recognize they are occupying positions of powerlessness but create a situation that enables them to bargain. Rahab hides the spies on her roof, thus saving their lives, and the Canaanite woman refuses to desist from her cries for mercy until she gains a response. There is then an extended section of dialogue in which both sets of men show a marked reluctance to grant their request before the story concludes.

The Setting (Matt 15:21-22a)

For the first time in his ministry, Jesus leaves the regions surrounding Galilee in order to withdraw from the insistent questioning and censure of the Jewish leaders (Matt 15:1), and goes to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Mention of these Gentile cities creates intertextual allusions for the discerning reader. Tyre and Sidon were

³³ This is the only time in the New Testament the word is used. In the Old Testament it is often used to identify Israel’s enemy.

traditionally paired together in the prophetic literature as two cities that were enemies of Israel under divine condemnation. The woman (she is given no name) comes from these territories. Similarly Rahab is from Jericho, a city destined for destruction. Will this woman also be condemned?

Although there are contrasts between their private and public settings, both women's stories take place on borderlands. The main action of Rahab's story takes place within her house situated in the city wall. Spatially she lives on the borders of the city and this reflects her position socially; she exists on the margins of society as a prostitute. The Canaanite woman's story takes place on the contested borders of Tyre and Sidon where, as Gerd Theissen has demonstrated,³⁴ tensions between Jews and Gentiles ran high. The rural hinterland from which she comes suggests her poverty as a peasant.

Consequently, the spatial settings where the women are located signal three things: their ethnic 'otherness' and difference; their social status, neither are in positions of power or privilege; and, finally, that they are both outsiders from Gentile cities under divine condemnation.

Main Section of Extended Dialogue (Matt 15:22b-28b)

The Mother's First Cry for Mercy (Matt 15:22b)

The two main players in the story meet as the woman comes out and cries out – the verb in the imperfect indicates a continued action – addressing herself directly to Jesus. Read in the light of Rahab's story, perhaps it is not so surprising that this Canaanite woman addresses Jesus as 'Lord' and 'Son of David' as she shouts out for mercy. Francis Wright Beare comments that 'the title is out of place on the lips of a Canaanite',³⁵ but then so was Rahab's confession of faith in Israel's Lord whom she acknowledges to be the all powerful "God in heaven above and on earth below" (Josh 2:11). Three times in this short dialogue the woman addresses Jesus as 'Lord' (Matt 15:22, 25, 27). Use of the title implies that she recognizes Jesus to be someone with more than human healing powers able to help her in her need.³⁶ Both women have made a choice: Rahab voices her faith in the God of Israel, and this mother importunes Jesus. The title 'Son of David' is more surprising on the lips of a Canaanite woman with its specifically Jewish connotations. Richard Bauckham points out that with its links to messianic nationalism use of this title designated

³⁴ G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), pp. 61-84, has demonstrated how the story mirrors the tensions that existed between Jews and Gentiles on the border between Galilee and Phoenicia, territory which they both wished to settle.

³⁵ F.W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p. 341.

³⁶ In daily life 'lord' was the equivalent of 'sir', but in Matthew's Gospel those who ask Jesus for help or mercy address him as 'Lord', implicitly recognizing his power to help and heal.

Jesus as her enemy.³⁷ The use of the title for Jesus by the woman implies she acknowledges her outsider (even enemy) status, yet still she pleads for Jesus to have compassion on her, for use of the title also is an expression of faith in the healing power of the Son of David.³⁸ She is appealing not for herself but on behalf of her daughter who is tormented by a demon.

In the same way Rahab, too, is an outsider, but much more overtly a designated enemy threatened by death. However, this does not prevent her from pleading for mercy (kindness) from the spies and implicitly from YHWH to whom she has confessed allegiance. She also pleads not primarily for herself but for those in her father's house whose well being is bound up with her life: "Spare my father and mother, my brothers and sister, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death" (Josh 2:13). However, the positive response Rahab receives from the spies, "Our life for yours!" (Josh 2:14a), is in marked contrast to the response received by this second Canaanite woman.

Jesus' Response (Matt 15:23-24)

Led by previous encounters, the reader assumes that Jesus will respond with compassion in the way he has with other women who have sought healing. Thus the reader is startled by Jesus' reaction – silence: 'he did not answer her a word' (Matt 15:23a). There is no other parallel in Matthew or the other Gospels to Jesus' non-response to someone pleading for help. The narrator forces the reader to pause and wonder; why the silent rebuttal? Is Jesus attempting to silence her with his silence? Is Jesus' lack of response because she is a non-Jew, or because she is a lone peasant woman making a nuisance of herself in public? Her position is in stark contrast to the Gentile centurion who had requested healing for his servant and with whom Jesus readily entered into dialogue (Matt 8:5-13). Wainwright has argued that the woman is defying convention by shouting out in public and in doing so 'challenges Jesus to break down gender barriers'.³⁹ Is there, as Fiorenza puts it, a tension point

³⁷ R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), p. 44.

³⁸ A.J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 169, whilst acknowledging the multiple connotations of the title, states that 'In Matthew, the son of David is pre-eminently a healer.'

³⁹ E.M. Wainwright, 'A Voice from the Margin: Reading Matthew 15:21-28 in an Australian Feminist Key', in F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert (eds), *Reading from this Place, 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 132-56 (p. 139). Elsewhere, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), p. 107, Wainwright quotes Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social conditions during the New Testament Period* (trans. F.H. and C.H. Cave; London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 359-60, in support of the view of the marginal status of the woman in the public arena: 'Eastern women take no part in public life ... accordingly, a woman was expected to remain unobserved in public.'

because the inclusive preaching of the kingdom has met a restrictive point of dominant patriarchal culture?⁴⁰

Clearly the disciples consider her approach to be inappropriate and irritating, and they come to Jesus urging him to send her away. Just as Rahab acted as a foil to the two spies, voicing faith in YHWH that failed to be expressed by the men, this woman serves as a foil to the disciples who want to send her away without her request being met.⁴¹ Finally Jesus speaks. His reply is heard both by the disciples and the woman herself. It is a verbal rebuke defining Jesus' self awareness of the exclusive nature of his mission: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). Jesus perceives that the boundary preventing his response is not primarily one of gender or inappropriate behaviour, but of ethnicity and place. Previously he has made an exception by granting healing in response to a request by the centurion within Israelite territory (Matt 8:5-13). Here he makes it clear he has not been sent into Gentile territory for mission, he has only been sent to Israel, geographically and as a nation. This hard saying,⁴² where Jesus refuses the woman on the grounds of his exclusive mission to Israel, is significantly omitted in Mark's account (Mark 7:24-29).

Jesus' expression of his understanding of the limitations of his mission is apparently at odds with the view that has already been articulated in direct comment by the narrator. Following a summary section (Matt 12:15-16), the narrator concludes with a fulfillment citation from Isaiah 42:1-4 that demonstrates how Jesus' ministry fulfilled words from Isaiah that specifically included ministry to the Gentiles (Matt 12:17-21). This is unusual for, in most of the narrative, Jesus' and the narrator's ideological positions are virtually identical. Yet here there is a tension created by the temporal axis of the story. Whilst Matthew looks forward to a time when the gospel will be preached to all nations, from Jesus' point of view the time has not yet come for the Gentiles to be incorporated into the flock. He himself predicts that "many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11), implying that faithful Gentiles will be seated at the patriarchs' table.⁴³ Yet within his lifetime Jesus understands his ministry to be limited to those within Israel. Jesus also sends his twelve male disciples only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6), words which are echoed in his reply to this woman.

⁴⁰ E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn, 1995), p. 121.

⁴¹ Just as previously they had urged Jesus to send away the crowds unfed, Matt 14:15.

⁴² G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H.J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 198, note Matthew's version has 'harder traits'.

⁴³ This passage has been used to suggest that Gentiles have replaced Jews as members of the kingdom of God. However, this is inconsistent with the Gospel rhetoric that points to an Israel restored. Clearly, in this context, Jesus is making the point that the centurion's faith, which has granted him a miracle, symbolizes the acceptance of faithful Gentiles, who, along with faithful Jews, will sit at the patriarchs' table.

The Mother's Second Cry for Help (Matt 15:25)

However, the woman is a mother; she is desperate with a mother's desperation for her daughter and has the faith to believe that healing can come from Jesus (just as Rahab knew she could only save her family by an appeal to the God of Israel). She will not give up. Although Jesus' response is negative, he at least has entered into dialogue with her. She comes and kneels in front of him. Maybe her action is to stop Jesus in his tracks; he will now have to step round her to continue on his way, but her posture involves submission and even worship.⁴⁴ This time she makes a single direct appeal to Jesus, simply and poignantly she pleads, "“Lord, help me”" (Matt 15:25).

Jesus' Response (Matt 15:26)

Surely such action will evoke a positive response, yet shockingly and uniquely in the Gospel, for a third time Jesus rebukes her: "“It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs”" (Matt 15:26). Previously Jesus had had compassion on the crowds and fed the children,⁴⁶ now in the words of this parable he refuses her plea for the healing of her child and in doing so implies she is a wild dog scavenging for the thrown out scraps.⁴⁷ What are we to make of this? Davies and Allison remark on the 'parable which, totally devoid of conciliatory overtones, almost inevitably strikes the modern Christian as too off putting, even cruel, as designed to wound a human heart'.⁴⁸ Many commentators try and soften the blow. For example, Amy Levine cites a number:

Jesus was 'undoubtedly speaking in a half humorous tenderness of manner,' with 'teasing challenge,' and with a 'twinkle in the eye'. Consequently 'we can be quite sure that the smile on Jesus' face and the compassion in his eyes robbed all insult and bitterness.' This argument is hardly credible. The Matthean Jesus is a complex figure, but he is not twinkly, and a cajoling response to an individual in desperate circumstances is not humane ... Nor again does the diminutive 'puppy' help; as

⁴⁴ Another way of translating προσκύνει is 'she worshipped'. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, p. 278 n. 45, argues 'Matthew uses προσκυνεῖν in a semi-technical way for the divine worship (rather than mere respect for a human superior) that is due Jesus and emphasizes that it expresses the proper response to Jesus.' The same word is used of the Gentile magi on seeing Jesus and is translated as 'paid him homage' (NRSV, Matt 2:11).

⁴⁵ The Greek word used here is the diminutive for 'dog' and can be translated 'puppy'.

⁴⁶ The covenant phrase 'the children of Israel' was often used of God's chosen people (see, e.g., Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1).

⁴⁷ The Old Testament generally refers to dogs in terms of wild, scavenging animals, not domestic animals (1 Sam 17:42; 24:14; 2 Sam 9:8; 16:9; 2 Kgs 8:3; Job 30:1; Eccles 9:4). I suggest this is the usage here.

⁴⁸ W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: Volume 2. Commentary on Matthew 8–18* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004 [1991]), p. 552.

feminists frequently remark, being called a 'little bitch' is no improvement to being called 'bitch'.⁴⁹

I consider Levine is right. It is all too easy to somehow excuse Jesus' words, yet it seems that Jesus' stance regarding the appropriateness of her request is non-negotiable: the food of the kingdom is for the children only. Is he testing the extent of this woman's faith as so often suggested by commentators? Is he simply stating that her request is outside his remit or that there are limitations to his healing power? Or is he waiting for her to acknowledge Israel's soteriological priority? Wainwright notes that 'a three-fold opposition posed by Jesus to the woman's request, which is unique in the gospel, significantly emphasizes what is at issue in this story, namely, Jesus' mission to the Gentiles and the legitimacy of the woman's request'.⁵⁰ We are left wondering who will yield first.

The Mother's Third Request (Matt 15:27)

Remarkably, the woman takes the parable and enlarges on it, applying it to herself; "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs falling from their masters' table" (Matt 15:27). She willingly recognizes that Jesus as the master is the provider of bread (in Mark's version, 7:28, it is the children's table) and accepts the metaphorical designation of herself as a dog, yet the dog in her response has moved from outside to inside the house. As Perkinson has pointed out, she shifts the implication from dogs scavenging for the bread thrown outside to an internal domestic scene of dogs under the table inside begging for scraps.⁵¹ Wainwright makes the same point: 'She does not accept the dichotomies of insider and outsider ... but creates a new space that is inside the house and that allows both the children and dogs to be fed within that household.'⁵² She does not challenge the insult to herself as a Canaanite Gentile, instead she claims a place for herself under the master's table thus placing herself under Jesus' care. Even the Gentile 'puppies' now under the table are deserving of a few crumbs, which is all she is asking for. In

⁴⁹ A.J. Levine, 'Matthew's Advice to a Divided Readership', in D.E. Aune (ed.), *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 22-41 (p. 32). The first citation in this passage is from A.H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1961 [1915]), p. 231, the second and third are from R.T. France, *Matthew* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 247. The final citation is from W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, rev. edn, 1995), p. 122. Although the use of the term 'bitch' has strong connotations for the modern reader and is anachronistic, the use of the term dog in the first century was often used to refer to what is inferior and contemptible, though it did not convey sexual overtones. See Phil 3:2; Rev 22:15.

⁵⁰ Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading*, p. 111.

⁵¹ J. Perkinson, 'A Canaanitic Word in the Logos of Christ; or the difference the Syro-Phoenician woman makes to Jesus', *Semeia* 75 (1996), pp. 61-85 (p. 75).

⁵² E.M. Wainwright, *Shall We Look For Another?: A Feminist Rereading of the Matthean Jesus* (The Bible and Liberation Series; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), p. 87.

the process the children will not be deprived, both can be fed. She has the faith to believe that God's provision is abundant enough to feed children and puppies. The quantity of bread left over from feeding the crowds (Matt 14:20; 15:37), specifically noted by the narrator, witnesses to the truth of her observation. She boldly claims that here and now this Gentile dog should be able to receive the benefits of the gospel along with the Jewish children.

Jesus' Response (Matt 15:28a,b)

Her quick wit that found her a place under the table, and tenacious faith that demands to be fed, finally illicit the response from Jesus she has been waiting for, "O woman, how great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you desire" (Matt 15:28). Like Canaanite Rahab, this woman has believed and acted on her faith and in so doing found a place inside under the master's table. Both Gentile women are characterized as having faith, daring, wit and determination. This woman's faith is the decisive factor in Jesus' granting of her request; she too can receive the bread of the kingdom.

Does the Puppy become a Child?

Petr Pokorný has understood the story to mean that in accepting the bread the woman and her child 'receive the status of children'; the good news of the story is that 'the puppy became a child'.⁵³ On the contrary, the irony and the importance of the story is that it is as a Gentile woman, not as a Jewish convert, that this woman receives healing from Jesus for her daughter.⁵⁴ Rahab's story read as an intertext supports this view. Rahab, the ultimate outsider to Israel, like this woman, finds a place on the inside, but in so doing maintains her identity. At the close of her story the narrator comments that 'She has lived in Israel ever since' (Josh 6:25). An aetiological explanation of Rahab's origins is given, strongly implying that her 'difference' in Israel remained. Unlike Ruth, Rahab is not fully assimilated into Israelite society but remains an alien within Israel's border. Similarly the Canaanite woman doesn't become Jewish. The significance of her reinterpretation of Jesus' parable lies in the fact that both children and puppies can be fed at the master's table; the puppy does not become a child.

⁵³ P. Pokorný, 'From a Puppy to the Child: Some problems of contemporary biblical exegesis demonstrated from Mark 7.24-30/Matt 15.21-8', *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995) pp. 321-37 (p. 337).

⁵⁴ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 636 n. 217, makes a similar observation that she 'becomes a beneficiary not as a freshly made Jewess, but as a Gentile'.

Conclusion (Matt 15:28c)

In a concluding comment, the narrator tells us that 'her daughter was healed from that hour'. The concluding words, Jesus' praise of the woman's faith, almost read like a postscript to the main climax of the narrative. Bornkamm, Barth and Held comment, 'When every time at the end of these "conversations" Jesus speaks of faith it is clear ... that faith represents an activity of the believer, an energetic, importunate, grasping after the help of God'.⁵⁵ Just as the Gentile centurion's servant was healed 'at that hour' (Matt 8:13) in response to his 'great faith' (Matt 8:10), so this woman's daughter is healed. Yet unlike the centurion, this Canaanite woman had operated not from a position of male prestige and power within Israel but from a position of female powerlessness on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Unlike the centurion, to whose faith Jesus responded without hesitation, she deflects Jesus' refusal to heal three times. She insists that Jesus put into action now a promise and vision that he had seen for the future. Her bold challenge to Jesus' ideology that excluded her and her daughter, finds a response in Jesus that brings about a change that causes him to make an exception to the limits of his healing power; she persuades Jesus to change his mind.

Similarly, in pleading for mercy from the spies, Rahab had been prepared to challenge Israel's holy war ideology that condemned all Canaanites. Her faith, which was the basis for her action in hiding the spies, evinced a response from Joshua that allowed her and her family to be spared from being 'devoted to destruction' (Josh 6:17). She too wins an exception to the strict boundaries surrounding Israel and refuses to allow her ethnicity to bar her from a place in Israel's covenantal life lived out in relationship with YHWH. Like Rahab's story, the story of the Canaanite woman is a story of a reversal of expectations where an outsider finds a place on the inside. Through the challenge of these two women made bold in their desperation, both Joshua and Jesus are brought to the point where they make an exception to the ideology that put a boundary around Israel as the people of God. Neither woman is prepared to accept that she and her loved one/s is/are beyond the compassion and mercy of God.

However, the exception the Matthean Canaanite woman secures from a second Joshua is one that will set a precedent for the future. John Meier has shown Jesus' action is the prophetic exception,⁵⁶ which anticipates his command to the disciples following his death and resurrection. It foreshadows the words "'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations'" given in the Great Commission by the risen Christ to his disciples (Matt 28:19). Wainwright comments,

⁵⁵ Bornkamm, Barth and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation*, p. 280.

⁵⁶ J.P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Matthew 5:17-48* (Analecta biblica, 71; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), pp. 27-30, takes Matthew 10:5-6, 15:24 and 28:16-20 as the basis on which to reconstruct Matthew's vision of salvation history. He argues that the public ministry of Jesus was limited to Israel with a few 'prophetic exceptions' which point towards this notion of salvation history.

This prophetic action occurs as a result of a dialogue with a woman. The woman stands, therefore, as one of the pivotal points in the Matthean narrative and in the whole Matthean vision of the Jesus-event.⁵⁷

Like Rahab, this Canaanite woman has refused to be excluded from the grace of God and in doing so has shown a prophetic understanding of the principles of the kingdom of heaven; that 'people from the west and east' will be accepted on the basis of their faith in Christ alone. The closing verses of the Gospel indicate that this is the goal of salvation history as envisaged by Matthew.

A Successful Reading Strategy

A gendered reading of Matthew's Gospel demonstrates that although women's stories are often not elaborated and are few in number, nonetheless they form an important gynocentric counternarrative that deconstructs the dominant androcentric narrative of the Gospel. The intertextual reading of Rahab and the Canaanite woman demonstrates that both the women of the genealogy and those within the Gospel narrative are significant in defining the importance of the role played by women in Matthew's theological vision. Focusing on the stories of women in order to retrieve them and explore their significance is one reading strategy that enables us to recognize that (although one might be accused of anachronism) the biblical text is able to respond to feminist critique. As Watson puts it, 'the biblical texts achieve a certain self-transcendence. They are not, as it were, taken by surprise by contemporary feminist critique'.⁵⁸

Our reading of the text is also an encounter through which we can draw theological lessons. The stories of these women serve to remind us that it is among those on the margins where God is often most significantly at work.⁵⁹ Faith is found in surprising places and sometimes it is the faith of outsiders that can challenge the poverty of our own faith. A recent example within my congregation is of a woman who had grown up under an atheistic regime in communist China. On coming to this country she had decided to become a Christian. Her openness towards others about her growing faith in Christ challenged me. We would also do well to be attentive to those we might otherwise dismiss as insignificant or, worse still, as irritants and problematic. For the last few years of her life, a woman who was an inveterate alcoholic and whose life was in pieces, used to knock on my front door from time to time when she needed friendship and help. I am sure many who are in ministry have had similar experiences. It would have been very easy to tell her I had no time, but in welcoming her into our home my family and I were all enriched. A few months before she died, she turned to God for help. We should never reject those whose

⁵⁷ Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading*, p. 114, referring to Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 138.

⁵⁸ Watson, *Text, Church and World* p. 194.

⁵⁹ This is a recurrent theme in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew 8–9, e.g., shows Jesus, as healer, responded primarily to those on the margins of Israelite society who sought his help.

lifestyles or backgrounds might tempt us to believe they are beyond the reaches of God's mercy.

There are those of us who can identify ourselves as outsiders. The ongoing discussion of women in ministry highlights the perceived problematic nature of having women in ministry. Within this discussion men in ministry are taken to be the norm; it is assumed that women are somehow outsiders to this norm and need to be accommodated to it.

Twelve years ago Ruth Gouldbourne wrote in her Whitley lecture,

We exist in a patriarchal context, and there is little indication that this is about to change fundamentally. So women's experience from which they minister, will continue to be that of the outsider, of 'other'.⁶⁰

The recent discussion of women in leadership in the Baptist Union of Great Britain Council shows that although things have moved on in terms of the active encouraging of women into ministry by the Union, we are still seen to be a separate entity, as a minority we are still 'other' to the masculine norm.⁶¹ Yet Ruth Gouldbourne suggests that it is our outsideness that is the 'distinctive thing which women bring to ministry as women'.⁶² Listening to the stories of the two Canaanite women suggests that as outsiders we can bring a different perspective to our role as ministers. It is a perspective that can, maybe, more readily identify with others who are on the margins because of ethnicity, gender, age or social status. It is a perspective that is prepared to challenge ideologies that fall short of the greater eschatological vision that one day Christ will be all in all and that all divisions, be they ethnic, social or gendered, will become irrelevant.

However, like the two Canaanite women, we too seek to be accepted as insiders. Like them, we do not seek assimilation but integration. We do not wish to be assimilated into male structures and ways of doing things as honorary men but integrated within the network of Baptist ministers as women, each bringing her own particular strengths and contributions. As this increasingly becomes the case,⁶³ our distinctive perspectives as women must continue to challenge what are often unconscious androcentric and patriarchal attitudes; not in a way that demeans or

⁶⁰ Ruth M.B. Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel: Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life* (The Whitley Lecture 1997-1998; Didcot: Whitley Publications, 1997), p. 44.

⁶¹ Of the current accredited ministers in the Baptist Union, 13% are female. Figures released by the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Ministerial Department October 2010, private communication from Robin Urwin, Baptist Union of Great Britain Ministerial Department, on 1/11/2010.

⁶² Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel*, p. 42.

⁶³ 28.9% of current Baptist Union ministerial students are female. Figures released by the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Ministerial Department October 2010, private communication from Robin Urwin, Baptist Union of Great Britain Ministerial Department, on 1 November 2010.

induces guilt, but in a way that is transformative and life giving, so that as a group of ministers we can more fully reflect the image of God.

The Centre for Baptist History and Heritage

Regent's Park College, Oxford



Aims

The aims of the Centre are:

- to deepen an awareness and appreciation of Baptist history and theology
- to develop research and scholarship in these areas
- to relate Baptist history and theology to Baptist life and principles today

The Centre pursues these aims by:

- providing College membership for students studying for research degrees in related areas
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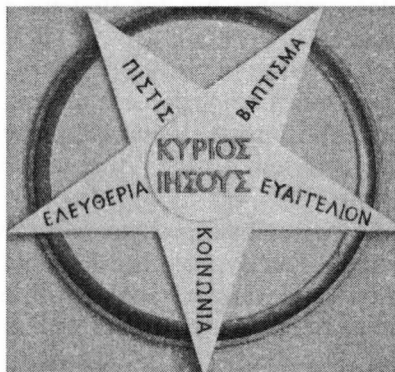
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Regent's Park College



Regent's Park College is a Christian foundation in the University of Oxford, which focuses on achieving excellence in undergraduate and graduate studies, ministerial formation and academic research. Our mission is to create an exceptional community of learning and research made up of individuals from a broad range of backgrounds and life experience.

Regent's Park College was originally founded as The Baptist Academical Institution (BAI) in Stepney, in the East End of London, in 1810. When the BAI moved to Regent's Park in 1857 the Institution was renamed Regent's Park College. The name was then retained when the College relocated to Oxford in 1927. In 1957, after thirty years in the city, the College became a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford.

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Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies

Anthony R. Cross and Nicholas J. Wood (eds)

Exploring Baptist Origins

Vol. 1

The 400th anniversary of the origins of the Baptists in Amsterdam in 1609 is here celebrated by Baptist historians and theologians. Originally presented as a lecture series at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, in the autumn of 2009, these fuller versions of the papers examine various aspects of Baptist beginnings in the light of the latest research and seek to explore some of their implications for today. Subjects discussed are the adoption of believer's baptism, whether Baptists are a church or sect, Thomas Helwys' *The Mystery of Iniquity*, William Kiffen and the Anabaptist Petitions of 1660 and 1661, Baptists and millennialism, the dangers of 'just' reading the Bible, and Baptists and Anabaptists. Contributors are Anthony R. Cross, Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes, Larry J. Kreitzer, Crawford Gribben, Stephen R. Holmes, and Keith G. Jones.

Anthony R. Cross is Director of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage and a Research Fellow of Regent's Park College, University of Oxford.

Nicholas J. Wood is Director of the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College, and Fellow in Religion and Culture, University of Oxford.

2010 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-6-5

Paul W. Goodliff

Ministry, Sacrament, and Representation

Ministry and Ordination in Contemporary Baptist Theology, and the Rise of Sacramentalism

Vol. 2

This study in the surprising rise in a sacramental understanding of ministry amongst ministers of the Baptist Union of Great Britain is the result of empirical research which compares the conciliar statements about ministry and ordination, and the wider literature, that together comprise the formal understanding of ministry amongst Baptists for the past seventy years, with the actual beliefs of over 300 ministers surveyed in 2007. Sacramental views have seen a remarkable resurgence amongst the more recently trained, and this study explores the reasons for this rise amongst both ecclesial factors and wider cultural processes. These include changes in the character of Evangelicalism, the widespread impact of charismatic renewal, the acceptance of ecumenism and a kind of 'demotic' post-liberal theology now mainstream for British Baptists. The study also places these developments within a MacIntyrean framework, especially in the rejection of two models of ministry: the therapeutic and the managerial.

Paul W. Goodliff is currently Head of the Department of Ministry for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, a tutor in Christian doctrine for the Open Theological College and an Associate Research Fellow of Spurgeon's College.

2010 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-8-9

Darrell Jackson

'As we are gathered ...': Membership and Belonging in Contemporary Baptist Congregations

Vol. 3

Statistics show a decline in membership and an increase in regular church attendance. This timely work observes practices and theologies of both membership and belonging emerging from local congregations. It examines theological writing about membership, constitutional resources for membership, and the language of church members and non-members. Jackson concludes that these three emphases—covenantal, denominational, and relational—fail to connect, producing popular understandings that will prove problematic in the long term. His solution prioritises the congregation as a site of theological production and outlines a post-foundational theology of belonging and membership that understands the church as the body of Christ, catholic, and covenantal. A process for achieving this is located in the discussion and adoption of a sixth 'Core Value'—relational communities.

Darrell Jackson has ministered in a local church, an Association, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Conference of European Churches, and is now the Director of the Nova Research Centre and Lecturer in European Studies at Redcliffe College.

2011 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-9-6

Andy Goodliff

'To such as these': The Child in Baptist Thought

Vol. 4

This study examines what British Baptists have written about and prayed for in regard to children in the twentieth century. Beginning with the Baptist liturgical practice of infant dedication or presentation, it explores the use of scripture, in particular Mark 10.13-16; the theology of sin and salvation; the relationship of children to the church, with a focus on baptism and eucharist; and who the child is as gift, agent and made in the image of God. A final chapter argues that Baptists must root and display a theology of the child in infant presentation.

Andy Goodliff trained for ministry at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford.

2011 / ISBN 978-1-907600-03-6

Peter J. Morden

'Communion with Christ and his people': The Spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon

Vol. 5

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-92) was the most famous Baptist minister of his generation. For such a significant figure, he has received surprisingly little scholarly coverage. This present work seeks to make a contribution to Spurgeon studies by examining him through the lens of his 'spirituality'. A wealth of primary material, much of it previously untapped, is used to build up a picture of Spurgeon's spiritual life. Whereas older and more recent interpretations of Spurgeon have a tendency to be one-dimensional, examination of Spurgeon's spirituality reveals him to be a complex figure, one who was moulded by a diverse range of factors. Despite this complexity, a unifying theme for Spurgeon's spirituality is traced and fresh light is shed on the foremost popular preacher of the Victorian age.

Peter J. Morden is tutor in church history and spirituality at Spurgeon's College, London, and a fellow of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

2010 / ISBN 978-1-907600-04-3

Anthony R. Cross and Ruth Gouldbourne (eds)

Questions of Identity: Studies in Honour of Brian Haymes

Vol. 6

Throughout the Baptist tradition issues of Baptist identity are being explored and widely debated. The Rev. Dr Brian Haymes is the former Principal of Northern and Bristol Baptist Colleges, and President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. He has lectured widely and influenced many contemporary discussions of Baptist life and thought in Britain and further afield. He has been a great encourager of both established and younger scholars and ministers, and this collection of essays takes up themes in his many and various writings. Not only is it fitting to honour one of our leading Baptist pastor-scholars, but also to explore issues of widespread importance to Baptists in the early twenty-first century. Contributors are: Faith Bowers, John E. Colwell, Anthony R. Cross, Paul S. Fiddes, Barry Harvey, Stephen R. Holmes, Ruth Gouldbourne, Alan Kreider, Robert Parkinson, Michael J. Quicke, Christopher Rowland, Sean F. Winter, Simon Woodman, and Nigel G. Wright.

Anthony R. Cross is Director of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage and a Research Fellow, Regent's Park College, and a Member of the Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford

Ruth Gouldbourne is a former Tutor in Church History at Bristol Baptist College and presently Minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London, and a Fellow of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford

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Brian Talbot

A Man sent from God: The Life and Ministry of John T. Hamilton 1916-1999

Vol. 7

John Hamilton was a locally successful Baptist minister in the middle years of the twentieth century. This book explores his life and work from the time of his theological training in South Wales and at Spurgeon's College in London, together with his short earlier pastorates in Coggeshall and Basingstoke. In addition to service as an RAF Chaplain in the 1940s, he held distinguished pastorates in Barnsley, Liverpool, Cleveleys, Morecambe and Caton between 1951 and 1994. This study sets these ministries in their social context and where appropriate in relation to the work of other Christian churches in these particular communities.

Brian Talbot is Minister of Broughty Ferry Baptist Church, Dundee, and a Fellow of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford. His published works include: *Search for a Common Identity: The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland, 1800-1870* (2003) and *'Standing on the Rock' A History of Stirling Baptist Church 1805-2005* (2005).

2011 / ISBN 978-1-907600-06-7

John H.Y. Briggs (ed.)

Baptists and the World: Renewing the Vision

Papers from the Baptist Historical Society Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, July 2008

Vol. 8

Here are essays on theology, history and vision, traced first in the story of British Baptists, and then in the recent history of Europe, East and West whilst a final section addresses the issues in global dimensions. Mission and evangelism, religious liberty, and relationships within community which respect the kingdom values of justice, peace and the God-created world in which we live, play their part as Baptists, always a biblical people, wrestle with the meaning of scripture for discipleship in today's world. The hope is that, whilst this volume celebrates 100 years of history, it may nourish faith in such a way that today's Baptists may develop the vision to discern the missionary task in the modern world—not just for discussion, but as a spur to decisive action. In this way history may become the inspiration for the living of tomorrow's story, as vision is realised in action.

John H.Y. Briggs is President of the Baptist Historical Society in the United Kingdom; Director Emeritus of the Baptist History and Heritage Centre, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford; Visiting Research Professor, the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague; a Trustee of Keston College; Emeritus Professor in the University of Birmingham; and Senior Deacon Highgate Baptist Church, Birmingham.

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Jonathan W. Arnold

The Reformed Theology of Benjamin Keach

Vol. 9

Taking into account the totality of Benjamin Keach's theological thought and writings, *The Reformed Theology of Benjamin Keach* places the seventeenth-century Particular Baptist theologian in his larger theological tradition. After re-creating the theologian's social networks, this work examines the impact of those networks on the often dogmatic and polemical stances espoused by this second generation Particular Baptist leader. In the process, this work highlights the uniqueness in Keach's theology—especially within the Baptist community—and demonstrates that his legacy pertains to more than the oft-cited hymn-singing controversy.

Jonathan W. Arnold recently graduated from the University of Oxford with a DPhil in Ecclesiastical History undertaken at Regent's Park College. He is also an ordained Baptist minister.

2011 / ISBN 978-1-907600-07-4

Clint C. Bass

Thomas Grantham (1633–1692) and General Baptist Theology

Vol. 10

Thomas Grantham was arguably the chief spokesman and theologian of the General Baptists in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In this period no other General Baptist published as much or as widely as did Grantham. His works provide a comprehensive picture of what this understudied group of anti-predestinarian radicals believed, the analysis of which may challenge some commonly held

assumptions about General Baptist sacramentalism and the extent to which Socinianism spread among their churches in the seventeenth century. Grantham emerged as the General Baptists' principal apologist, defending their anti-predestinarian doctrine as well as practices such as ordaining apostles and laying hands on new converts.

Clint C. Bass is currently Assistant Professor of Church History at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Missouri
ISBN 978-1-907600-11-1

Karen E. Smith

The Community and the Believers

A Study of Calvinistic Baptist Spirituality in Some Towns and Villages of Hampshire and the Borders of Wiltshire, c.1730-1830

The period from 1730 to 1830 was one of transition for Calvinistic Baptists. Confronted by the enthusiasm of the Evangelical Revival, congregations within the denomination as a whole were challenged to find a way to take account of the revival experience. This study examines the life and devotion of Calvinistic Baptists in Hampshire and Wiltshire during this period. Among this group of Baptists was the hymn writer, Anne Steele.

Karen E. Smith is Tutor in Church History and Spirituality at South Wales Baptist College and in Cardiff University, Wales.
ISBN 978-1-907600-09-8

Paul F. Walker

From American Slavery to English Ministry

The Revd Peter Thomas Stanford (1860-1909): Birmingham's 'Coloured Preacher'

African American ex-slave Revd Peter Stanford was minister of a Baptist church in the 'slums' of Birmingham in the 1890s. His story is one of the earliest indications that Black people played a greater part in the British church's social history than was previously imagined. Stanford is part of the neglected history of Black people in Britain prior to the in-migration of the mid-twentieth century, an area of study only just emerging as a substantial area of research. His life-story, theology, social activism and writings in pursuit of racial justice are highly significant. This study uses an original method to tell Stanford's fascinating life-story, seeks to explain his presence in nineteenth-century Birmingham, and reflects on the significance of his involvement in the struggle for racial justice through British Nonconformist churches.

Paul F. Walker is the Minister of Highgate Baptist Church, Birmingham, a Tutor for the Urban Theology Unit and Honorary Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham.
ISBN 978-1-907600-10-4

Re-sourcing Baptist History: Seventeenth Century Series

Larry J. Kreitzer

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The London merchant William Kiffen (c.1616–1701) is commonly regarded as one of the founding fathers of the Particular Baptists in London. For over sixty years Kiffen played a significant role in the complex world of the 17th century, with its volatile mix of religion, politics and commerce. He established himself in the early 1640s as the leader of a Baptist congregation, became an important contact for the Cromwellian Commonwealth and Protectorate, and was intimately involved in the political manoeuvrings of the royal courts of Charles I, Charles II, James II and William III. This volume seeks to explore several aspects of Kiffen's life which have not hitherto been given the attention they deserve, and offers ten specific studies which concentrate on key primary sources.

Larry J. Kreitzer is Tutor of New Testament and Tutor for Graduates at Regent's Park College, Oxford. He holds a Research Lectureship within the Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford, and is a member of the Society of New Testament Studies

2010 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-7-2

Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies Occasional Papers

Anthony R. Cross

Should we take Peter at his word (Acts 2.38)?

Recovering a Baptist Baptismal Sacramentalism

Vol. 1

In his inaugural lecture, Dr Anthony R. Cross, Director of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Regent's Park College, Oxford, challenges the widely held assumption, not least among Baptists, that baptism is merely symbolic, a believer's testimony to what God *has* done in the past. Cross examines this position biblically, theologically and historically and finds it wanting. Restating an understanding more faithful to biblical and early Baptist teaching he argues that baptism always has been an integral part of becoming a Christian and that it was always faith-baptism. Cross also contends for an evangelical use of the term sacrament, as he affirms what God *does* in baptism in the present. This restatement of a key Baptist conviction is an important contribution to Baptist thought and practice and to ecumenical debates. It is particularly addressed to all who claim scripture as their rule of faith and practice, urging the necessity of reform of both the theology and practice of baptism in the contemporary church. The lecture concludes by outlining seven ways in which such reform might be realized.

Anthony R. Cross is Director of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, a Research Fellow of Regent's Park College, and a Member of the Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford.

2010 / ISBN 978-1-907600-02-9

Ian M. Randall

'Conscientious Conviction'

Joseph Angus (1816–1902) and Nineteenth-Century Baptist Life

Vol. 2

Joseph Angus' principalship of Stepney College and then Regent's Park College in London spanned most of the second half of the nineteenth century. It was in 1865, as President of the Baptist Union, that Angus spoke of the existence of Baptists as representing a 'conscientious conviction'. This study examines the convictions of Angus in the areas of theology, education, the church and baptism, spirituality and mission. These themes indicate the major concerns which Angus brought to bear – through his extensive writing, speaking and personal engagement with people – on Baptist life. Angus' interests, as a Baptist educator and missionary thinker, were exceptionally wide-ranging.

Ian M. Randall is Director of Research at Spurgeon's College, London, and Senior Research Fellow at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague. He studied for Baptist ministry at Regent's Park College in the 1980s. He is the author of a number of books and many articles on Baptist and wider evangelical history. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

2010 / ISBN 978-1-907600-08-1

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Larry Kreitzer, Tutor of New Testament and Tutor for Graduates, Regent's Park College, and a Member of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Oxford

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Rex Mason

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Rex Mason, Fellow and Tutor in Old Testament at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford (1975–90).

1993 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-1-5

John David Weaver

In the Beginning God: Modern Science and the Christian Doctrine of Creation

Vol. 3

John Weaver works out his belief that modern discoveries in science, especially in cosmology and geology, have given new life to the old arguments for design and purpose in the universe. While not proving the existence of God, such features as the 'fine tuning' of the origin of the universe, the 'Anthropic Principle', and the non-computable nature of the human mind show the reasonableness of belief in a Creator God. They also prompt theological reflection on the nature of God, opening up a vision of a God who is deeply involved in his creation, guiding the development of life from within and suffering with its pains. The author thus ventures, in a bold way, to integrate science and faith while not ignoring the differences between them.

John D. Weaver, Principal of South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff.

1994 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-2-2

Paul S. Fiddes (ed.)

Reflections on the Water: Understanding God and the World through the Baptist of Believers

Vol. 4

This is a timely book about baptism. The first six chapters are all by British Baptists whose main aim is not to repeat well-worn arguments between advocates of believers' and infant baptism. Rather, they show how the act of believers' baptism can help us understand the creative activity of God in the natural world, human society, political life, and the Christian community. Above all, the baptism of believers leads us to contemplate the nature of the triune God who calls people into relationships. As the contributors reflect on the central place that the dramatic act of baptism has in Christian faith and practice, they find the image of God and many aspects of the world reflected on the waters of the baptismal pool. The book ends with an extended response to these essays by the Anglican New Testament scholar, Professor Christopher Rowland. This is a fresh approach both to ecumenical conversation and Baptist identity.

Paul S. Fiddes, Director of Research, Regent's Park College, and Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford.

1996 / 978-0-9518104-3-9

Michael I. Bochenski

Theology from Three Worlds: Liberation and Evangelization for the New Europe
Vol. 5

This study sets out to transfer some key principles of liberation theology, as they emerged in Latin America, into the very different context of contemporary Europe. Secondly, in conversation with the Bible, it aims to make clear the links between liberation and evangelism, two concepts that are often fostered in quite separate theological camps. Finally, it asks the church to face the challenges of the New Europe developing within the European Union and the collapse of old-style Communism. This study will help readers understand how the local church, wherever it is in the world, can develop an evangelism that is truly liberating.

Michael I. Bochenski, former Rector of the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary, Poland, and Minister of Rugby Baptist Church.

1997 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-4-6

Timothy Bradshaw

Praying as Believing: The Lord's Prayer and the Christian Doctrine of God
Vol. 6

Pastoral leaders who take courses in theology to prepare for their ministry are bound to meet the thoughts, for example, of the great Swiss-German theologian Karl Barth, or the British theologian John Macquarrie, or the American School of Process Theology. How shall we assess what they have to say about the being and acts of God? Why should it matter to members of a local congregation anyway? This book sets out to answer these questions by bringing recent developments in Christian theology up against the test of prayer, and especially against the challenge of the master-prayer of Christians, the Lord's Prayer. The author sets out to consider how 'talk about God' (theology) might help us to talk to God in prayer. Conversely he considers what the great prayer of Jesus tells us about the very nature of God.

Timothy Bradshaw, Senior Tutor and Tutorial Fellow, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford.

1998 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-5-3

G. Henton Davies and J.E. Morgan-Wynne

The Last Seven Days: The Story of Jesus and Holy Week
Vol. 7

This book follows the story of Holy Week as told by the writers of the four Gospels. While it aims to examine the particular ways that each evangelist tells the story, it also sets out to uncover the main features of that story as it happened in that crucial week. The authors believe that there is both a story of history and a story of faith, and that the two intertwine in the story of the Gospels. The main part of the book traverses the days of Holy Week one by one, before moving in the final part to draw out the theological meaning which the Gospel writers find there.

G. Henton Davies, former Professor of Old Testament, University of Durham, and Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford (1958-72).

John E. Morgan-Wynne, former Principal of Bristol Baptist College (1987-93) and Minister of Ilkley Baptist Church.

1999 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-6-0

Michael Ball

The Radical Stories of Jesus: Interpreting the Parables Today

Vol. 8

Michael Ball shows how shocking, disturbing and even subversive Jesus' parables must have seemed to those who first heard them. They are not bedtime stories or moralistic example stories, rather, he suggests, they are designed to get under the guard of our minds and make us see new truths from new perspectives, pointing to the reality of God and his kingdom. Drawing on illustrations from novels, poems and sermons, his aim is that the authentic voice of Jesus may be heard as clearly as possible.

Michael Ball, Minister of Llanishen Baptist Church, Cardiff.

2000 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-7-7

Paul S. Fiddes (ed.)

Faith in the Centre: Christianity and Culture

Vol. 9

This volume explores the many ways in which Christian faith and human culture have been related to each other in the past and how they interact with each other in the present. In particular, it asks how we can tell the Christian story in the midst of a postmodern culture, marked as it is by a rejection of all large-scale explanations of the world, by relativizing truth and by the loss of a memory of Christian images. Special attention is given to the experience of women—theologians, poets and artists—in the meeting between gospel and culture.

Paul S. Fiddes, Director of Research, Regent's Park College, and Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford.

2001 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-8-4

Anthony Clarke

A Cry in the Darkness: The Forsakenness of Jesus in Scripture, Theology, and Experience

Vol. 10

The dying cry of Jesus, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?', has puzzled and inspired Christian thinkers and preachers through the ages. In the past it has raised questions about the historicity of the events of the cross, the identity of Jesus, and the meaning of atonement. In the present this cry has taken a central place in grappling with the problems of human suffering and in exploring the idea of the suffering of God. Clarke's exegesis of the text and the way it has been used by Moltmann, Sölle, Jüngel and von Balthasar, leads him to conclusions about the vulnerability and justice of God which begin to meet the challenge of doing theology after the Holocaust. He also draws practical implications about hope for both the Godless and the Godforsaken.

Anthony Clarke, Tutorial Fellow in Pastoral Studies and Community Learning, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford.

2002 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-9-1

Richard Kidd and Graham Sparkes

God and the Art of Seeing: Visual Resources for a Journey of Faith

Vol. 11

The authors of this book invite us to accompany them in walking around an imaginary gallery which exhibits the work of six artists—Munch, Chagall, Spencer, O’Keeffe, Lawrence and Van Ggh. Along the way they draw widely on their own experience, essentially one of joy in the presence of visual forms—pictures, sculptures, landscapes, seascapes and city-scapes, and other memorable art-objects. Their conviction is that too much Western Christianity, with its strong emphasis on words, creeds and doctrines, has forgotten just how important the visual form can be for human development.

Richard Kidd, Principal of Northern Baptist College, Manchester.

Graham Sparkes, Head of the faith and Unity Department for Ecumenical Engagement, Public Issues and Social Justice, Baptist Union of Great Britain.

2003 / ISBN 978-0-9518104-0-3

Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes (eds)

Flickering Images: Theology and Film in Dialogue

Vol. 12

Studies of the relationship between film and Christian theology are growing in number and this collection of essays has the special aim of offering help to those who want to draw on current films in church services or small study groups. Questions of theory are kept in mind, especially in the first part of the book which explores theological, existential and ideological approaches to film. The second part of the book then aims to model a variety of ways of holding the dialogue between film and theology, while the third reflects on a film in a group context. The popular culture of film provides rich material for theological and spiritual reflection.

Anthony Clarke, Tutorial Fellow in Pastoral Studies and Community Learning, Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford.

Paul S. Fiddes, Director of Research, Regent’s Park College, and Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford.

2005 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-1-0

John Weaver

Outside-In: Theological Reflections on Life

Vol. 13

John Weaver argues for a radical reversal in thinking about the church and the world, urging us to stop looking from the ‘outside-in’ and to let God’s activity in society and human lives outside the church make an impact upon worship and Christian teaching. The direction must be ‘outside-in’. He believes it is ‘time for the church to stop playing games’ and aims to provide ways in which church members can relate their faith to their actual daily work and to the tough and sometimes brutal world in which they spend their lives. This guide for congregational leaders sets out a method for exploring experience and for moving through reflection to action.

John D. Weaver, Principal of South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff.

2006 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-2-7

Paul S. Fiddes (ed.)

Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality

Vol. 14

In this book the Principals of the six Baptist Colleges in Great Britain explore Baptist spirituality. They propose that the spirituality of Baptists, in all its diversity, is characterized by living 'under the rule of Christ'. While all Christian spiritual traditions affirm this truth, they suggest that there is a particular sense of being under Christ's rule which has been shaped by the story of Baptists and by their way of being church through the centuries. Elaborating the main theme, chapters explore various dimensions of spirituality: giving attention to God and to others; developing spirituality through suffering; having spiritual liberty within a community; living under the rule of the Word of Christ and scripture; integrating the Lord's Supper with the whole of life; and engaging in the mission of God from an experience of grace. Together, the writers present an understanding of prayer and life in which Christ is both the final authority and the measure of all things.

Paul S. Fiddes, Director of Research, Regent's Park College, and Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford.

2008 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-4-1

Laurie Guy

Making Sense of the Book of Revelation

Vol. 15

As the author of this study remarks, the Book of Revelation stirs powerful emotions. It can fascinate, inspire and mystify, while it can also repel the reader with its images of violence. Competing voices today cry out for us to accept their interpretation. Some claim the book is a road map for future events, others that it is a plea for justice for the oppressed. The author sets out to provide a guide for the perplexed, setting the book in the context of its time and showing that it remains an encouragement for Christians facing opposition and hostility in any age. In a straightforward way the author explores the colourful and often puzzling imagery of the book, tracing its origins in the Old Testament and other literature, and highlighting the message that Christ is the Lord of the world who will overcome all evil. In an exceptionally clear style, the author roots the book in history, finds its message for today, and opens up its assurance of hope for the future.

Laurie Guy has taught at Carey Baptist College, Auckland, New Zealand, for nearly twenty years. He is currently Vice-Principal (Academic) at the College.

2009 / ISBN 978-0-9539746-5-8



Baptist Historical Society

What this Society does

We are here to help Baptists understand their heritage and history. We provide an appropriate academic opportunity for those who wish to study life of Baptist churches, people and ideas, so that Baptists can 'articulate and discover the faith by which we all live' (Brian Haymes). We are interested in collecting primary Baptist information for the national Baptist collection in The Angus Library and Archives, Regent's Park College, Oxford (www.rpc.ox.ac.uk), and finding such resources in local churches, Record offices and any in the possession of private individuals.

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Wrestling with the Word

A Woman reads Scripture

In *Wrestling with the Word*, Anne Clements describes her journey into ministry, and how she is developing a reading strategy able to explore the significance of stories involving women in the male-centred world of the Bible. An exposition of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15 provides a powerful example of how this can be done.

This lecture confronts the issues raised by the recognition that the biblical text is often both patriarchal and androcentric. It suggests the formulation of a hermeneutical stance that moves beyond suspicion of the text to a position of hospitality, adopting a reading strategy that retrieves the stories of women. Attention is drawn to the gynocentric counternarrative of Matthew's Gospel, first indicated in the naming of women in the genealogy. The lecture presents an intertextual reading of Rahab and the Canaanite woman, and concludes with a brief reflection on the theological lessons that can be drawn from the narrative.



E. Anne Clements studied theology at King's College, London University, before going into secondary school teaching. After starting a family, she and her husband, Ronald, spent ten years in mainland China (1986–1996) teaching at a university in Fujian province. On their return, alongside helping her husband run the China department for OMF International, she cared for her family and two elderly parents. After starting a part-time masters at Spurgeon's College in 2001, she felt called to the ministry and continued to train at Spurgeon's for the Baptist ministry. She has been the pastor at West Kingsdown Baptist

Church, Kent, for the past six years. She is currently completing a PhD at Spurgeon's College having benefited from a sabbatical funded by a Baptist Union Scholarship. Anne has three grown daughters, two of whom are married, and she has recently become a grandmother. As well as cuddling her new grandson, she enjoys cooking, reading and country walks.

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