

**CONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN IDENTITIES,  
ONE CANAANITE WOMAN AT A TIME:  
STUDIES IN THE RECEPTION OF MATTHEW 15:21-28**

by

Nancy Klancher

B.A., English Literature, Boston University, 1982

M.A., Medieval Literature, Boston University, 1986

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This dissertation was presented

by

Nancy Klancher

It was defended on

March 16, 2012

and approved by

Jerome Creach, Professor of Old Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Kathryn Flannery, Professor of English and Women's Studies, English Department,

University of Pittsburgh

Adam Shear, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and History, Religious Studies

Department, University of Pittsburgh

Dissertation Advisor: Dale C. Allison, Professor of New Testament Exegesis and Early

Christianity, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

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Nancy Klancher, PhD  
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This dissertation is a cross-cultural, cross-temporal reception history that identifies, compiles, and analyzes approximately fifty interpretations of a provocative New Testament passage, Matthew 15:21-28. It explores how these exegetical texts, ranging from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, construct a wide range of Christian identities and ideals and how those ideals function within their own historical cultures and discourses and in relation to preceding interpretations. This reception history combines historical contextualization and close readings of texts. It relies on theoretical premises from the history of reading, reception theory, and feminist analyses of subject- or identity-formation. It examines multiple encounters with one biblical text and the accumulation of traditions and topoi that built up as a result of those encounters over time.

These theoretical frames raise critical questions about exegetical depictions of religious identities, most importantly in this study, about the formative function of exegetical texts and the importance of aesthetic experience, not as pure perception or abstracted pleasure, but as engagement with tradition, historical understanding, and the transformation of reader and text. Thus, in this study interpretations and receptions of the Canaanite woman are understood as historical technologies of the Christian self. Two interpretive strategies repeatedly surface; they persist, even as their content morphs to fit the questions and concerns of their historically-bound iterations. Over time, the figure of the Canaanite woman is repeatedly used within texts ranging

from anti-heretical polemic to devotional literature as either 1) the occasion for anathema or 2) universal exemplum. The dissertation argues that there is a disciplinary power in such exegetical strategies, one consciously leveraged to ensure solidarity, unity of belief, conformity of practice, and maintenance of institutional hierarchies. Such historical uses of biblical interpretation and the dynamics of their reception are the focus of the dissertation. It concludes with a discussion of current scholarship on Matt 15:21-28 and considers the implications of the dissertation—both its method and its findings—for the current practice of reception history.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation identifies, compiles, and analyzes instances of the exegetical construction of a wide range of Christian identities and ideals within the reception history of one provocative New Testament passage, Matt 15:21-28. The encounter between the Canaanite woman and Jesus has often been the occasion for apologetic. The woman is a Canaanite<sup>1</sup>; she asks Jesus to perform an exorcism on her daughter who is possessed by a demon. Jesus refuses to help her, uttering the famous “exclusivity logion,” stating that his ministry is intended only for Jews. She persists, whereupon Jesus refers to her as a dog, unworthy of the bread intended for the “children” (the children arguably referring to the Jews as favored sons of God). The Canaanite woman then turns the tables, by claiming the rights of a dog to crumbs under the table. Jesus proclaims her faith great and her child healed. The argument between the Canaanite woman and Jesus is an allegory, a performance that dramatizes and purportedly resolves questions about how to define the real-world referents of its allegorical terms: “bread,” “children,” “dogs,” and “crumbs.”

Identity is central to this story of Jesus' encounter with an argumentative Canaanite woman, a quintessential outsider through ethnicity and religious praxis and an outlier in terms of the gender norms of her time. As reception history, this study examines multiple encounters with this text and the accumulation of traditions and topoi that built up as a result of those encounters over time by analyzing approximately fifty readings of the gospel passage written between the

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<sup>1</sup> As such, she descends from one of the greatest enemy tribes of the Israelites.

2<sup>nd</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. I describe the relationship of these readings to the cultures and discourses of their own time and place and to preceding interpretations. In doing so, I have found that two interpretive strategies persist, even as their content morphs to fit the questions and concerns of their historically-bound iterations: the figure of the Canaanite woman is used within texts ranging from anti-heretical polemic to devotional literature as either 1) the occasion for anathema or 2) universal exemplum. Questions of ideal Christian identity and conduct and of inter-religious conflict have informed the traditions that have developed around the Canaanite woman's story, hallmarks of the practical and persistent prescriptive function of the passage in this cross-temporal and cross-cultural *Rezeptionsgeschichte*.

To study in detail such a broad range of Christian interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 as constructions of a variety of normative Christian identities and codes of conduct is to fully register the rhetorical nature of the interested and situated stories they tell about the new faith and its ideal adherents. The historiographical implications are obvious: nuanced and detailed attention to the constructed nature of early Christian teachings on Scripture precludes a simple reflectionist reading of them as sources of straightforward history.<sup>2</sup> My interest in mapping textual constructions of Christian identities within the reception history of Matt 15:21-28 is, therefore, less in what they may or may not reveal about actual historical Christian practices, beliefs, or self-conceptualizations, and more in the ideals which the texts construct and how those ideals function within their particular cultural contexts, and in relation to preceding interpretations.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Denise Kimber Buell's discussion of "Origin Stories as Authorizing Discourse" in her *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999): "By attending to how early Christians constructed Christianity for themselves, we may be better able to reconstruct Christian history without simply reduplicating the views inscribed in those texts traditionally considered normative." Buell's study of the use of procreative and kinship imagery in the creation of "an authoritative discourse of Christian identity" is a thorough study of a particular historical trope of Christian communal identity.

I am interested in the specific types of compliance these exegetical texts openly and explicitly mandate in different settings. I also wish to discern, where possible, the *how* of this process, that is, the exchanges implied in text-reader/listener interactions; in particular, I wish to describe textual devices that interlock paranesis, the internalization of ideals, and the embodiment or enactment of norms.<sup>3</sup> The combination of these two foci should produce a greater understanding not only of the prescriptive function of the interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 presented in the following chapters, but also of the *means* by which they prescribe.

At the most basic level, the imposition of evolving ideals of behavior and belief is achieved through contrasts that foster denunciation (anathema) and on exempla that encourage imitation (exemplum). These, in turn, largely depend upon literal and historical interpretation on the one hand, and nonliteral strategies of interpretation, such as allegory and typology, on the other. The relationship between exegetical techniques and their paranetic effects within particular historical settings is central to this reception history. This is why the final chapter analyzes several texts that claim to be internalized personal assimilations of the Canaanite woman's persona. In order to portray how dynamic the production of paranetic effects is, then, I have brought into dialogue communication theory, which looks at literary devices, topoi, and structures that texts put into play as transactions between exegetes and audience, on the one

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<sup>3</sup> A note on how the notion of "paranesis within exegesis" is developed in this reception history. The following chapters recognize paranesis within a myriad of forms and use the term to signify exhortation which is able to take on the structures and categories of a variety of socio-religious endeavors *in order to further their cause*. Paranesis functions within commentaries, sermons, monastic rules, prayer manuals and more. It transmits wisdom, encourages spiritual discipline, catechizes, anathematizes, baptizes, and so on. It is, thus, best defined as a highly contextual *function*, rather than a decontextualized *form* of general moral exhortation, a function that "interferes in church politics and theological development" in specific and historical ways. Cf. Wiard Popkes in "James and Paraenesis, Reconsidered," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts* (ed. Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm; Oslo-Copenhagen-Stockholm-Boston: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 543-44. Popkes describes paranesis as 1) emerging out of the long-standing Jewish practice of extrapolating practical lessons, primarily of conduct, from Scripture, which is then reinscribed within an early Christian tradition of neophyte instruction; and 2) informing a wide variety of texts which provide "guidance in situations of transition and decision where clear and reliable advice is needed."

hand, and socio-historical theories of texts that focus on the *Sitz im Leben*, textual evidence of historical reading practices, and the social function of literature, on the other.

## 1.1 A GENEALOGY FOR RECEPTION HISTORY

The field of New Testament Studies has analyzed the reception and interpretation of Biblical texts and evolving Christian traditions for centuries, producing a long history of inquiry into the relationship between historical contexts and religious traditions, texts and peoples. The methods of older Biblical scholarship and newer theoretical developments are equally in evidence in my study of prescriptive exegesis. However, reception history and the theoretical assumptions that inform its practice today govern my thesis and its structure. That is to say, my primary focus is the evolution of textual traditions surrounding Matt 15:21-28 through the lenses of socio-historical function and the aesthetics of identification. The goal is not to identify the sources of Matt 15:21-28, nor the traditions out of which the gospel text was constructed, nor, most importantly, to interpret the gospel text itself, but rather to understand the cultural history of its later interpretation and reception. I emulate traditional methods of textual analysis in exploring how exegetical Christian texts were pieced together and for what purposes, yet recognize the essential differences between older histories of interpretations and what is currently being practiced as reception history.

Reception history, as a subfield of Biblical Studies, is often defined as a new methodological paradigm, categorically distinct from both the reconstructive claims of historical-critical methodology and the engrained theological premises at the heart of traditional histories of biblical interpretation. There are fundamental differences between reception history as it is

practiced today and traditional histories of interpretation, chief among them the priority granted to theology, history, text, and culture. Yet, indiscriminate generalizations are rarely as edifying as specific historical textual illustrations. A survey of several histories of interpretation, 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present, as case studies, focusing on their methods, assumptions, and metacritical thinking will locate this dissertation, not at the evolutionary apex of a growing theoretical sophistication, but poised between the historical utility of biblical interpretations and the mechanisms of their aesthetic effects.

### **1.1.1 Bedrock Concerns: Exegetical Credibility, Context, Function, and Reader**

In 1631, the French Huguenot minister and Bible commentator, Jean Daillé, published a treatise—highly controversial at the time—entitled *De vrai emploi des Pres*. The treatise is an extraordinary and very early negotiation of the Catholic-Protestant divide regarding the value of patristic tradition; it is a rigorous, incisive critique that seeks to rescue the Biblical texts from false interpretation and application. In 1651, it was translated into English by Thomas Smith, Bishop of Carlisle, as *The Right Use of the Fathers in the Decision of Controversies Existing at This Day*. Daillé’s principle concern was to discredit patristic exegesis, since many “articles of faith” (most pressing, in his view, transubstantiation and papal authority) were based mistakenly upon “the testimonies or opinions of the Fathers,”<sup>4</sup> rather than on Scripture itself. Arguing that the New Testament was “the most ancient and authentic rule of Christianity,” Daillé proceeded to demonstrate, by reproducing and criticizing the history of patristic interpretation on key doctrinal issues, how corrupted, motivated, and obscure the Fathers could be.

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Daillé, *A Treatise on the Right Use of the Fathers in the Decision of Controversies Existing at This Day* (transl., Thomas Smith; London: William White, 1841), xix.



This sort of polemic against Catholic tradition by a Huguenot is not extraordinary in and of itself, but the terms and bases of his critiques are surprisingly developed. For example, Daillé analyzes the intentions and aims of patristic exegetical method with particular emphasis on its social and ecclesiological functions. In one instance, he explains the obliqueness and obscurity with which the ancient writers described the Eucharist to new converts as a strategy to manipulate and secure their zeal and commitment to partake:

Observe how Theodoret, Epiphanius, and other ancient writers are, in adverting to the subject of the Eucharist; describing it in general terms only, and such as they only could understand, who had been formerly partakers of that Holy Sacrament. I shall not here take upon me to examine the end which they proposed to themselves in so doing, which seems to have been to implant in the minds of the Catechumeni a greater reverence and esteem for the Sacraments, and for more earnest and eager desire to be admitted to partake of them: fearing lest the laying open and discoursing plainly on the matter and manner of celebrating the Sacraments might lessen these feelings for them.<sup>5</sup>

The focus is clearly on form, style, and function, rather than content.

Daillé also documents the suppression of dissenting testimonies.<sup>6</sup> Regarding transubstantiation, for instance, he cites a certain Bertram, “a priest who lived in the time of the Emperor Charles the Bald, which is about seven hundred and fifty years since,” who wrote against transubstantiation in his treatise, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*. The book was forbidden, in its entirety, in the Tridentine Index. It was also seriously altered, according to Daillé, with offending paragraphs being removed by “censors of the low Countries:”

These gentlemen, finding that the language of both these passages did very ill accord with the doctrine of Transubstantiation, thought it the best way to erase them entirely; for fear lest, coming to the people’s knowledge,

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<sup>5</sup> Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 92.

<sup>6</sup> This is a critique that remains very alive in New Testament Studies today, for instance, in studies of the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, and myriad apocryphal gospels and traditions. Indeed, accounts of the historical suppression of non-canonical Christian sources, along with their alternative narratives and theologies, has become a mainstay of religious trade books.

they might imagine that there had been Sacramentarians in the Church ever since the time of Charles the Bald.<sup>7</sup>

Such observations expand in Daillé's treatise into robust assertions about the diversity of the early church, an acknowledgement often framed as new or "postmodern" within New Testament Studies today:

We must necessarily believe that the opinions of the faithful were in those days altogether as different, if not much more, than they are now. Whence it will also follow that even the doctors themselves, who lived in those times, could not know all the different opinions of men, much less could they represent them to us in their writings.<sup>8</sup>

Daillé's opinion is the result of the many demonstrations of conflicting pronouncements, "accidents" and "diversity of opinion" among the Fathers that he records.

Daillé follows his observations regarding a diversity of opinions and many conflictual interpretations with a warning against the dangers of a feigned or fabricated consensus. At the most technical level, Daillé objects to the adoption of prior interpretations without any revisions or qualifications, and, equally as often, without attribution: "You may observe out of the expositions of St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, and others, who, robbing poor Origen without any mercy, do not yet do him the honour so much as scarcely to name him."<sup>9</sup> Daillé complains of not knowing whose opinion he is reading. He is bothered that such methods create the impression of repeated, careful discernments of a single truth, instead of the mutual influence and cultural reproduction of established and conventional "truths."

Further, such readily adopted consensus positions can lead to what Daillé considers the ridiculous. He describes the Fathers almost as lemmings rushing to the sea, noting in alarm that

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<sup>7</sup> Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 163.

<sup>9</sup> Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 105.

Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, and Africanus all believed that Jesus kept the Feast of Passover only once after his baptism, though they were wrong. With rhetorical flourish, he exposes misreading after misreading, while protesting that they are beneath consideration:

Neither shall I take any notice in this place of that conceit of Athanasius, St. Basil, and Methodius, as he is cited by John, Bishop of Thessalonica, who all believed that the angels had bodies: to whom we may also add St. Hilary, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and very many more of the Fathers, who would all of them have the nature of angels to be such as was capable of the passions of carnal love, of which number is even St. Augustin also....<sup>10</sup>

Daillé here protests the power and influence of exegetical tradition to override new and better understandings, a move that skillfully conflates methodological laxity and substantive error.

Last but not least, Daillé observes the constraints of literary form by describing the distortions inherent to polemic, forcing exegetes to take more extreme positions: “dangerous expressions... being urged thereto through the warmth of the dispute.”<sup>11</sup> In this, he acknowledges not just the limits of literary formal conventions but the impact of historical, theological contexts upon exegetical pronouncements.

In sum, here is a 17<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Bible commentator exhibiting awareness of 1) the calculated construction of a “canon” of exegetical traditions through the suppression of dissenting texts; 2) the social, cultural, and religious functions of biblical exegesis, such as imposing religious conviction and commitment; 3) the theological and doctrinal diversity of the early church and the impossibility of establishing one rule of faith from the testimonies of the late Antique period; and 4) the way in which the conventions of literary forms determine what may be said and how. Daillé asserted the superiority of Protestant over Catholic understandings of Bible, church, and doctrine using relatively sophisticated historical and functionalist methods

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<sup>10</sup> Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 275.

<sup>11</sup> Daillé, *Right Use of the Fathers*, 98.

of interpretation. He displays an unabashed factionalism; his text is a complex mix of literacy, urbanity, and polemic. It is a characteristic mix within the field of Biblical Studies—both before and after the advent of the “objective” historical-critical method—as Biblical scholars have analyzed the reception and interpretation of Biblical texts and evolving Christian traditions.

Until very recently, the stated goal has been the correct interpretation of the semantic text, according to which positioned analysis is the natural product of superior exegesis. This understanding of the authentic and substantiated textual basis of “strong readings,” however, is currently challenged; a distinction is now drawn between subjective theologically-informed and objective historically-informed exegesis. It is a distinction that can be difficult to discern at times. A number of factors have contributed to the likelihood of confusion, each with its own history within earlier interpretive practices. For instance, the New Testament texts themselves are appropriations, redactions, and transmissions of prior traditions and forms which, in turn, represent multiple strata of evolving oral narratives. Early Christian sources, whatever the genre, involved reception and interpretation, at the least in their selection and presentation of disparate materials.

In addition to recognizing that local and situated reinscriptions of Christian traditions are the inevitable byproduct of cultural transmission, it is important to recall a few key turning points in the history of Biblical interpretation and reception. One of the better-known examples of such a turning point, for instance, was the Reformation rejection of “Catholic antiquity,” of the long history of authoritative (patristic) exegetical Tradition. In its place, Protestants proffered a purportedly less interested, less institutionally complicit interpretation of Scripture (as is vividly

clear in the case of Daillé above).<sup>12</sup> This claim was to reach its full expression in the historical-critical method three centuries later, a method which aimed to replace a theological exegesis bound to the interests of institutional power with the objective evidence of historical scholarship. Current reception studies owe a clear debt to this shift in paradigm.

Another influential turn was the form critical attention to the historical *Sitzen im Leben* of synoptic pericopes. Looking for the rhetorical context and the light it shines on rhetorical subtext—even if not exactly conceived of thus by Bultmann et al.—has become a fundamental premise for reception historians, as they seek deeper discernible socio-cultural agendas behind theological and exegetical apparatus.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, redaction criticism often identified dogmatic ideas and theological conceptions at work in gospel redactions.<sup>14</sup> Martin Dibelius, for instance, rejected the notion of the gospels as purely historical witnesses and instead explored their form as preaching and exhortation “to convert unbelievers and confirm the faithful,”<sup>15</sup> even as he sought whatever historical glimpses were afforded by early church texts.

These early shifts in foci represent bedrock moments when rhetorical *context* began to be understood as social and ideological *function*. Form and redaction criticism provided rigorous scholarly answers to reception and reader-response questions about gospel traditions. They delineated rhetorical strategies and theological premises and reconstructed historical audiences, socio-religious utilities, and trajectories of textual traditions. They have in common the study of

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<sup>12</sup> The Protestant move towards direct, implicitly less “political,” interpretation of Scripture, sans institutional mediation, was surely based on theological factors, but should also be understood against the violent backdrop of burning Lutheran books, heretics executed at the stake, and churchmen appointed and fired over theological differences. A purportedly purer form of Scriptural interpretation could function as a kind of shield, rhetorical and political.

<sup>13</sup> Such agendas need not be understood according to the old terms of authorial intention, but rather in terms of the rhetorical aims and implied authors represented within texts.

<sup>14</sup> Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 12.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to the Gospel* (transl. Bertram Lee Woolf; London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1934).

the historical nature and transparency of gospel traditions, including discerning who their historical readers or listeners were. As such, they have provided a model for the practice of reception history now in which the documenting of the situatedness of individual texts, whether small units such as pericopes or large units such as sermons or treatises, may cease to look backward to origins and begin instead to situate them among a range of evolving readers and social, political, and theological contexts and functions.

This is today presented as the crucial twist, the fundamental difference between older histories of interpretation and current reception history. Traditional histories of interpretation remained intent upon discerning the correct original meaning of each Biblical text, whether the gauge was theology or historical antiquity. These earlier, essentially theological, inquiries were interested in biblical texts as divine, or historical, revelations to be deciphered.<sup>16</sup> In the latter case, the role of antiquity was akin to the role of divine inspiration; it denoted authenticity. Proximity to the source—spiritual or historical—was the key to the texts. It is in this light that the reception and interpretation of Christian texts and traditions have been analyzed, explained, and evaluated—authorized, critiqued, or denounced—since the very beginning. For better or worse, current reception histories have developed out of this long history of theological, exegetical and historical-critical methods.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mary Chilton Callaway's 2004 SBL San Antonio talk, "What's the Use of Reception History?" (Cited 14 January, 2012. Online: <http://bbibcomm.net/reception-history>) for a cogent summary of the contrasts I am delineating, though she draws the lines much more sharply than I do between "theological" histories of interpretation and "historical and cultural" reception histories. This may be because I engage the texts at the level of methodology more and consider individual case studies, as below, while she remains at the level of theory and generalization.

### 1.1.2 More Recent Developments Within Reception Studies

Most recently, the transmission of culture at the heart of reception studies has acquired new labels, such as *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history or history-of-influence), *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (reception history), and *Rezeptionsästhetik* (reception theory).<sup>17</sup> These are framed as a departure, a new paradigm, in order to differentiate them from prior theological inquiries. The older preoccupations with original meanings, preserved, if hidden, within traditions and discoverable through the study of textual origins and influence, have given way to more recent interests in idiosyncratic appropriations and reconfigurations viewed through the lenses of local or regional politics, social stratification, and cultural hegemonies. It seems a neat and clean break, indeed. But what of the overlaps and interconnections? These are surprisingly instructive. They are, as should be clear from the case of Daillé above, suggestive and thought-provoking.

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<sup>17</sup> These three methods are differentiated variously; sometimes they are intentionally conflated. For instance, in a recent volume of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* dedicated to the place of reception history and theory in New Testament studies, Mark Knight defines *Wirkungsgeschichte* as “the story of how a text has been applied and understood” in any number of media, *Rezeptionsgeschichte* as “concrete examples of reception without always being drawn into the consequences that these might hold for our understanding of interpretation,” that is, for our understanding of the original text’s “real” meaning and *Rezeptionsästhetik* as the aesthetics of reception or reader-response criticism, both of which focus on readers, the process of meaning-making, and the determinative role of interpretive communities in the generation of meaning (Mark Knight, “*Wirkungsgeschichte*, Reception History, Reception Theory,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33:2 (2010), p137-146 (141). In contrast, David Parris follows Robert Holub in using the term “reception theory” as an umbrella term for “a general shift in concern from the author and the work to the text and the reader... [that] encompasses empirical research and the traditional occupation with influences” (David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 107 (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 118). Thus, Parris places *Wirkungsgeschichte* (the impact of a text), *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (the history of reception), *Wirkungsästhetik* (the aesthetics of effect or response), and *Rezeptionsästhetik* (the aesthetics of reception) all under the one rubric of “reception theory.” This homogenizes the very different preoccupations and aims of these methods. In particular, the phenomenological issues that dominate within the aesthetics of reception and the historical and political questions that arise within the history of reception and effects are not always mutually edifying.

### 1.1.3 The Old and the New

Most recently, Oxford University Press has published *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, May 2011, a 752-page two-pronged synthesis of traditional exegetics and current reception studies. The *Oxford Handbook* is concerned to acknowledge the specific historical, socio-cultural, and religious contexts of both traditional and newer biblical interpretations without reducing either to the accidental status of context alone. That is, the editors aspire to more than a collection of curious historical interpretations.

Then, too, both J. C. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) and Blackwell Publishing have recently offered multivolume series that feature scholarly histories of the interpretation and reception of a variety of biblical texts: the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese* series, 1955--, and the *Blackwell Bible Series* (“*Through the Centuries*”), 1998--. Likewise, De Gruyter has recently embarked on its *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, 2010--, to be offered in printed and online formats, which will “move into new terrain,” documenting the history of the Bible’s reception “not only in the Christian churches and the Jewish Diaspora but also in literature, art, music, and film, as well as Islam and other religious traditions and current religious movements.”<sup>18</sup> The breadth and reach of the de Gruyter *Encyclopedia* will no doubt exceed older efforts, yet the inclusion of intercultural and interreligious responses to biblical texts is not without precedent.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, there are the slightly older series, such as the 530 volume *Sources Chrétiennes* collection, published by the Éditions du Cerf and founded in 1942 by Cardinals Jean

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<sup>18</sup> Dgruyter Project Description, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, <http://Www.Degruyter.De/Cont/Fb/Th/Ebr/Ebrprojecten.Cfm>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. discussion of Jane T. Stoddart below, 23.



Daniélou and Henri de Lubac, and Father Claude Mondésert. Their aim was and remains to collect, edit, and commend the most important texts from the first 1400 years of the Church, including apologetics, biblical commentary, sermons, treatises, letters, liturgies, poems and hymns, dialogues, ascetic writings, Church canons and history. This series, spanning almost 70 years, reflects aims and methods that date back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, yet more recent volumes display increasing affinity with current theoretical concerns. How do these recent efforts compare with the older histories?

Looking back at the variety of histories of interpretation and reception within Biblical Studies, one quickly discovers familiar differences, disagreements and arguments, along a continuum on which the ideals of “higher criticism” and academic scientism lie on one end and ecclesiological, denominational, and doctrinal emphases and applications, on the other. This tug-of-war is in play in many different sorts of histories, whether collections of ancient writings, metacritical meditations on interpretive methods, debates about the significance of particular parts of Scripture in the life of the Christian church, or histories of the exegesis of particular biblical passages and/or interpretive cruxes. Methods and claims are myriad.

For instance, the range in approaches may be demonstrated through contrasting Daillé’s methods in his 1631 *Treatise* with a very different presentation of patristic writings, published some 200 years later in England. The *Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church: Anterior to the Division of the East and West; translated by Members of the English Church, with Notices of the Respective Fathers, and Brief Notes by the Editors, Where Required* was the first corpus of translations of patristic texts into English. Published between 1836 and 1881, it was a multi-volume undertaking begun in the summer of 1836 by the Tractarians of the Oxford

Movement, specifically E. B. Pusey and John Henry Newman.<sup>20</sup> It gathered together patristic homilies, commentaries, and treatises into a compendium of late Antique biblical exegesis and doctrinal exposition. It would eventually develop into the *Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series, still in considerable use today.<sup>21</sup>

The *Library* emerged, like Daillé's *Treatise*, as a negotiation of Protestant-Catholic division, doctrinal and ecclesiological; its aims are discernible most visibly in the preface to the series. There the editors, Pusey and Newman, asserted the untainted authority of the Fathers. They provided twelve reasons for publishing the series, most of them straightforward and practical, such as providing a broad array of patristic texts in translation to those whose knowledge of the ancient languages was limited. Some reasons, however, were more pointed, even polemical, such as combatting the "contracted and shallow" perspectives of different Christian "bodies" and the disrespect for "Catholic antiquity" evident in "modern and private interpretations of Holy Scripture." This was a struggle to be accomplished through the "translation" and "circulation" of "a body of ancient Catholic truth, free from the errors, alike of modern Rome and of Ultra-Protestantism."<sup>22</sup>

Editorializing was kept to a minimum throughout the series, but the stated motives of the editors in circulating patristic texts for the edification of tradition-besotted Romanists and maverick Protestant "private interpreters" were nonetheless inflammatory. A review in the *Dublin Review* of August 1839 written by a Catholic was particularly caustic, 1) pointing out that Catholics, far from needing English access to the Fathers, had been well-versed in their writings,

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<sup>20</sup> Richard W. Pfaff, "The Library of the Fathers: The Tractarians as Patristic Translators," *Studies in Philology* 70:3 (June 1973), p329-344 (329).

<sup>21</sup> The *Ante-Nice Fathers* was originally published by T&T Clark as the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* between 1867 and 1873 in Edinburgh and then edited, simplified, and published in the United States by the Christian Literature Company as *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. And the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series was published simultaneously in both Europe and America between 1886-1900 by the same two publishing houses.

<sup>22</sup> Review of *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, *Dublin Review* 7:13 (1839), 2.

through an endless supply of “public libraries and private collections” where the Fathers could be found translated into French and Italian (thus deriding the inflated importance Pusey and Newman seemed to assign to *English* translations, as though there were no other prior translations into “modern languages”) and 2) objecting to the facile aim of the editors of the *Library of the Fathers*, viz. the ahistorical and reductive assumptions of “the first and main object of the editors, to present to the public a body of doctrine [out of ‘only a portion of the documents of antiquity’] on which their faith is to be grounded.”<sup>23</sup>

However, such protestations were soon enough no longer required. With the movement of several of the series’ editors into the Roman church, beginning with Newman in 1844, the larger claims with which the project began became decidedly more modest. Pusey’s appeals for new subscribers around the year 1852, in the wake of the fragmentation of the Oxford movement, simply “stress the utility of the series as a collection of scriptural commentaries and other homiletical aids rather than buttressing the claims so confidently advanced fifteen years earlier.”<sup>24</sup> So, in the end, the Library that Pusey had first envisioned in a letter to Newman as a “‘Quinque-articulated’ Library (Practical, Doctrinal, Historical, Anti-Heretical, Expository)”<sup>25</sup> reverted into a practical and historical resource.

An interesting postscript to these early efforts exists in the 1998 publication of Christopher Hall’s *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, itself the introductory volume to InterVarsity Press’ new *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series. Hall encourages Protestants to reconnect with patristic writings, though they may believe that “much of church history” appears to be “a barren wasteland, a desert of error strongly characterized by the

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<sup>23</sup> Review of *A Library*, *Dublin Review*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Pfaff, “The Library of the Fathers,” 329-344 (333).

<sup>25</sup> Printed in H. Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1893), 420-22.

absence of the Holy Spirit's guidance and discernment."<sup>26</sup> They should do so, he argues, so that they can escape their current state of being "rootless and drifting in a barren secular and ecclesiastical landscape, largely because they have forgotten their Christian past."<sup>27</sup> This "long journey home" requires a dismissal of post-Enlightenment biblical criticism and theology as well as its myth of an objective, autonomous interpreter. Because we do not interpret in a vacuum, we may concede the cultural and religious blind spots of the Fathers and ourselves, affecting a kind of mutual correction in the process. Thus, Hall's answer to his own question—"Can the Fathers be trusted?"—is affirmative. He cites Dale Allison regarding the early exegetes' superior intertextual knowledge and hermeneutical proximity to the Biblical texts as one argument. He depicts "conceptual and ethical bridge-building" between the Fathers and Christians today as a kind of transhistorical identification with enduring human struggles, like Augustine's against lust. He urges his readers to emulate the Fathers' synthesis of biblical exegesis and spiritual formation. It is a far cry from Daillé, whom we might imagine turning over in his grave; but Pusey and Newman would likely have been well-pleased.

If ecclesiological and denominational concerns have played a role in the construction and evaluation of histories of interpretations, so too have the ideals of "higher criticism" and academic scientism. During the 1830s and 1840s, for instance, T&T Clark of Edinburgh published a series entitled *The Biblical Cabinet; or Hermeneutical, Exegetical, and Philological Library*, a series of translations of German Biblical criticism. The series was primarily intended for the edification of theology students. It showcased the relatively new "higher criticism," featuring studies of genres, such as the messianic Psalms, individual epistles, discourses such as the Sermon on the Mount, and smaller pericopes such as the Lord's Prayer. It also published

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<sup>26</sup> Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 13.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, *Reading Scripture*, 14.

volumes on biblical geography, philological studies, historical accounts of such things as “the planting and training of the Christian Church,” scientific descriptions of biblical botany and minerology, and even one biography of Cornelius the Centurion!

The series was widely praised by contemporary journals and newspapers for its presentation of “the best works of the best divines of our German neighbors,” its “analytical investigation,” its “contribution to the science of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation,” its “critical study of the Sacred Scriptures:” “no work which has appeared in this country has given a greater stimulus to the study of those accurate and settled principles of Scripture interpretation.”<sup>28</sup> It was quickly commended not only to theology students, ministers, and preachers, but also to parents to aid them in the enlightened instruction of their children.

In this instance, the history of interpretation became a useful tool, buttressing the scientism of “higher criticism,” sometimes to authorize long-held interpretations, sometimes to illustrate the superior rationality of new findings. Dr. A. Tholuck, professor of Theology in the Royal University of Halle, wrote the sixth volume in the *Biblical Cabinet* series; it provides a particularly good example of this technique. Tholuck organized his introduction to his *Exposition, Doctrinal and Theological, of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, According to the Gospel of Matthew* according to “the history of the views which have been held upon” a number of interpretive cruxes which he confronted in the gospel renditions of the Sermon on the

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<sup>28</sup> This sampling of contemporary responses to *The Biblical Cabinet* series comes from reviews in *The Church of England Quarterly Review*, *Davidson’s Biblical Criticism*, *The Eclectic Review*, *The Church of Scotland Magazine*, and *The Congregational Magazine*, all cited in a one-page advertisement at the back of *Clark’s Foreign Theological Library*, 20 (1851): 401.

Mount.<sup>29</sup> Tholuck thus created a history of interpretation organized by particular exegetical questions.

For instance, wishing to harmonize Matthew's and Luke's versions of Jesus' sermon, he cited Augustine's early explanation (*De Consensu Evangelistarum*) that Jesus first delivered an extensive version of the sermon on top of the mountain (which appears in Matthew's gospel) and then descended to the plain to deliver an abridged version to the crowds of people there (the discourse recorded in Luke's gospel).<sup>30</sup> Tholuck then proceeded to trace the development of the question in a number of "harmonists," including Andrew Osiander (1537), John Calvin (1555), Faustus Socinus (1574), Cornelius Jansenius (1571), Abraham Calov (1676), Caspar Sandhagen (1688), Rheinhard Rus (1727) as well as (nearer) contemporaries such as Johann Herder and Johann Eichhorn.

In all of this comparative analysis, Tholuck did not represent the history of interpretation as an inexorable march of progressive revelation; for instance, he judged the structural analyses of the sermon by contemporaries Rau and Jentzen as "far from coming up to such of their more ancient predecessors in the field as Chrysostom and Bengel,"<sup>31</sup> and he lamented that "Eichhorn's splendid hypothesis of a primitive gospel has disappeared without a trace."<sup>32</sup> Other cruxes that provoked Tholuck to a review of historical opinions include whether or not Jesus was a new Lawgiver and what to make of the Lord's Prayer. Yet, while Tholuck's introduction concludes with the rehearsal of historical approaches to the Sermon on the Mount from the Reformation to the present day (1835), his version of the reception history of Matt 5-7 is far from a catena.

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<sup>29</sup> A. Tholuck, *Exposition, Doctrinal and Theological, of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1835).

<sup>30</sup> Tholuck, *Exposition of Christ's Sermon*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Tholuck, *Exposition of Christ's Sermon*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Tholuck, *Exposition of Christ's Sermon*, 12.

Throughout, Tholuck arbitrated the methods and conclusions of his predecessors and, more important still, he narrated the historical development of Biblical exegesis as encompassing the gains won through higher criticism as well as the dangers of theological blind spots evident in the work of prior Biblical critics. In this he was not alone, not when such a mainline figure as Frederic William Farrar, Archdeacon of Westminster Abbey and later Dean of Canterbury, could frame his comprehensive presentation of the history of Biblical interpretation, delivered as the Bampton Lectures at Oxford University in 1885, as “a history of errors,” progressively rectified through the “teaching of the Spirit of God in the domains of History and Science.”<sup>33</sup> Farrar incisively declared,

We shall see system after system—the Halakhic, the Kabbalistic, the Traditional, the Hierarchic, the Inferential, the Allegorical, the Dogmatic, the Naturalistic—condemned and rejected, each in turn, by the experience and widening knowledge of mankind.... The original Hebrew of the Old Testament was for many ages unknown.... Religious controversy went to Scripture not to seek for dogmas but to find them.... Mysticism placed the interpreter above the text.... A scholastic orthodoxy developed elaborate systems of theology out of imaginary emphases....<sup>34</sup>

Farrar identified not just exegetical systems but their historical causes. Unlike Tholuck, he stated outright that his role was apologetic; his aim was to “rob of all their force the objections of infidels and freethinkers... [and] the stock-in-trade of the freethought platform and the secularist pamphleteer.”<sup>35</sup> This was possible, he said, if one regarded the Bible “as the record of a progressive revelation divinely adapted to the hard heart, the dull understanding, and the slow development of mankind.”<sup>36</sup> So Farrar’s lectures were metacritical; they criticized historical

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<sup>33</sup> Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Bampton Lectures, 1885* (New York: E. Dutton, 1886; repr., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), px-xi.

<sup>34</sup> Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, xi.

<sup>35</sup> Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, x.

<sup>36</sup> Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, x.

methods of exegesis rather than describing the history of interpretation of particular passages or particular exegetical questions.

Both Tholuck and Farrar felt authorized to historically contextualize earlier Biblical exegetes and their interpretations, to qualify established exegetical methods, and often to emphasize the associated limitations and errors of the Church Fathers. In this, they continued in the tradition of ancient disputations on the *correct* reading of Scripture, as much as they typified the rationalism and scientism of the higher critical thought of their time. Their exposure of errors and their historical qualifications remained in the resolute service of the sure establishment of the semantic text, that is, upon arriving at a correct exegesis of whatever text was before them.

Their emphasis on the limitations of patristic exegesis and historical explanations for those limitations, however, does not work in the same way as Daillé's opposition of patristic traditions to "ancient and authentic" New Testament texts, for these "newer" histories of interpretation opposed the methods of early exegetical traditions to higher critical findings. An early metacritical instance of this newer focus on historical-critical methods may be found in T. K. Cheyne's 1893 review of the founders of Old Testament criticism.

Cheyne begins with the pronouncement that "it is not unimportant to notice how the intellectual phases and material surroundings of a writer have affected his criticism. We may see thus how natural and inevitable his course was, and how pardonable were his errors; we may also gather from his life both warnings and encouragements."<sup>37</sup> He tracks the development of "methodical criticism" from English precursors such as Warburton, Lowth, and Geddes, to Eichhorn, Ewald, Hitzig, Bleek, Reuss, and finally to Robertson Smith, G.A. Smith, and A.H. Sayce. The book reads at times like an annotated bibliography that advocates strongly for the

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<sup>37</sup> T. K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism: Biographical, Descriptive, and Critical Studies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), vi.



“free but reverent Biblical criticism” that he deems is under attack in England at the time of writing. Of interest is Cheyne’s list of contemporary accusations against the higher criticism, specifically that it was immature, unproven, foreign (too German), too rationalistic, and too narrow in its methods. Weighing the relative values of various methods and arguments—concerning the Documentary Hypothesis, philology, comparative ethnic-psychology, naturalism, and historical-critical methods, among others—Cheyne concludes that “England is no longer so adverse as formerly to a free but reverent Biblical criticism,” that “such a criticism is becoming more and more necessary for the maintenance of true evangelical religion.” He advocates for “a firmer treatment of all parts of the grave historical problem of the origin of our religion.”<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Otto Bardenhewer’s *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literatur*<sup>39</sup> (1902) is concerned, *inter alia*, with the impact of historical, ecclesiological, and dogmatic contexts upon patristic writings. This multi-volume, rigorous, and comprehensive presentation of early Christian literature covers Christian writings from the Church Fathers to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, East and West, including Syrian and Armenian authors, as well as Jewish and “heathen” literature that feature later Christian redactions and interpolations. The collection, due to Bardenhewer’s historical, philological, and source-critical erudition, remains a scholarly resource to this day, reissued as recently as 2008.<sup>40</sup> In the 1880s, Bardenhewer served as professor of New Testament exegesis and Biblical hermeneutics, first at Münster and then at Munich. He viewed the Christian texts that he studied less as literature per se, and more as repositories and reproductions of dogmatic conclusions and struggled to keep historical context to the fore in his discussions.

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<sup>38</sup> Cheyne, *Founders*, 372.

<sup>39</sup> Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literatur* (5 vols., Berlin: Freiburg Im Breisgau Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1902-1932).

<sup>40</sup> Already in 1962, the Scientific Paper Company published a special edition of the “Bardenhewer,” based on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Freiburg editions. In 2008, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft reissued the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, unchanged, with an extended introduction by the Münster Patristics scholar, Alfons Prince.

Bardenhewer emphasized the dogmatically-oriented reception of early church writings, that is, their consistent reception in terms of content rather than form:

Die Kirchenschriftsteller stets dem Inhalt den Vortritt einräumten vor der Form... Im Mittelpunkt des Inhalts der altkirchlichen Literature aber steht natürlich immer wieder die Lehre der alten Kirche, und diese war nichts anderes als die rein und ungetrübte forgepflanzte Predigt der Apostel.. Denn diese Literature is der Ausdruck oder Niederschlag nicht der Kirchenlehre, sondern des Denkens und Fühlens, Glaubens und Hoffens, Leidens und Streitens aller derjenigen, welche sich zur Kirche bekannten.<sup>41</sup>

The church writers always privilege content over form. In the center of the content is of course always the teaching of the ancient church, and this was nothing but the pure and unadulterated already established preaching of the Apostles. For this literature is neither the official expression nor the distillation of church teaching, but rather of the thoughts and feelings, faith and hope, suffering and strife of all those who confessed to the church.

Bardenhewer's acknowledgement of the historical particularity and individuality of early Christian exegesis was noticed. In an 1896 review of his *Patrologie*, his definition of Patrology as "the science of the life, writings, and teachings of the Fathers" and his blazing of a *via media* between the old Patrology of Roman Catholicism and the new Protestant practice of literary-historicism were noted and appreciated: "Bardenhewer, though not free from traditional and confessional influences, is very much in touch with modern things."<sup>42</sup>

Histories of interpretation and reception dating back over the last two to three centuries, however, have consisted not only of negotiations, such as these, of the competing claims of historical method and doctrinal argumentation. There has been an abundance of explorations of historical exegesis and its influence within the life of the church. These run the gamut from

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<sup>41</sup>Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literature*, pviii-ix.

<sup>42</sup> Ernest C. Richardson, "Reviews of Recent Historical Theology, including Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 7 (Philadelphia: MacCalla & Co, 1896), p544-45 (545).

theological disputations to anthologies to testimonies of the personal reception and spiritual impact of Biblical texts.

An interesting and understated instance of the latter that perhaps comes closest to what we consider reception history today appeared in two volumes in 1913 and 1914 in England, both written by Jane T. Stoddart and entitled *The Old Testament in Life and Literature* and *The New Testament in Life and Literature*. Stoddart was a member of the editorial staff of *The British Weekly* and author of a dozen or so books, including private devotionals, historical biographies, illustrated Psalms, as well as an “impartial inquiry” into “the new Socialism.”

The two volumes on Biblical passages “in life and literature” are compendia of situated readings, testimonies to the spiritual impact of key biblical passages. Together they comprise an amazing mix of academic and existential responses to the Old and New Testaments, that is, comments by more traditionally authoritative voices as well as humbler more personal responses and free associations by friends and acquaintances of Stoddart. She thus weaves together Biblical readings by Augustine, Erasmus, Luther, diverse Biblical Studies professors of her day, priests and rabbis, with stories told by Chinese teachers, English lords and ladies (Lord Acton, Frances Baroness Bunson), mothers, dentists, lady diarists, poets (Blake, Coleridge), novelists (George Eliot), which in turn voice resonances between the Biblical texts and Japanese legends, Jewish prayer books, and quotations of the psalms in the Qu‘ran (which a sheik had pointed out to Stoddart),<sup>43</sup> to name but a few.

Stoddart assembles these myriad confessions of relationship to the Biblical texts, verse by verse, book by book, desiring, she writes, not so much to build up an anthology or encyclopedia, but rather to gather “from day to day some fresh line for that ‘vast palimpsest’ of Holy Scripture,

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<sup>43</sup> Jane T. Stoddart, *The Old Testament in Life and Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, New York, Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 242.

which... is ‘written over and over again, illuminated, illustrated by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and nations.’”<sup>44</sup> Stoddart’s ease with the reinscription of the Biblical texts that continually takes place in the minds and cultures of human beings belongs to the kind of existentialist hermeneutics and faith in the salutary impact of encounters with Biblical revelation that undergirds Christian devotional discourse. Thus, she demonstrates no interest in rehearsing long, authoritative traditions on each verse. She is quite direct about the sort of reception she is documenting: “This is not a field in which any new-comer needs to glean after others.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, while she may devote a chapter of her New Testament volume to the thoughts and readings of “the men who gave it [the New Testament] to Europe,” she gives equal space to the impressions of less famous readers. In this, she anticipates some of the democratic and particularist impulses of current reception histories.

Several more recent volumes of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese* series take up similar strategies. Mohr Siebeck began publishing the series in 1955 under the title, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der neutestamentlichen Exegese*. The first volume, Lukas Vischer’s *Die Auslegungsgeschichte von 1. Kor. 6, 1-11*, was edited by Oscar Cullmann and Ernst Käsemann, but the series quickly broadened its scope to *biblical* exegesis by the time the second volume, *Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l’exégèse*, appeared.<sup>46</sup> Selections from the *Beiträge* series illustrate the emerging preoccupations through the early 1980s that looked backward to the likes of Tholuck, Farrar, Cheyne, and Bardenhewer, yet also served as stepping stones to the interests of current reception studies.

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<sup>44</sup> Stoddart, *Old Testament in Life*, vii. The quote is from *Stoddart’s* contemporary, Dean Stanley.

<sup>45</sup> Stoddart, *Old Testament in Life*, vii.

<sup>46</sup> Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l’exégèse*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 2 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1959).

For instance, Pierre Prigent's 1959 history of the interpretation of the first 11 verses of *First Corinthians* developed and expanded earlier appreciations of the way historical context determines exegetical content by including his own analyses. Indeed, his and the following examples from the 1970s and 1980s might best be described as "histories of exegesis" focused on process and not product, a variant of history of interpretation, but not yet reception history. That is, they focus more on exegetes and their historical and theological contexts than on their readings of the text itself or its theology, yet they do not yet ask directly or expressly about impact or social function.

Prigent presents his exegetical history chronologically, so that the exegetes he discusses may be judged fairly, "in an appropriate light" given their historical moment, and he organizes that chronology by "les grands types d'interprétation," e.g., spiritualist, historical-prophetic, eschatological, mystical, literary, history-of-religions, and even Mariological. Within these divisions, the book reads like a catena, featuring each exegete's name followed by a description of his exegesis. Throughout, he expresses his desire not to let his own theology or exegetical method determine, even unconsciously, how he defines "high points" in the history of exegesis or "dominant proofs." Likewise, he distinguishes only between Catholic and Protestant exegetes when their interpretations appear to be clearly governed by a priori dogmatics. Prigent's is a careful historicizing of exegetical assumptions and agendas.

Three volumes in the *Beiträge* series published in the 1970s and considered here continue to share a common preoccupation with historical exegetical assumptions, which they attribute variously to eisegesis, changing schools and methods, and "dogmatic assumptions and

interpretive principles.”<sup>47</sup> For instance, in his study of the patristic exegesis of *Hebrews*<sup>48</sup> Rowan Greer favors a simple descriptive approach to exegetical texts coupled with analysis of the theologies expressed through them. Arguing that a separation of exegesis and theology is anachronistic, Greer considers the “double judgment” in Hebrews of Christ as both the stamp of God’s person and lower than the angels through the lens of 5<sup>th</sup> century Christological controversies. The decisive impact of religio-cultural context on exegetical conclusions is a given for Greer. Very similarly, Hans Gunther Klemm in *Das Gleichnis vom Barmherzigen Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert* reviews changing appraisals of the allegorical method in dogmatic treatments of the Good Samaritan parable during the “fertile” period when Humanism and the Reformation stood side by side.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, still, in some cases, the use of historical contextualization as a vehicle to “a right understanding of the meaning” of passages endured, as in Bruce Demarest’s *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1-10 from the Reformation to the Present*.<sup>50</sup> For Demarest, “old mistakes” instruct new hermeneutics. Interestingly, he divided readings by group identity and theology as much as location, under such group headings as Protestant reformers, Socinian interpreters, Puritan expositors, antiquarian investigations, pietistic expositions, and so on.

The scope of the *Beiträge* reception histories from the 1980s described below narrows even more, attesting perhaps to an ever-increasing sense of the local and particular conditions under which biblical exegesis occurs. Kenneth Hagan’s study of 16<sup>th</sup> century commentaries on the *Book*

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<sup>47</sup> Bruce Demarest, *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1-10 from the Reformation to the Present*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 19 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976), ix.

<sup>48</sup> Rowan A. Greer, *The Captain of Our Salvation: A Study in the Patristic Exegesis of Hebrews*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 15 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1973).

<sup>49</sup> Hans Gunther Klemm, *Das Gleichnis vom Barmherzigen Samariter: Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert*, *Beiträge Zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testamenet*, 6 (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1973).

<sup>50</sup> Bruce Demarest’s *A History of Interpretation of Hebrews 7,1-10 from the Reformation to the Present*, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 19 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1976).

of *Hebrews* covers just 80 years (from 1516-1598).<sup>51</sup> While it confronts the rather large and enduring question of the relationship between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, it adopts a catena format. Worthy of note is Hagan's focus on the *argumenta* or introductions to the commentaries as reactions to the theological provocations inherent in *Hebrews* itself, including how it treats the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. He presents the exegetical *argumentum* as a means to "get immediately at the commentator's view(s) of this perennial issue,"<sup>52</sup> as well as his related concerns about Pauline authorship. Beginning with Erasmus, who raised the authorship question seriously, Hagan moves through the likes of Luther, Oecolampadius, and Zwingli, as well as Catholic commentators, such as Cajetan and Contarini. Hagan is interesting in his resistance to the idea that theological or denominational differences, during a period of violent theological and denominational upheaval, might have determined the positions of these commentators on *Hebrews*. He argues that "the control of the text" trumped such contextual determinants: "Interpretations differ. Polemics enter in. But in large areas, e.g. authorship, authority of the epistle, Christology, even soteriology, Old Testament hermeneutic, interpretations are not along confessional lines."<sup>53</sup> He finds, for instance, that the Roman Catholic Contarini is the exegete who emphasizes faith most.

If Hagan asserted "the control of the text" in 1981, by 1983 David Brady was moving away from it. In his *Contribution of British Writers between 1560 and 1830 to the Interpretation of Revelation 13.16-18 (The Number of the Beast): A Study in the History of Exegesis*,<sup>54</sup> Brady drew a sharp distinction between "historical exegesis" and "Biblical exegesis," declaring that he

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<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting from Erasmus to Bèze: 1516-1598*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese, 23 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981).

<sup>52</sup> Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting*, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Hagen, *Hebrews Commenting*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> David Brady, *The Contribution of British Writers between 1560 and 1830 to the Interpretation of Revelation 13.16-18 (The Number of the Beast): A Study in the History of Exegesis*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese, 27 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983).

would make “no attempt to establish a reasoned interpretation of the passage.” His was not an ecclesiastical, nor a theological history. It was simply “discussion of the [exegetical] material... The exegesis rather than the theological superstructure is at the centre of the study.”<sup>55</sup> Beginning in 1560 with the Geneva Bible marginalia, Brady narrated the shift from historicist to preterist exegesis of the *Revelation* passage, tracing, along the way, antipapal readings, numerological fascinations, realized eschatology and idealist/spiritualist interpretations. While he moved away from the semantic text towards its exegesis, he did not ask *why* different readings became *popular* at different times. That is, he remained focused on the exegete and historical determinants, rather than on any receiving audience or readership.

#### **1.1.4 Then and Now**

The earlier histories discussed above are clearly not as monochromatically “theological” as they often appear to be in current scholarship. They demonstrate awareness of the calculated pursuit of a Rule of Faith or “canon” of exegetical traditions, the suppression of dissenting texts, the social, cultural, and religious functions of biblical exegesis, the exegetical imposition of religious conviction and commitment, the theological and doctrinal diversity of the early church, the impossibility of establishing one rule of faith from the testimonies of the late Antique period, the constraints of literary forms and conventions, the institutional complicity of patristic exegesis, the ideal of objective historical inquiry, clear acknowledgement of the historical particularity and situated nature of biblical interpretations, and a sense of the impact of biblical exegesis on “the life of the Church,” if not beyond. Here is a sophistication of cultural and

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<sup>55</sup> Brady, *Interpretation of Revelation 13.16-18*, 1.



institutional critique that should be recognized, particularly since it lies directly behind and within what is being done today. Sustained inquiry into the social, cultural, and religious *functions* of biblical interpretations is not absent, as all of the examples above demonstrate.

It is, instead, the normative role of Biblical interpretation and its effects that goes unchallenged by them. The older exegeses embraced the “applied” side of biblical interpretation, understood as Christian edification, as “a series of ecclesial messages”<sup>56</sup> to be embodied, and not as reader-oriented historical criticism, effective history, or “the hermeneutics of consequences.” And this view is still extant, as one recent quirky reception history of the Gospel of Matthew illustrates, summing up biblical exegesis appreciatively as “not only a passive field for academic investigation but also an active and creative force in the lives of individuals, in their religious communities, and in the events of history.”<sup>57</sup> In contrast with the earlier histories, the critique of this “active and creative force” within the most interesting current reception histories involves strong engagement with 1) the aesthetics of reading (a domain that continues to share significant affinities with more traditional existentialist hermeneutics) and 2) the institutional and political ramifications and socio-historical functions of biblical interpretation.

Consider, for instance, Yvonne Sherwood’s *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (2000). It is representative of a particularly progressive brand of reception history. Sherwood dispenses by page 2 with “the pure and naked original state” of the biblical texts, in favor of the “agglutinative” knowledge and meanings that emerge out of endless recombinations of old and new interpretations of the text, recombinations which

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<sup>56</sup> The phrase comes from Mark Elliot’s wry commentary on the ecclesiological subtext of the effective history of Ulrich Luz in Mark W. Elliott, “Effective-History and the Hermeneutics of Ulrich Luz,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33:2, 161-173 (171).

<sup>57</sup> Howard Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), viii.

she illustrates with relish through a mix of both “loose cultural surplus and proper scholarly activity.”<sup>58</sup> Dividing her book into three sections, Sherwood presents first “Mainstream” Christian and scholarly treatments of Jonah; secondly, the “Backwaters and Underbellies,” that is, readings that resist containment within scholarly tables and paradigms;<sup>59</sup> and, thirdly, she “regurgitates” Jonah, offering her own reading of the text, but not without revealing her theoretical assumptions or “postmodern creed.”<sup>60</sup>

In Sherwood, we see precisely the emphasis on the aesthetics of reading and the socio-historical functions of biblical interpretation that distinguish the best of current reception histories from their predecessors. At the end of her first section, she “takes stock” of the mainstream tradition, advocating a New Historical understanding of exegesis<sup>61</sup>, not just as “a chronicle of the past,” but as “a pragmatic weapon for explaining the present and controlling the future”<sup>62</sup> as well. Even within the first section, this focus on how the Bible is caught within broader networks of power relations is evident in her development of the ideological dimensions of traditional readings of Jonah, for instance, as typological twin of Jesus or as cypher for Jewish envy, jealousy, carnality, and particularism. Finally, Sherwood describes her own approach to “reading” the Bible, acknowledging current and ever-contested critical claims about the relative importance of author, text, context, and reader. She ascribes broadly to the deemphasizing of

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<sup>58</sup> Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p2-5.

<sup>59</sup> Sherwood, *Biblical Text*, 90.

<sup>60</sup> Sherwood, *Biblical Text*, p211-13.

<sup>61</sup> The New Historicism arose during the 1980s. The “New Historians” were among the first to argue that historical texts are not self-contained art forms, but rather local and particular historical voices within a contentious and heterogenous “context.” They also emphasized the inability of historians to reconstruct history objectively or in overview, but rather asserted the necessarily subjective, historically-determined nature of all history-writing. For this reason, Sherwood quotes Veesper’s view that New Historicism is a weapon that exposes the social functions of texts, past, present, and future.

<sup>62</sup> Sherwood, *Biblical Text*, 53. Sherwood is here citing H. Aram Veesper’s *The New Historicism Reader* (London: Routledge, 1984), 11.

author and intention, the contextualizing of reader, and the recognition of “personal ‘reading neuroses’ and ticks and twitches of the *Zeitgeist*” in any exegesis, including her own.<sup>63</sup>

In the field of New Testament Studies, consider Rachel Nicholl’s *Walking on Water: Reading Matthew 14:22-33 in the Light of Its Wirkungsgeschichte*.<sup>64</sup> Nicholl’s book is typical of a more mainstream New Testament appropriation of the aesthetics of reading. Nicholls favors the reception aesthetics of Hans-George Gadamer over reception *history* per se. Nicholls’ theory and method, based squarely within Gadamerian phenomenology, advocates for the exegete’s “subtle negotiation” of texts and their “effects” (“effects” being understood as traditional, as well as more broadly cultural, accretions).<sup>65</sup> Her approach, like Sherwood’s, is additive (“agglutinative”) and participatory, in line with Gadamer’s recuperation of “prejudice” in reading: “Since one cannot be detached, perhaps one should try to be attached in a number of different ways.”<sup>66</sup> In the encounter between reader, text, and the series of prior historical encounters, shifting perceptions, and connections that have come before, Nicholls (via Gadamer) sees a kind of consciousness-raising endeavor. The reader confronting his or her own assumptions and prejudices in the encounter with a foreign, unfamiliar past, becomes conscious of them and can see the past (historical text) more clearly too. This is what *Horizontverschmelzung* really is, not a fusion in terms of identity, but of difference.

Nicholls goes on to offer a traditional historical-critical examination of the Matthean pericope, then a literary-critical examination, and finally juxtaposes these with “clusters” of effects, viz. several nineteenth-century theological texts in one chapter (by period and genre) and

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<sup>63</sup> Sherwood, *Biblical Text*, 212-13.

<sup>64</sup> Rachel Nicholls, *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt. 14-22-33 in the Light of Its Wirkungsgeschichte* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008).

<sup>65</sup> Nicholls, *Walking*, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Nicholls, *Walking*, 17.

a handful of works of art or “visual effects in another (by medium alone). She concludes her study, arguing for the reconciliation of *Wirkungsgeschichte* with more traditional exegetical approaches, advocating for *Wirkungsgeschichte*’s “precautionary and remedial value for any interpreter working in any method.”<sup>67</sup> Here it appears that Nicholls’ goal is a historically-informed, broadly communal remediated interpretation of the passage, even while she argues against the privileging of any particular “stage” of the text’s influence. Nicholl’s conciliatory “unleashing” of *Wirkungsgeschichte* within Biblical Studies entails, in effect, its incorporation into a traditional exegetical process. This incorporation is understood as “enriching interpretation with additional insights and fruitfully alerting us to the narrowness of the vision of our own time and place.”<sup>68</sup> The text, for Nicholls, is thus immeasurably enlarged, not diminished or elided.

With these two examples, I have tried to illustrate not only a newly-framed focus on the aesthetics (or phenomenology) of reading and the institutional, political and socio-historical functions and effects of biblical interpretation. I have also highlighted the persistence of differences amongst reception historians in their fundamental assumptions about texts, i.e., the authority and status given to the Biblical text. For Sherwood, the “pure and naked” semantic text is less important than its exegetical “afterlife.” For Nicholls, an “enriched” text emerges out of the fusing of a historical palimpsest of readings. Yet, both of these reception histories understand biblical interpretations as formative, often normative, “scripts,” active agents in social practical consciousness, elements in the material social process, and products and agents in particular historical spaces.

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<sup>67</sup> Nicholls, *Walking*, p191-2.

<sup>68</sup> Nicholls, *Walking*, 201.

I have also tried to illustrate that older histories of interpretation are not oblivious to the social logic<sup>69</sup> of biblical interpretations. They are, instead, the often overbearing and opinionated parents (almost always fathers) of current reception histories and their methods. Understanding their continued influence upon Biblical critics today is best achieved by studying them more carefully, not least because their interested, ideological, theological, subjective motivations corroborate current theorizing about the situated nature of Biblical exegesis. After all, most theoretically-minded reception historians today claim only a greater awareness of their own “reading neuroses.”

The best reception histories today have moved beyond the recuperation of long-lost readings and the rectification of exegetical amnesia. By the same token, neither do they practice a kind of reductive, functionalist cultural travel log. Mapping the genealogies of biblical interpretations, their relationship to their own time and place, and the proliferation of additional “effects” of their texts over two millennia, exposes biblical exegesis, interpretation and reception as socially, politically, and ideologically ambitious, locally situated, interested, and rhetorically coercive. But Daillé could have and did point this out. The priority granted, or denied, to the semantic (Biblical) text persists as both a theoretical and, for some, a theological issue. Yet, closer scrutiny of the case studies above reveals a more nuanced transmission of biblical interpretation and reception, one that exceeds a subjective theology- objective (cultural) history distinction. The critical acuity and evolving methods of the older histories remain integral to current reception history, even as the older uncritical leveraging of the normative power of

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<sup>69</sup> This term is usefully introduced and applied by Elizabeth Clark in her exploration of accounts of fourth- and fifth-century women ascetics; Clark defines “social logic” in texts as the “combined effect of [their] social and formal concerns” in “The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the ‘Linguistic Turn,’” *Church History* 67 (1999), p1-31 (13). Clark borrows the larger concept and its post-structuralist rationale from Gabrielle Spiegel's essay, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): p59-86.

authoritative interpretation is ostensibly disavowed. It is this power of authoritative exegesis to mandate ideal religious identities and behaviors that underlie the analyses in this study.

### **1.1.5 THEORY OF RECEPTION IN THIS RECEPTION HISTORY**

This reception history is built upon the historical contextualization and textual analysis of a broad selection of responses to Matt 15:21-28. It understands the historical readings that it presents as serving ecclesiastical, political, and social functions, rather than as esoteric explorations of theological truths. Most of the readings of Matt 15:21-28 analyzed in the following chapters may be characterized as prescriptions, achieved in alternatively didactic, minatory, and hortatory registers. Analyzing how they prescribe, teach, delimit, and encourage involves inquiry into the cultural environments that produced and required them, environments constituted by religious, social, and political practices, and cultural forms, representations, and discourses in each historical period.<sup>70</sup> This structure and method will help make more visible both continuities and ruptures in the historical meanings assigned to the Canaanite woman and, through her, to Christian categories of identity, such as faith, sin, cultural inheritance, exclusive salvation, prayer, and belief.

The close readings within this reception history rely on theoretical premises from the history of reading, reception theory, and feminist analyses of subject- or identity-formation. These theoretical frames raise critical questions about historical depictions of ideal and/or anathematized religious identities within interpretations of the Canaanite woman, and about their

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<sup>70</sup> Within the field of the history of reading, the French reading historian, Roger Chartier, has described the interplay between such practices, cultural forms, and discourses as “interconnected forms of logic” (Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*. Transl. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 1).

persistence or decline at different times. Further, some of these questions are not at all new within New Testament Studies, but rather are newly framed: Who is the implied audience, the model reader? What is the probable or stated venue for reading or hearing the texts? What claims are made and what is contested about interpretation in the texts? At what points does interpretation become pedagogy or paranesis? What exactly do the texts impose? What of tradition or cultural discourse is appropriated within the texts and how? How do the material form or experience of the texts affect their messages and meanings (spoken sermon, studied catechesis, personal letter held in the hand, printed pamphlet, personal prayer manual, text embodied as drama on the stage, webpage on a computer screen)? What is promoted as exemplary, normative, obligatory, and what sorts of identification are encouraged? What are the outcomes of identification (purgation, imitation, action)? What is the social function of the texts?

These questions assume that exegesis and its reception are social practices in which the processes of interpretation and reception become, in Roger Chartier's terms, a dialectic of imposition and appropriation. Chartier's terms are transactional; they imply an active exchange, indeed, a struggle between texts and readers and their relative roles in meaning-making. In the light of Chartier's dialectic, historical topicalities become the currency within situated, circulated and appropriated transactions that promote particular beliefs and doctrine, but also compulsory codes of conduct. They are "situated within the places and milieus of their elaboration" and "the forms of their circulation and appropriation."<sup>71</sup> This understanding of exegesis and reception informs my analyses of the contingency of biblical interpretation, its historical and cultural nature, and also the very concrete manner in which the reception of texts construct social and cultural ways of life, beliefs, and institutions.

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<sup>71</sup> Roger Chartier, *On the Edge*, 6.

I am thus not interested in “misreadings,” but rather interpretive function. That is, the primary theoretical question here is not the subjective projection of self or culture onto a historically or culturally removed text by exegetes, past or present. That is a question of semantics. Instead, the operative question is how and why interpreters have extracted values and ideals of behavior out of an originally elliptical text. These are questions related to the history and phenomenology of reading. They focus on what is imposed and appropriated in the act of *receiving* Matt 15:21-28.

From this vantage point, still more questions arise. What claims to universality do exegetical texts make? How does particularity and the quotidian enter into the texts and how are they valued? What is excluded or ignored in the interpretations? How married to objectivism, rationalism, or individualism are the texts? What role does the body and/or emotion play in the texts? How do representations of gender function in the texts?

Combining these old and new questions with sustained analysis of the prescriptive or paranetic function of exegetical texts in particular historical settings creates a history of biblical reception as social and political interventions, rather than as an evolution of textual meanings. This integration of the *hors-text* into the fundamental meaning of textual interpretations, this argument that the text’s meaning resides outside the text in history and social function, found early expression in the reception theories of Hans Robert Jauss, theories which underlie much of my approach.<sup>72</sup> Currently, within New Testament reception studies, it is more typically the dialogic model of Hans George Gadamer, Jauss’ teacher, which is preferred. As was evident in the discussion of Rachel Nicholl’s use of Gadamer above, this model allows for critical

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<sup>72</sup> Hans Robert Jauss was a German reception theorist and professor of medieval literature and history at the famous Konstanz School in Germany during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Konstanz School argued that literary critics turn their attention to the reader and reception of texts. The two most influential theorists at Konstanz were Jauss and Wolfgang Iser.



acknowledgement of the inevitability of historically determined expectations and prejudices (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*); at the same time, it maintains that these may nonetheless—through the “dialogue” that takes place between historical text, available cultural topoi, and reader—effect in the reader a new understanding of the ideal meaning of the text. Hence, Nicholls’ search for a palimpsest of readings and the newly-constructed *ideal* semantic text that it generates.

In contrast, I prefer Jauss’ approach which combines Gadamer’s phenomenological categories of horizon and dialogism, attention to the ways that new forms are created out of old, and exploration of the historical *effects* of the text-reader event. He pursued all of these in the interest of demonstrating the intrinsically formative nature of literary texts. He rejected notions of art as “autonomous” or timeless, and emphasized instead the historical effects of art in lived praxis. He rejected the naïve reflectionism of Marxism, but kept its sense of the historicity of art.<sup>73</sup> As a medievalist, Jauss emphasized that art was once “pre-autonomous” and held communally-embedded social functions. The medieval liturgies, miracle and mystery plays, and periods of carnival that he studied were participatory in nature. They entailed social training, freedom to adopt unusual roles and identities, and a variety of types of identification that produced imitation, moral aspiration, catharsis, and even satirical distancing.

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Jauss’ seminal 1967 lecture, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft* (“Literary History as a Provocation to Literary Theory”), in which he combined the best of Marxist historicism with Russian Formalist theories of how new forms are created out of old ones through a process of “defamiliarization.” He also incorporated Prague structuralist understandings of the text-reader event, particularly Roman Ingarden’s notion of *konkretisation*, and his teacher Hans-George Gadamer’s phenomenological categories of horizon and dialogism. Jauss advocated for the study of the *terminus ad quem*, the reader. (Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, “Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft,” *Konstanzer Universitätsreden* 3 (1967)).

Of most use to this dissertation is Jauss' bi-directional and emphatically historical reformulation of Gadamer's dialogic model of reception history. Anthony Thiselton succinctly describes his contribution as follows:

Changing situations make their impact or effect on successive readings and rereadings of texts. These may include texts of Scripture, doctrine, or literature. Conversely, successive rereadings of texts serve to reshape readers' horizons of expectations, with the result that the impact of texts has an effect upon situations. The history of effects is two-sided or bi-directional....Texts have a formative influence upon readers and society; but changing situations also have effects on how texts are read.<sup>74</sup>

Jauss's seven theses in his "Literary History as a Provocation to Literary Theory" accounted for disruptions and turns in the reception of texts. He explained these as interruptions of historically- and textually-conditioned horizons of expectations. The process of defamiliarization, provocation, and reshaping of readers' expectations results in ever-changing understandings and "lived praxis." Texts are formed by and formative of social life. If Jauss was later criticized by Gadamer for tying hermeneutics to a primary aesthetic experience, making "meaning" more dependent on incidentals like historically-conditioned expectations and personal vision and less on the text itself, Jauss countered by prioritizing the formative function of texts and the importance of aesthetic experience, not as "pure perception or abstracted pleasure," but as engagement with tradition, historical understanding, and transformation of reader and text.<sup>75</sup> This should be seen as part and parcel of Jauss' "hermeneutics of alterity," whereby the experience of alienation or defamiliarization from the text provokes transformation in the reader.

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<sup>74</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 98-99.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 166-69.

In this, Jauss relies upon Gadamerian hopes for the self-correcting possibilities of interpretation and of the possibility of rhetoric “made just by dialectic.”<sup>76</sup>

In the analyses of readings of Matt 15:21-28 here below in chapters 2-6, Jauss’ emphases on the socially-formative function of texts and the bi-directional understanding he describes of the simultaneous extra-textual and textual shaping of readers’ (horizons of) expectations dovetails with more recent language and theory that describes historical reading processes. In his reception history of the *Kuzari* of Halevi, Adam Shear uses the terms *image*, *use*, and *influence* to capture “how individuals and communities read a particular book.”<sup>77</sup> He suggests that we think in terms of each text’s *image* or status, that is, the way in which it appears to have been perceived before it was read, for example, how authoritative it was. He advises considering each text’s *use*, how it was deployed “to argue for a particular cultural agenda or philosophical position;”<sup>78</sup> and logically, then, he proposes identifying each text’s *influence*, the ways that it has discernibly shaped the thinking of subsequent interpreters and their texts. Shear’s terms of analysis are useful to this cross-temporal, cross-cultural discussion of the relationship between changing representations of the Canaanite woman and evolving Christian identities. His book aims, in a very similar way, “to examine the role of the book [the *Kuzari* of Halevi] in the formation of certain expressions of Jewish cultural and religious identity before the twentieth century.”<sup>79</sup>

Also useful is Moshe Halbertal’s distinction between *normative* and *formative* texts, particularly in distinguishing between references to the Canaanite woman within prescriptive

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<sup>76</sup> This useful formulation of “rhetoric made just by dialectic” comes out of Susan E. Shapiro’s comparison of the theories of Jurgen Habermas and Gadamer in, “Rhetoric as Ideology Critique: The Gadamer-Habermas Debate Reinvented,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 57:1 (Spring, 1994), 123-150 (137).

<sup>77</sup> Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13.

<sup>78</sup> Shear, *Kuzari*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Shear, *Kuzari*, vii.

authoritative interpretations and how she is used in spiritual guides, devotional literature and liturgical texts. The authority and influence of *normative* texts, according to Halbertal, entail behavioral compliance, outright enactment: “Texts form a normative canon; they are obeyed and followed, as, for example, are Scriptures and legal codes.”<sup>80</sup> Arguably, the uses of the Canaanite woman in early polemical literature, anti-heretical literature, commentaries and sermons fall into this category. While they are not formally “legal codes,” the intensity of early Christian group-definition in these texts and their fixation on compelling and delimiting particular beliefs and lifestyles make clear that they were not intended as “food for thought” or steps in a process of group discernment. They define parameters and prescriptions for living.

The role of the *formative* canon on the other hand is to teach and transmit a common language: “Such texts are not followed in the strict sense but taught, read, transmitted, and interpreted... they provide a society or a profession with a shared vocabulary.”<sup>81</sup> Many of the spiritual guides and devotional and liturgical materials in the second half of the dissertation function in this way. Thus, Halbertal’s categories of authoritative canons are relevant in defining the interpretations in this study as specific types of transactions which attempt to evoke specific effects:

Texts can therefore exert influence in many realms: they are followed and obeyed, studied and read; they are imitated and revered; and they set a standard and bestow value. They control action, thought, and creativity.<sup>82</sup>

Enriching substantially these explanations of texts’ formative power over social identity and conduct are feminist theories of subjectivity and subject-formation, which also provide conceptual handles for the analyses below, if not always explicitly. Of particular salience are 1)

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<sup>80</sup> Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>81</sup> Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 3.

<sup>82</sup> Halbertal, *People of the Book*, 4.

feminist accounts of the long-standing default masculine gendering of human subjectivity (sometimes referred to as “the sovereign male subject” or “androcentrism”), 2) the use of women as cyphers of male experience and 3) the bedrock feminist concept of socially *constructed* subjectivity, which grew inexorably out of the emergence of feminism itself and its assertions, through its very existence, that there are multiple ways of knowing (of which male knowing remains only one) and that all are situated and partial. Indeed, it is useful to recall that feminist historians were among the first to redefine key social historical concepts such as “experience,” “agency,” “discourse,” and “identity”<sup>83</sup> and that the now general “crisis of rationality,” or “crisis of modernity,” emerged simultaneously with feminist theory. As Rosi Braidotti has epitomized the relationship, women’s questions about “sexuation and embodiment of the subject are part and parcel of the non-Cartesianism of our era.”<sup>84</sup>

Within feminist Biblical Studies, there is a general tension between positivism and constructivism, between the desire to recuperate evidence in texts (including archeological engravings, papyri, inscriptions, numismatic evidence, laws) of real historical women and their social worlds on the one hand,<sup>85</sup> and the need to acknowledge the autonomy of literary “worlds,” that is, gendered literary devices, on the other.<sup>86</sup> My dissertation focuses exclusively on the latter emphasis.

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Kathleen Canning, “Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience,” *Signs* 19:2 (Winter, 1994), 368-404

<sup>84</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (transl., Elizabeth Guild; New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1991), 8. Later in the book, Braidotti argues more explicitly that “the field of feminist epistemology is not in service to the larger crisis of the subject”: “women certainly have not developed their critique of subjectivity so as to help philosophy out of its crisis...” (Braidotti, *Patterns*, 171).

<sup>85</sup> Cf., for instance, Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Brown Judaic Studies, 1982).

<sup>86</sup> Susan Marks maps out how these critical goals have played out in feminist research in her essay, “Women in Early Judaism: Twenty-five Years of Research and Reenvisioning,” *Currents in Biblical Research*, 6:2 (2008): passim.

Two examples will be helpful. Consider the now-standard analysis of the use-value of women in texts as figures of male subjectivity, such as Shelly Matthews's elaboration and theorizing of the ancient practice of "using women to think with" in her 2001 essay, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography."<sup>87</sup> This particular aspect of feminist critique – the critique of a metaphysical cannibalism which uses women to buttress and sustain "the symbolic institution that is the male ego"<sup>88</sup>—is particularly relevant to feminist criticism of ancient Jewish and Christian texts. For instance, Elizabeth Clark similarly describes the "social logic" of fourth- and fifth-century lives of women ascetics<sup>89</sup> and how the combined effect of their "social and formal concerns"—"has less to do with 'real women' than with an elaboration of theological points that troubled their authors."<sup>90</sup>

The collapse of the female figure into a trope for the male subject, his struggles and ideals, is apparent in depictions of exemplary women, from Diotima in the *Symposium* to Macrina in Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita* and *De anima et resurrectione*.<sup>91</sup> It also characterizes readings of the

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<sup>87</sup> Matthews, Shelly, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17 (2001), 39-55. Matthews acknowledges that she has borrowed the phrase "using women to think with" from Peter Brown's analysis of women's role in the apocryphal acts in his 1988 *The Body and Society*: "Continent women play a central role in the Apocryphal Acts. Yet these narratives should not be read as evidence for the actual role of women in Christianity. Rather, they reflect the manner in which Christian males of that period partook in the deeply ingrained tendency of all men in the ancient world, to use women 'to think with.' There is no doubt that women played an important role in the imaginative economy of the Church. Their presence condensed the deep preoccupations of male Christians with their own relations with the 'world,' with the ever present reality of a tainted and seductive pagan society that pressed up against the doors of their houses and abutted the closed spaces of their new meeting places. Throughout this period, Christian men used women 'to think with' in order to verbalize their own nagging concern with the stance that the Church should take to the world" (*The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 153.

<sup>88</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (transl., Elizabeth Guild; New York: Routledge, 1991), 156.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn,'" *Church History* 67 (1999), 1-31.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Clark, "The Lady Vanishes," 24.

<sup>91</sup> Clark cites David Halperin's reading of Plato's Diotima as "an 'inversed alter ego' of the male protagonist": "She is not a true female 'Other' to the male philosopher, but 'a masked version of the same,' what Julia Kristeva calls a 'pseudo-Other.'" Elizabeth Clark, "The Lady Vanishes," 27, citing Halperin, "Why is Diotima a Woman?" in Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 113-151.

Canaanite woman, not only in ancient commentaries and amongst the church fathers, but up to and through 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century commentaries. The Canaanite woman is leveraged within interpretations of the passage as universal exemplum, allegorical personification of the human soul, spiritual wrestler, human sinner. She is also used typologically, as a foreshadowing of the Gentile mission and the Gentile church.

One may certainly argue that the allegorical or typological use-value of characters in the New Testament is an equal-opportunity practice, pointing, for instance, to the rich young man of Mark 10:17/Matt 19:16 or the good Samaritan of Luke 10:25 as easily as to the Canaanite woman or the woman with the alabaster jar of Mark 14:3/Matt 26:7. Feminist analyses of the *effects* of using Others “to think with,” clarify that Jesus’ encounters with such outsiders in the gospels function to create a normative insider subject-position (usually male), or more interestingly to reverse assumptions about insiders and outsiders. Thus, the allegorizing of the Canaanite woman serves repeatedly to construct warnings, models, and directives for consumption by Christian audiences. This is all the more pronounced as the substance of those models and directives shifts over time and place.

In the history of interpretation of Matt 15:21-28, the norms and/or reversals that are identified in the passage accrue new and remarkably diverse historical topicalities over time, revealing the particular and local nature of all historical readings of the story of the Canaanite woman at the same time that they demonstrate the enduring function of exegesis as paranesis. It will soon become clear that the strategic assignment of typological, allegorical, or corporate representation to actors in the gospel narratives has played a starring role in that drama. In order to present how exactly this has been accomplished, I combine traditional questions about interpretation and reception, questions about the reading process and its link to religious identity-

formation, and feminist questions about the deeply-gendered nature of subjectivity, individualism, and traditional modes of interpretation.

## 1.2 TECHNOLOGIES OF THE CHRISTIAN SELF: ANATHEMA, EXEMPLUM, AND IDENTITY<sup>92</sup>

The meanings assigned to Matthew 15:21-28, however diversely packaged over time, invariably derive from the categories of identity that it is understood to represent, categories of ethnicity, religion, class and gender. At the level of content, the readings demonstrate a striking variety in the identities and ideals that they recommend, as well as in the historical, cultural and discursive contexts upon which they are contingent. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century forward, interpretations of the Canaanite woman's story are preoccupied with cult, proselytism, conversion, and salvation. They are fixated upon early and evolving Jewish-Christian relations. They debate the fundamental components of religious identity—peoplehood, election, covenant, but also faith and law-observance. These are treated not just through the lenses of ethnicity or theology, but also in

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<sup>92</sup> With the title of this section, I acknowledge the influence of Michel Foucault's work on this dissertation, specifically, his work on what he calls "technologies of the self." In a 1982 lecture at the University of Vermont, Foucault identified four types of "technologies of the self" that define historical "selves," subjects, or identities. I have kept three of these in mind as I have written this study: "technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; and technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others [such as the examination of conscience or public confession] a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." Elsewhere, Foucault speaks of just two types: technologies of domination and technologies of the self. In any case, the interaction of these cultural "technologies" sheds light not just on the role of prohibitions and ideals in constructing normative identities, but on the way in which thoughts, desires, and self-knowledge are harnessed to the pursuit of a normative self. Or, as Foucault puts it: "How has the subject been compelled to decipher himself in regard to what is forbidden?" (L. H. Martin, et al, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988, 16-18).



terms of local pious practices, traditional duties and piety towards gods, ancestors, parents, and community. This constellation of identity markers persists and haunts even the most recent interpretations of Matt 15:21-28, though the nature of religious observances, interfaith relations, and prescribed conducts have obviously changed over time.

Thus, the chapters below focus on *how* changing norms of Christian identities have been constructed through the mechanics of textual prescriptions and transactional literary devices like allegory, typology, and intertextuality. For instance, the readings in the dissertation illustrate how allegory and typology, built upon the linking of authoritative intertexts, create new associations, hence new meanings, which are often revisionary or “counter” readings of the materials which they purport to explicate. The transcendence of history at the heart of allegorical signification repeatedly asserts itself in the texts. It makes possible the translation of each text’s particular cultural touchstones into purportedly universal Christian ideals. That is to say, these exegetical practices allowed for a consistent decontextualizing of religious texts and thence for their cultural appropriation and paraneitic application to new ends.

In a similar way, interpretations of the passage utilize dramatic devices. In the fourth century, Chrysostom, initiating what would become over the ensuing centuries an exegetical love affair with direct discourse, inserts himself into the biblical scenario, interpolating his two cents in between the words of Jesus and the Canaanite woman as they argue! Equally dramatic is the way in which obedience is exacted through catechetical explications, within forms that require audience response (hymns and talking back during sermons). Similarly, imitation is inspired through hagiographic exempla.

These technologies of Christian identities are versatile and potent, as the chapters below demonstrate. At the same time, I sift the texts for their historical understandings of identities,

e.g., ethnic categories such as “Jew” or “Canaanite;” gendered categories such as feminized understandings of the human soul and human sinfulness; doctrinal categories such as “heretic” or “sinful misreading;” and changing appraisals of outsiders and protest. The range of meanings of such categories, in the past and as they are transmitted to the present, is difficult to account for fully. They are often presented in the historical sources as definitive or fixed, even as they are leveraged in fluid and expedient ways. Furthermore, they are often conflated in scholarly analyses with their current constructions—race, class, gender, religion. Old definitions and assumptions mutate, adapting to new cultural contexts, even while retaining important core understandings.

Ancient biblical exegetes described group affiliations using terms such as *genos*, *ethnos*, *laos*, signifying primarily peoples, cults, and nations, yet the registers upon which these sound as they move within the interpretive tradition are various. Religious Studies scholar Paula Fredriksen has vividly described the dynamism of ancient ethnic and religious practices. Focusing on “the lived human context of ancient civic life,” she has studied the relationship of textual rhetoric to material social reality and offered a nuanced description of ancient “identity” and its constituent parts: cult, ethnos, nationality, kinship, religious practices, and cultural traditions.<sup>93</sup> She argues that first-century non-Christian Greeks and Romans were just as invested in their distinctive identities as their Jewish or Jewish-Christian contemporaries and that this is demonstrated in a large body of literature in which they express their xenophobia, civic loyalty, and patriotic pride. Yet, at the same time, mutual engagement and even mutual worship occurred, at times producing inter-group affinities. Some Jews went to the Roman festivals.

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<sup>93</sup> Paula Fredriksen, “‘What Parting of the Ways?’ Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient Mediterranean City,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (eds. A. H. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen: Mohr, 2003), *passim*.

Some Pagans went to synagogues, respectful of the antiquity of the Jewish faith. John Gager has written of a depth of sympathy with Judaism amongst some Roman aristocrats, from cursory references in Horace and Ovid to longer accounts in Nicolaus and Strabo.<sup>94</sup> Gager cites Suetonius' report of the emperor, Augustus' comment that "not even a Jew, my dear Tiberius, observes the Sabbath fast as faithfully as I did today."<sup>95</sup> Both the impulse towards polemic and differentiation and gestures towards mutual engagement resurface in historical readings of Matt 15:21-28, far beyond the earliest interpretations.

In a similar way, Stephanie Cobb has explored ancient understandings of gender and sex by focusing on early Christian martyr texts and the legacy they leave behind for subsequent Christian exegesis.<sup>96</sup> She describes the assumption within these texts that anatomy and character are intricately interwoven, always interdependent and inseparable; she explains that the martyrologies often evoke a kind of "one-sex" model, according to which differences between men and women are differences of degree, not kind.<sup>97</sup> Gendered adjectives, such as "male" or "womanly," describe types of individuals, not anatomies. Clearly, the theoretical distinction between biological sex and cultural gender at the heart of modern scholarly discussions is completely at odds with such ancient understandings. It is in this context that Polycarp is exhorted by a voice from heaven during his trial to "be a man;"<sup>98</sup> that Perpetua realizes when she takes off her clothes before battle that she "has become a man;"<sup>99</sup> and that Pliny the Elder repeats popular stories about women who engaged in masculine activities (running too fast, jumping

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<sup>94</sup> John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 75.

<sup>95</sup> Gager, *Origins*, 75, citing Suetonius, *Augustus*, 76.

<sup>96</sup> Cobb, L. Stephanie, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>97</sup> Cobb, *Dying*, 25.

<sup>98</sup> Cobb, *Dying*, 24, citing *Mart. Pol.*, 9.1: Ἴσχυε, Πολύκαρπε, καὶ ἀνδρίζου ("Be strong, Polycarp, and be a man").

<sup>99</sup> Cobb, *Dying*, 24, citing *Pass. Perp.*, 10.7.

over a fence) who literally became men, that is to say, their genitalia descended!<sup>100</sup> Cobb reads such passages as evidence that “at one time the dominant discourse construed the male and female bodies as hierarchically, vertically, ordered versions of one sex and at another time as horizontally ordered opposites, as incommensurable.”<sup>101</sup> Cobb concludes that, “maleness is not an arrived-at state, but rather the goal of a lifelong quest that required self-control, wisdom, and virtue.”<sup>102</sup> Both men and women had to strive to be “men.” This fusion of gender, sex, and moral and spiritual status—of “anatomy and character”—runs straight through the interpretive tradition of Matt 15:21-28, achieved by means of such literary devices as personification, exemplification, hagiography, and hierarchical reversals.

Negotiations of the categories of peoplehood, cult, femininity, motherhood, as well as categories of disenfranchisement and exclusion, surface again and again in the interpretations below. The readings that most emphatically oppose such identity categories to one another are concentrated in Chapters 2 and 3; in Chapter 3 I have organized them by the current rubrics of race, class, and gender, in order to frame the disparities and continuities between historical understandings and our own. This is an emphasis that New Testament scholar Denise Buell has also adopted, most recently in *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*.<sup>103</sup> Buell chooses not to bracket historical understandings of group affiliations as distinct from current understandings of race. She argues that Christianity from the beginning defined conversion as a transformation of one’s ethnicity and a restoration of one’s true identity; hence, not a universal, a-racial identity, but a distinct Christian *ethnos* or *genos* through biologized

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<sup>100</sup> Cobb, *Dying*, 26, citing multiple examples from Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 114-148.

<sup>101</sup> Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Cobb, *Dying*, 28.

<sup>103</sup> Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race?: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, 5-33.

organic metaphors of peoplehood and kinship.<sup>104</sup> The modern concept of the Jews as a separate *race* may be a 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon, one which emerged out of the “scientific” construction of a variety of biological and anthropological typologies, scientific racism, and eugenics, but historical categories of peoplehood, cult, gender, and entitlement have served equally complex functions for centuries. There is no dearth of historical distinctions to be made based on evolving cultural logics of identity, as will become apparent in the biblical interpretations in this study.

### 1.3 ORGANIZATION OF READINGS

The chapters are organized to highlight the prescriptive significance of the Canaanite woman for Christian identity at different moments, within the two exegetical trajectories mentioned above. Those readings that rely on anathema tend to present the pericope as a historical encounter that dictates subsequent relationships between a variety of groups. Those that use the passage as an exemplum describe the encounter as portrait of a larger spiritual process that models specific spiritual imperatives and compels active spiritual development.

Chapter 2, “*Rapitur Christus: Becoming Christians*,” describes early interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 written between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. These consist primarily of exegetical commentaries, and anti-Jewish and anti-heretical polemic in which exegetes turned to Gospel stories for precedents and models. To that end, they attributed to the stories, regardless of generic form, a kind of catechetical authority. Building on both Jewish and Greco-Roman exegetical practices, each interpretation sought to edify not only intellectually, but morally, thereby

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<sup>104</sup> Buell, *Making Christians*, 101. Note also two second-century examples: Clement of Alexandria describing Christians “gathered into the one race [*genos*] of the saved people” (*Misc.*, 6.42.2) and Polycarp who, as he was being martyred, described Christians as “the race of the righteous” (*Mart.Pol.*, 14.1).

defining, enforcing, and maintaining some of the earliest authoritative Christian ideals of belief and behavior. Whether “academic” interpretations of the Canaanite woman found in formal exegetical texts, or boundary-setting polemics, or homiletic exhortations and sermons,<sup>105</sup> they effected—and still effect—a potent blend of catechesis and paranesis.

Within these texts, the Canaanite woman appears variously as a convert to Jewish (law-observant) Christianity; an exemplary pagan who interprets Jesus’ words correctly and submits to his teachings, one who is held up in positive contrast to Gnostic and Marcionite modes of exegesis; and a portrait of the human soul ascending in knowledge and understanding towards God, unlike less edified souls. In some cases, historical-typological argument and intertextuality are used to define the pericope as a definitive historical nexus that determines the fate of a variety of groups and peoples, indeed, as a turning point in salvation history. In other cases, spiritual allegory describes a transhistorical and universal spiritual status and the possibility and prerequisites for spiritual evolution, extrapolating generic instruction out of specific illustration. Anti-Jewish and anti-heretical polemic and the scriptural ratification of the election of the Gentiles underlie several of the readings, achieved through typological and allegorical argumentation. Homilies and sermons exhort and prescribe a variety of practical embodiments of the story’s intertextually-adapted message. Dramatic elaboration of the encounter is also

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<sup>105</sup> The categorization of interpretations in this chapter is dictated by the texts, their chronology, and their functions within their communities. They are, happily, confirmed in Frances M. Young’s reconfiguration of patristic exegesis, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82. She describes “the advent of scholarship” as a particular move within the formation of an alternative Christian body of classics and a new Christian *paideia*, and locates traces of Greco-Roman school methods and concerns not only in the early commentators, but in the earlier polemical texts as well. She also links commentary and homily as the principle vehicles of exegesis in the patristic period and today, noting that “the modern divorce between biblical exegesis and *praxis* would have been unthinkable in the days of the Fathers” (Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 4). Cf. also chapter 8 of Buell’s *Making Christians*, 119-130, in which she delineates ways in which second century Christians drew on non-Christian models of *paideia* to depict the process of becoming a Christian.

sometimes evident, heightening the sense of personal challenge and the hard-won nature of Christian virtue.

A seminal emphasis and urgency develops within these readings, fixated upon identifying those who meet the challenge that was faced by the Canaanite woman—that of understanding rightly and submitting to Jesus—and those that fail and go astray. Consequently, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 presented a story of failure and denunciation on the one hand and successful self-transformation on the other. These two types of readings served to delimit and elaborate definitions and representations of what it meant to be Christian and they have continued to construct Christian identities, mobilizing the text as a story of public conflict or private evolution, negotiating ever new religious and cultural oppositions and ideals.

Chapter 3, *Necessary Others in Matthew 15:21-28: Race, Class, and Gender*, analyzes later examples of denunciatory, conflictual readings which, from the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the present, continued to use the Canaanite woman's story to define Christian faithfulness over against "necessary others."<sup>106</sup> At stake has been the maintenance of authoritative, "orthodox" Christian identities. The selection of readings in this chapter is not comprehensive; it is rather, for comparative purposes, comprised of interpretations that construct "others" in new and different ways. This helps to accentuate the historical particularity and diverse uses of these constructions and to illustrate how interpretations of this sort do not promote static religious and cultural ideals, identities or even adversaries over time, even if they function similarly in advocating for them through anathema.

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<sup>106</sup> David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 8. The label is Dawson's. The logical necessity of constructed "others" within allegorical and typological interpretation has been discussed in the introduction. Inevitably, the very structure of allegory, of one thing meaning something else, requires comparison and contrast. This type of reading almost always involves *negative* contrast and, hence, *denunciation* of the "other."

Some of the readings in this chapter continue to construct Jews as “other” and as adversary, but within new historical and geographical contexts. At the same time, the list of “others” expands to include women, “masters,” and the poor. The readings are therefore organized by the types of “others” that they construct, according to contemporary categories of race, gender, and class for heuristic purposes. They appear in loose chronological order. Interpretations that emphasize the Canaanite woman’s gender are fewer, but are contextualized in greater detail within late medieval-early Renaissance religious drama, the Reformation *querelle des femmes*, 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical and renewal movements, 19<sup>th</sup> century discourses of domesticity, and 20<sup>th</sup> century blog sites. Only one instance of a class-oriented interpretation appears at the end of the chapter. It is an opinion piece that evokes the Canaanite woman’s story in debating the politics of the state, the family, the home, and Liberal welfare reforms in 1906 Britain. This reading also weaves the category of gender into its call for social and economic justice for the poor of its time. In all cases, normative Christian behavior and belief is contrasted with anathematized “others.”

Chapter 4, *Transforming Selves: Reversal, Μετάνοια, and Spiritual Ascent*, analyzes texts that use the example of the Canaanite woman and her encounter with Jesus to illustrate spiritual experiences, disciplines, and progress. These texts present Matt 15:21-28 primarily as the story of the spiritual transformation of a mother and not the miraculous healing of a daughter. The chapter begins with sermons, saints’ lives, spiritual teachings, and monastic rules written by Christian preachers, ascetics, monastics, and mystics from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. It then follows several of their themes into medieval discussions of the Canaanite woman. Many of the texts focus on the Gospel passage as a story of conversion, whether articulated in the language of *μετάνοια*, a change of mind, a turning back, or remorse. These readings are concerned with



defining how individuals may come close to, and be reconciled with, God. Their main strategy is to define a variety of soul-states, and to explore their relationship to religious practices. In this, they sometimes evoke another pivotal concern of early Christian identity, προκοπή, the progress or ascent of the soul. Matt 15:21-28 becomes a story about spiritual process, about understanding and optimizing the give-and-take or call-and-response that characterizes human encounters with God in these texts. Such a process is seen as implicit in the Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus and in the questions that their exchange raises. How can Christians interpret Jesus' words in order to apprehend their true meaning? How does God teach and how should human beings respond? Who understands rightly? Who is in favor with God as a result?

These questions are asked again, rehearsed, within the dramatic vignettes of hagiographic story-telling, the plaintive strains of first-person prayers, the teachings of 4<sup>th</sup> century desert asceticism, and the public ritual of medieval monastic disciplines. Established topoi of spiritual development—of the inadequacy of intellectual efforts alone, the need for obedience and submission, and the inability of the human soul to save itself—punctuate these readings of the Canaanite woman's argument with Jesus. The possibility of direct spiritual transformation that the Canaanite woman comes to exemplify is counterbalanced by communal guidelines and practices and institutional interventions and disciplines.

Chapter 5, *Protestant Readers from the Reformation to the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, features readings which continue this strain of questioning about the capacity of the autonomous individual Christian soul and the catalysts and foundations of Christian faith in relationship with Scripture, Law, and doctrine. The selection of readings in this chapter, out of so many possible Protestant texts, is based primarily on their focus on the relative roles of autonomous spiritual experience, ecclesial authority, divine Grace and the teachings of the Church. These exegetes

continue the interpretive tradition that explores the capacity of human beings as spiritual “athletes,” a tradition sparked by the Canaanite woman’s obvious strength and faith and by questions about the source of her power. The Protestant interest in the relationship of grace, works, and deliverance is in evidence in these readings, but little of the open-ended questioning, or even celebration, of the human potential for spiritual acumen that was visible in the ascetically-minded readings of chapter 4. The Canaanite woman’s “untutored” faith is, instead, the work of the Spirit’s inward teachings, in spite of the “unholy leaven” of human nature. Only the last reading in the chapter, that of American Anglican Phillips Brooks, demonstrates a noticeable optimism and interest in the potential for spiritual growth in each person.

Chapter 6, *Avatars of the Canaanite Woman: Lived Narratives or Rhetorical Performances?*, discusses three different types of texts that adopt the Canaanite woman’s persona and voice: a *speculum principum* of the Carolingian Renaissance, two communal prayers, and three private devotional texts. In all of these texts, the words and actions of the Canaanite woman are reenacted and claimed as personal spiritual experience. The overarching question of this chapter is whether the texts provide any evidence of authentic or “real” internalization of, or identification with, the Canaanite woman; that is, whether centuries of exegetical paranses have produced demonstrable results. Such transcribed experiences are found to be lacking as evidence of internalized identity.

Finally, a short epilogue concludes the dissertation in which I discuss current scholarship on Matt 15:21-28 and consider the implications of the dissertation—both its method and its findings—for the current practice of reception history.

## **1.4 NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS**

All translations, unless otherwise attributed, are my own.

## 2.0 *RAPITUR CHRISTUS*: BECOMING CHRISTIANS

### 2.1 AN APOCRYPHAL TRADITION AND A JEWISH-CHRISTIAN CANAANITE WOMAN

The earliest treatment of the Canaanite woman to be considered in this study is found in the *Pseudo-Clementine Literature* of the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, a set of Jewish-Christian romance-inflected narratives.<sup>107</sup> Earliest, because though the *Pseudo-Clementines* date from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, they are thought often to reproduce traditions found in an earlier *Grundschrift*.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the *Pseudo-Clementine* Canaanite woman arguably provides a valuable prior context and counterpoint to later readings, reflecting very early Jewish-Christian views of Matt 15:21-28. In particular, the *Pseudo-Clementine* constructions of the Canaanite woman reveal much about earlier understandings of the exclusivity logion and Jesus' Jewish mission, the mechanisms governing conversion, and the place of Gentiles as followers of Jesus. For the *Pseudo-*

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<sup>107</sup> It is worthwhile to note that the earliest Christian writings, prior to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, rely on the Gospels only occasionally. Gospel texts are rarely the central matter in the Apostolic Fathers, exceptions notwithstanding: Clement of Rome appeals to the "words of the Lord Jesus" as authoritative; Ignatius knows Matthew's gospel; and the *Didaskalia* interprets Matt 7:6 and Mark 3.28-29. The apologists, in comparison, are more engaged with the gospels. In contrast, the earliest writings produced a broad pallet of genres. Biblical narratives were adapted and transmitted in liturgies, letters, folk tales, poems, romances, hymns, and martyrologies.

<sup>108</sup> The search for the sources of the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature, the foundations of its gnostic and Jewish-Christian tendencies and their relationship to early forms and leaders of Christianity, whether Petrine, Jewish, or Pauline, is ongoing and inconclusive, and ranges from F.C. Baur and the Tübingen *tendenz* theories of early church conflicts to George Strecker's more recent source criticism. Cf. Nicole Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines: Situating the Recognitions in Fourth Century Syria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 2-7, where she also comments upon the implications of an exclusive focus on sources.

*Clementine* Canaanite woman is a Jewish-Christian convert, aligned with the Jerusalem church, and law-observant. This portrait stands apart from later orthodox representations of her as poster girl for the Gentile church.

In this history of interpretation that looks at how readings of one biblical character were used to establish idealized orthodox Christian norms, the three primary texts of the *Pseudo-Clementines*—*Recognitions*, *Homilies* and the *Epitome*—prompt a kind of initial disclaimer. With their doubly-told stories, their layers of interpolations and their cutting and pasting of letters and extracts from other writings, that is, in their very form as mash-up, they epitomize the free manipulation of all available textual means to polemical and prescriptive ends. The *Pseudo-Clementines* combine gospel traditions and fairy tale coincidences typical of romance. These, in turn, fuel strong doctrinal argumentation and group boundary definition. No wonder the *Pseudo-Clementines* were foundational texts for Tübingen *tendenz* theory, their staging of Peter's teachings clearly a thinly-veiled pretense for doctrinal exposition. The catechetical function of the readings in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, however, is not so different from that of the patristic readings that follow in this chapter.

The Canaanite woman appears twice in the *Pseudo-Clementines* playing a role in two related but distinct conversion narratives, one from the *Recognitions*, one from the *Homilies*. While the exact relationship between the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies* is unresolved as to priority and influence, they represent reworkings, possibly independent, of the same source traditions and thus offer two interpretive performances for the price of one.

In *Recognitions* 7.32, the Canaanite woman makes a cameo appearance as a foster-mother within the story of the restoration and redemption of the biological family of the character Clement. This narrative reflects the plight of peoples and families in transition

between, or perhaps divided by, pagan, Jewish and Christian affiliations. Certainly, the *Recognitions* in general is focused on Clement, the great Roman Church Father, as a pagan convert to Jewish Christianity, even if he becomes a favorite student and heir to the chair of Peter, the apostle. Thus, during lessons, Clement recounts the story of his family to Peter; the plot unfolds as follows.

Clement loses his family because of an initial incestuous desire on the part of his uncle for his mother, Matthidia. Using a vision as her excuse, Matthidia flees with Clement's two twin brothers, is lost at sea in a shipwreck and later becomes the poor starving widow of Aradus whom Peter meets in the *Recognitions*. Matthidia then tells Peter her story, including how she had left Clement behind as a comfort for his noble pagan father.

Matthidia's story sets off a series of "recognitions" of familial bonds that ushers the mother into the process of Jewish-Christian catechesis, fasting, baptism and fellowship. For Peter, who has now heard both Clement's and Matthidia's stories separately, puts two and two together and reunites pagan mother and Jewish-Christian son. They all travel together to Laodicea where they find Peter's followers, Niceta and Aquila, to whom they recount the tale of reunion, only to prompt another recognition. Niceta and Aquila reveal that they are Clement's twin brothers, whom pirates had rescued from the shipwreck long ago, and sold to none other than the Canaanite woman, *viduae, honestae admodum feminae, Iustae nomine* ("a certain widow, a very honorable woman named, Justa").<sup>109</sup> This Justa becomes their foster mother, treats them as sons and teaches them Greek literature and liberal arts. In this detail, she begins to

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<sup>109</sup> Rufinus, *Clem. Recogn. 7.32.3*. Bernhard Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen II: Rekognitionen in Rufins Übersetzung* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 51; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1965), 212. Text variants describe Justa not as a widow, but as a Jewish woman: *iudae* in Southern France and *iudaeae* in Italy. Her designation as a widow, *viduae*, comes out of the English manuscript tradition. A Jewish Justa may be harmonized with her role as pedagogue of Greek learning in the *Recognitions*. It is completely at odds with the detailed attention to her conversion in the *Homilies*.

look very much like a personification of a Greek education within the text's staging of families caught between cultures and religions. But how does this very small role within an entirely different context relate to the Canaanite woman of Matt 15:21-28?

It is only in Justa's second appearance in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, in *Homilies* 2.19-21 that she is revealed to be the same Canaanite woman who appears in Matt 15:21-28. In the story of familial *Recognitions*, she is only an explanatory detail in the pagan background of the narrative, subordinated to ecclesiological questions. The most pressing of these are 1) when and how Matthidia may eat with her Jewish-Christian sons who do not keep a common table with Gentiles and 2) when she may be baptized, given prerequisites of fasting, extended catechism, and a formal profession of faith. The Gentile foster mother is thus secondary, serving only to unwittingly educate the sons of the Jewish-Christian mother so that they may later defend Christianity against Gentile arguments: *quo possemus religionis divinae dogmata philosophicis disputationibus adserentes confutare gentiles* ("that we might confute the Gentiles, by supporting the doctrines of the divine religion by means of philosophic disputations").<sup>110</sup> Her supporting role is associated with the usefulness of a pagan education in Christian apologetics.

The story of the Canaanite woman in *Homilies* 2, by contrast, appears to be closer to the tradition in *Matthew*. It shares the familiar details of her pleas for a sick daughter and Jesus' refusal to heal a Gentile. We recognize the Canaanite mother with a grievously ill daughter, pleading for a healing, and the disciples behave much as they do in *Matthew*, though they are more clearly in her corner: they are described as directly entreating Jesus on her behalf in the *Homilies*. Beyond these touchstones, however, are very interesting elaborations. For instance, the text offers an explanation for the exclusivity logion and the refusal to heal Gentiles that it entails:

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<sup>110</sup> Rufinus, *Clem. Recogn.* 7.32.4. Rehm, *Rekognitionen*, 13.

ὁ δὲ καὶ ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἀξιωθεὶς εἶπεν· Οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἰᾶσθαι τὰ ἔθνη, εὐκότα κυσὶν διὰ τὸ ἀδιαφόροις χρᾶσθαι τροφαῖς καὶ πράξεσιν, ἀποδοδομένης τῆς κατὰ τὴν βασιλείου τραπέζης τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ.<sup>111</sup>

But he, being asked also by us, said, ‘It is not lawful to heal the Gentiles, who are like dogs because of their using mixed meats and practices, while the table in the Kingdom has been given to the sons of Israel.

Here, the exclusivity logion is about law-observance, both the general illegality of healing Gentiles and the basis of that prohibition in the unclean dog-like state of Gentiles, specifically because they do not observe food laws. In the *Homilies*, then, Matt 15:24 is not about election and salvation through Jesus, as Christian exegetes would later argue; rather, it is about being law-observant. It makes sense, then, that Justa is next portrayed as a convert to Jewish-Christianity and to law observance:

μεταθεμένη ὅπερ ἦν, τῷ ὁμοίως διαιτᾶσθαι τοῖς τῆς βασιλείας υἱοῖς τῆς εἰς τὴν θυγατέρα, ὡς ἠξίωσεν, ἔτυχεν ἰάσεως. οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐθνικὴν οὕσαν καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ αὐτῇ πολιτείᾳ μένουσαν ὁ τὴν ἀρχὴν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐξεῖναι θεραπεύειν ὡς ἐθνικὴν [ἐθνικὴν μείνασαν] <...>, ἐθεράπευεν.<sup>112</sup>

Having changed what she was, by living like the sons of the kingdom, she obtained healing for her daughter, as she asked. For had she remained a Gentile and remained in the same lifestyle, He would not have healed her, on account of its not being lawful to heal her as a Gentile.

Indeed, it is her subsequent observance of the law that upsets her pagan husband, so much so that he drives her from their home, along with their now-healed daughter. But Justa is wealthy. She marries her daughter off to a poor man, one whom we are told is “attached to the true faith.” She then goes on, in line with the *Recognitions* story, to buy Niceta and Aquila and to educate them in the company of Simon Magus. This last narrative detail provides a smooth segue

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<sup>111</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 2.19.2. Bernhard Rehm, *Die Pseudoklementinen I: Homilien* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 42; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1953), 42.

<sup>112</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 2.19.3-4. Rehm, *Homilien*, 43.



back into the diatribe against Simon Magus that precedes and follows the story of the Canaanite woman in the *Homilies*.

The *Pseudo-Clementine* Justa, then, is not a turning point in Jesus' ministry, signaling the beginning of a Gentile mission. She is firmly aligned with Jewish-Christianity and could even be understood as part of an argument directly opposed to the notion of a uniquely Gentile Christianity, especially if Simon Magus is read as a figure for Paul and his mission to the Gentiles. In any case, she is most definitely leveraged within the context of doctrinal disputation, sandwiched between chapters dedicated to exposing the duplicity and misguided doctrines of Simon Magus. As female convert to the tenets of the Jerusalem Church, she has moved into Matthidia's role in the *Recognitions*, who there provides an even more detailed delineation of the requirements and rituals of conversion to Jewish Christianity. She thus establishes a model for Gentile conversion to Jewish-Christianity, as does the main character, Clement.

## **2.2 EARLY POLEMICAL INTERPRETATION: TERTULLIAN AND CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY**

Christian scholars have presented the *Pseudo-Clementines* in what can only be described as an apologetic manner, as "strange and curious documents,"<sup>113</sup> as marginal and heretical. Yet the fusion of expansive exegesis and doctrinal argumentation in their depiction of the Canaanite woman is equally in evidence in orthodox readings of her.

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<sup>113</sup> M. B. Riddle, "Introductory Notice to the Pseudo-Clementine Literature" (*ANF* 8:69).

At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, two of the earliest, albeit brief, references to the story of the Canaanite woman appear within the anti-heretical polemics of Tertullian, specifically within his *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* and *Adversus Marcionem*. These texts were produced from within an embattled early North African church, one assailed by persecution by outsiders and heretical controversies between insiders. Tertullian (like his contemporary, Irenaeus, in Gaul) presents his biblical interpretations as authoritative exegesis in the apostolic tradition, thus claiming an exegetical method which alone can discern the *skopos* or *dianoia* (the unitive mind) of Scripture, one that “knows nothing against the Rule of Faith” and marginalizes all dissenting interpretations as blasphemous and abuses of Scripture. In practice, this exegetical approach combines *a priori* theological assumptions with scriptural intertexts and proof texts to establish the orthodox meaning of passages in the Bible.<sup>114</sup> But unlike his Alexandrian counterparts, Tertullian employed this technique not so much to elucidate the metaphysics of the gospel message as to establish the Christian way of life, contrast it with pagan vice, and to dictate “faith in action.”<sup>115</sup>

Tertullian’s first allusion to Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite woman appears in chapter 8 of his *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, written c. 200. This is a treatise that not only details the errors, abuses and moral turpitude of Tertullian’s “heretical” competitors, but based on Tertullian’s legal training denies them the right to interpret scripture at all, in effect throwing their case out of court. Chapter 8 is a particularly critical chapter in the overall argument of the

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<sup>114</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 38. Cf. Young’s analysis of the constituent moves of this technique in Athanasius’ *Orations against the Arians* and *De decretis*. Also, Frances Young, “Exegetical Method and Scriptural Proof: The Bible in Doctrinal Debate,” *SP* 24 (1989): 291-304.

<sup>115</sup> Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol 1 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1986; repr., 1991), 246.

*De Praescriptione* because it refutes a popular Gnostic claim, that Matt 7:7, “Seek and you shall find,” authorized what Tertullian refers to as their *curiositas* and *scrupulositas*.<sup>116</sup>

Tertullian’s counter-argument rests on historically situating Jesus’ dictum at the beginning of his ministry and specifically on establishing that the saying of Matt 7:7 was intended for a particular historical audience in a particular condition, that is, for Jews who had not yet recognized him as the Messiah, at a point in the narrative when Peter had yet to make his confession at Caesarea Philippi. The dictum, “Seek and you shall find,” and its corresponding parallelisms, “Knock and the door will be opened” and “Ask and you shall receive,” are all addressed to the Jews, according to Tertullian, who alone knew where to “seek,” that is, in their own Scriptures where, Jesus had told them, they would find him described. The Jews alone had lived inside God’s house, even if they had now been expelled through their own errors, and therefore they alone knew of the door and the house within; and it was to them alone that a promise had been made by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and so they alone knew that they need only ask to receive it again.

It is at this point that Tertullian uses the exclusivity logion of Matthew 15:24, to deny the Gnostics any part of Jesus’ promise in Matt 7:7, or any claim that Matt 7:7 sanctioned their spiritual explorations more than a century later. For, Tertullian argues, in Jesus’ confrontation with the Canaanite woman, he made clear that all of his teaching and promises were intended for the lost sheep of the house of Israel:

*Et adeo ad Israel loquebatur: “non sum, inquit, missus nisis ad oves perditas domus Israel.” Nondum canibus iactaderat panem filiorum, nondum in via nationum ire mandarar.*<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> These are pejorative terms for what Tertullian considers to be gnostic exegetical and doctrinal excesses.

<sup>117</sup> Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 8.12-13. Tertullien, *Traité de la Prescription Contre Les Hérétiques*, SC 46, ed. R. F. Refoulé; transl. De Labriolle (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957), 100-101.

And thus the Lord said to Israel: ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ He did not throw the children’s bread to the dogs, nor did he command (the disciples) to go in the way of non-Jews.

Tertullian is making a point about *timing* in this argument. Jesus had not *yet* ordered the mission to the Gentiles when he spoke the saying recorded in Matt 7:7. The disciples had not *yet* been given the Paraclete, to guide them in all truth as doctors destined for the nations. Therefore, Jesus never encouraged the Gnostics to seek beyond the Rule of Faith so recklessly.

Only after this point has been firmly established does Tertullian relent and admit that *all* Jesus’ words are for everyone, though he still adds a disclaimer: they have come to us *per aures Iudaeorum*,<sup>118</sup> through the ears of the Jews. His words refer directly to the Jews and are therefore an *example*, not a *lesson*, for us. And again, in the following chapter of *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, Tertullian continues to explain that, in this sense of *example*, the words of Jesus *are* for everyone, not just the Jews; their universal message is that once the truth is found out about Jesus, no more searching is required or advised. There is nothing more to seek. Not then, not now.

The Canaanite woman is absent from Tertullian’s reading in the *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*. Yet his assertion in chapter 9 that divine words are not so incoherent and mystical, but rather clear enough that we can establish their rational meaning, may contain a nod to her experience:

*Unum utique et certum aliquid institutum esse a Christo, quod credere omni modo debeant nationes et idcirco quaerere ut possint, cum invenerint, credere.*<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Tertullian, *Praescr.*, 8.16 (SC 46, 101).

<sup>119</sup> Tertullian, *Praescr.*, 9.3 (SC 46, 102).

The Lord taught a unique and precise doctrine in which the pagans must absolutely believe, and which they must seek, in order to believe it when they have found it.

Thus, pagans search Jesus' words, and will believe easily once they find their meaning.

By combining Matt. 15:24 with Matt. 7:7, then, Tertullian has marginalized the Gnostic Christians in two ways. They are not the Jews, the direct beneficiaries of Jesus' teaching, and they are not even the Canaanite woman, who searched Jesus' words, accepted their meaning, and was satisfied. On this reading, the Canaanite woman—the only person in the entire New Testament who could be described as winning an argument with Jesus—becomes an example of submission to Jesus' definitive and authoritative teaching. The paranesis within the exegesis is, then, something like this: Early Christian readers should accept and mirror in their actions that they are not Jews who were told to seek the truth about Jesus, but did not; and they are not Gnostics who misinterpret the directive to seek, looking for Jesus in all the wrong places. They are adept gentile interpreters, who have learned from the negative examples of others, and who have sought Jesus' teaching, found it in the orthodox apostolic tradition, and are satisfied.

At about the same time in his career, Tertullian alluded a second time to the story of the Canaanite woman, this time in his revised and expanded edition of his *Adversus Marcionem*. In this text, her story is used as part of Tertullian's refutation of Marcion's gospel and of his methods of interpreting Scripture, the discrediting of which constitutes the entire fourth book of *Adversus Marcionem*. Books 1-3 focus on Marcion's theology and Christology, and Book 5 on Marcion's *Apostolicon*. Book 4 was written probably sometime between 208-212, during the same period, or slightly after, Tertullian wrote *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*.<sup>120</sup> And again

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<sup>120</sup> Tertullien, *Contre Marcion, Tome IV*, SC 456, eds. Claudio Moreschini and René Braun (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2001), 17-18. Cf. Quaston, *Patrology*, Vol. 1, 274 for the history of the theft and alteration of this manuscript by one of Tertullian's "brothers" who later became "an apostate" and disseminated a "fraudulent" version of his original

Tertullian is interested only in the exclusivity logion. His use of Matthew 15:24 in this text demonstrates, among other things, how local and pragmatic exegetical practice could be in the early church. In responding to an opponent who was anti-Hebrew Scriptures and anti-incarnationist, the passage in *Adversus Marcionem* emphasizes Jesus' Jewishness, his historical and embodied locatedness, in a way that seems quite at odds with Tertullian's own anti-Jewish writings, and certainly in a way that required more subtlety than the prevalent conflation of Jews, Judaizers and heretics in later (4<sup>th</sup> century) anti-heretical writings.<sup>121</sup>

Tertullian establishes Jesus' Jewishness by means of Old Testament citations (René Braun counts a total of 419 citations of the Hebrew Scriptures),<sup>122</sup> and allegorical typology to prove that Jesus is the embodied fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. And proof from prophecy is the explicit preoccupation of Tertullian's argument in which Matt 15:24 appears. Tertullian is ridiculing Marcion's decision to begin his gospel at Luke 3:1, with Jesus descending from heaven into Capernaum, where he is said to "appear" suddenly. Why, Tertullian asks, does Jesus materialize in Galilee, if not to fulfill Isaiah 8:23-9:1:

*Hoc primum bibito, cito facito, regio Zabulon et terra Nephtalim, et ceteri qui maritimam et Iordanis, Galilaea nationum, populus qui sedetis in tenebris, videte lumen magnum.*<sup>123</sup>

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work. Tertullian tells this story in the opening paragraphs of the treatise (*ANF*, 1.1). This vignette provides a glimpse of the kind of culture wars that were being waged to establish which would be decisive or authoritative texts.

<sup>121</sup> The apparent contradiction may be better understood by considering the difficult tension between typological theories of continuity and historical practices based on divisive particularity, a tension which is ultimately resolved through a model of substitution (supercession). For the conflation of groups in anti-heretical writings, cf. Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria*, *Patristic Monograph Series*, 20 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 4-9.

<sup>122</sup> *SC* 456, 32.

<sup>123</sup> Note that Tertullian is citing an antique edition of *Isaiah*. While some argue that Tertullian used the LXX, Semler concludes that, "he always quoted from the old Latin version, whatever version that might have been, which was current in the African church in the second and third centuries," not least because of "the suspicion which largely prevailed in the African branch of the Latin church, that the Greek copies of the scriptures were much corrupted by the heretics, who were chiefly, if not wholly, Greeks or Greek-speaking persons." (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Introductory Note, *ANF*, 3:7)

First prepare yourself, and quickly, region of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, and all others who live in the maritime zone and that of the Jordan, Galilee of the nations, you, a people sitting in the shadows, will see a great light.

If all conforms to the prophecy, do we not begin to think Jesus' incarnation has been prophesied? Building on this beginning, Tertullian continues to catalogue Marcion's exegetical errors. He condemns Marcion's suppression of key texts, especially of Matt 5:17: *ingressu venisse se non ut legem et prophetas dissolveret, sed ut potius adimpleret* ("He came not to abolish the law and the prophets, but moreover to fulfill them").<sup>124</sup> But deeds speak louder than words in any case, Tertullian crows, for into what place does Jesus fall from the sky but the synagogue: *De caelo statim ad synagogam!* Likewise, the absence in Marcion's gospel of Matt 15:24 and 26 cannot obscure the ways in which Jesus *enacts* these sayings: Jesus goes to the synagogue in Luke/Marcion to reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel; he offers them first the bread of his teaching; he prefers them as sons. All are stupefied by his words, and certainly not because he taught against the Laws and the prophets!

Thus Tertullian uses the exclusivity logion again, this time to discredit the *exegetical* authority of Marcion. It is not a question here of whether Scripture applies to the heretic, but whether the heretic can apply himself to Scripture. Tertullian compiles a constellation of related intertexts, from the prophets and the gospels, to argue against Marcion's exegetical method, which he critiques as censorship. He claims for himself an exegesis achieved through selection and combination, as opposed to omission and redaction.

In the interest of assessing Tertullian's methods in context, it should be noted that he has constructed a false distinction. Except for the Gnostics, who were happy to gain insight and

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<sup>124</sup> Tertullian, *Marc.*, 7.4.4 (SC 456, 96). Cf. 96, n. 2 where Braun points out that, even though Marcion based his gospel on Luke, his not citing Matthew is still a fair critique, because its absence is a consequence of his larger error, his ill-advised choice of Luke and not Matthew as the basis for his version of the gospel to begin with.

revelation from any and all sources and did not limit themselves to one text or even one culture,<sup>125</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> century Judaisms and Christianities were veritable studies in the practice of selectively combining intertexts so that they would yield whatever meaning was needed in a given argument. In comparison, Marcion's challenge to orthodoxy at least acknowledges and confronts contradictions within the length and breadth of received Scriptures. He cannot reconcile the God in the Jewish Bible, who incites to violence, rejects his beloved people and changes his mind all the time, with the God described by Jesus in the gospels, however reductive this distinction looks today. The challenge was comprehensive, textual and exegetical<sup>126</sup> and Tertullian fought it by demonstrating the inextricable symbiosis between the Jewish Scriptures and the gospels. But neither of these positions can be labeled in a simplistic way as narrow or suppressive or censoring.

The Canaanite woman is once again left out of Tertullian's reading of Matt 15:21-28, yet the difficult task that she confronted, of "correctly" interpreting and accepting Jesus' words, remains resolutely center frame. It is consistently this aspect of the encounter and her role as interpreter of Jesus' words that are of most use to Tertullian in his defense of orthodoxy against opposing Christianities. The paranesis within the exegesis in Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* is, thus, even more directly aimed at regulating acts of interpretation than was the passage in *De Praescriptione*. At the same time, the central place that Jesus' Jewishness plays in this interpretation is not an invention, it is *text-derived*; that is, not just needful in the face of the Marcionite denial of the Jewish foundations of Christianity, but also dictated by the passage

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<sup>125</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 61.

<sup>126</sup> This point is emphasized by Young in her argument that early church divisions were *about* exegesis. Certainly, bids for early institutional control were embedded within, and waged by means of, conflicting interpretations and exegeses.



itself, which provokes much more directly than others in the gospels the need to harmonize the tenets of the Jewish Scriptures and the new kerygma.

Perhaps most important in these two readings, though, is the conflation of exegesis and *history* in Tertullian's interpretations of the Canaanite woman, that looks sometimes like familiar patristic typology, but other times remarkably like our own historical methods. Whether as a past context that determines present meaning as in the case of Tertullian's reading of Matt 7:7, or as enacted typology (Jesus' incarnation as fulfillment of *Isaiah*) that cannot be excised from the act of interpretation, as in Tertullian's reading of Matt 15:24, this historical frame of reference is central for an understanding of a major thread in the development of interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 over time. Through these moves, the passage was articulated as a historical nexus, a confrontation of the historical fortunes of the Jews and τὰ ἔθνη, all other peoples. Such historical readings of the passage abound in the commentary traditions.

### **2.3 EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY: EXEGESIS AS CATECHESIS AND PARANESIS**

Academic Christian commentary began in earnest in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and developed into a deliberate cultural force in the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Hippolytus was writing commentaries in Rome, creating amusing correspondences, like that between the bath soaps of Bathsheba and the Ten Commandments.<sup>127</sup> Origen was developing his allegorical method within the Alexandrian tradition, in the footsteps of Philo, but also in the tradition of allegorical

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<sup>127</sup> Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.* 1.16. Hippolytus, *Commentaire Sur Daniel*, SC14, eds. Gustav Bardy and Maurice LeFevre (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1947), 101.

interpretations within the New Testament itself.<sup>128</sup> Ephrem of Nisibis was refining his own methods in the Antiochene style, avoiding allegorical excess, yet acknowledging a deeper, often typological significance to the literal meaning of texts, a practice which quickly found even more aggressive and censorious expression in Theodore of Mopsuestia's readings of Old Testament prophecy and prefiguration. Disparities between early Christian commentators speak to their considerable diversity linguistically, theologically, and culturally. But affinities are also evident. The obvious influence of Origen on Didymus provides just one instance.<sup>129</sup> The teaching of Didymus himself provides another; the work of this monkish recluse had a wide ripple effect, touching the likes of Rufinus of Aquileia, Melanie the Elder, Jerome, and Paula. Even the Syriac texts of Ephrem, who exerted extraordinary influence within his own Syrian Christianity, were translated fairly rapidly into Greek.<sup>130</sup>

### 2.3.1 Origen: In Matthaëum

Within this field of exegetical labors, Origen's 3<sup>rd</sup> century reading of the Canaanite woman in his *In Matthaëum* (written 246-248) is probably the earliest commentary on Matt 15:21-28. In contrast to Tertullian's historical and polemical emphasis, we find in Origen a shift to spiritual allegory and perhaps the earliest foundation of later readings of the Canaanite woman as universal exemplum, for Origen reads the Canaanite woman as a portrait of the human soul.

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<sup>128</sup> Not least the argument between the Canaanite woman and Jesus in Matt 15:21-28, which is essentially an argument about how to extrapolate allegorical meaning from scriptural dicta in order to advocate exemplary action based on correct interpretations of "covenant," "community," "bread," "children" and "dogs." The terms of their exegetical debate model the allegorical and typological techniques later applied in interpretations of it.

<sup>129</sup> Louis Doutreleau, in his introduction to Didymus' *In Zacharium*, notes that Didymus adopted Origen's allegorical style, similar expressions and transitions, and even Origen's practice of leaving the work of finding scriptural texts he has cited to his listeners/readers, so as not to unduly interrupt the commentary proper. (Didymus the Blind, *Sur Zacharie, Tome 1*, SC 83, ed. Louis Doutreleau, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962), 15, 31.

<sup>130</sup> Didymus, *Zacharie*, 33.

He situates and reveals the state of the generic human soul by means of the critical clause in verse 22, ἀπὸ τῶν ὁρίων ἐκείνων ἐξελθοῦσα (“emerging out of those borders”),<sup>131</sup> and by expounding upon the place from which the Canaanite woman comes, and what her “coming out” means. Tyre, at least its Hebrew form, *Sor*, means “gathering place” (ἥτις ἐρμηνεύεται συνοχή) and Sidon signifies “hunters” (θηρῶντες):<sup>132</sup> Ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔθνεσι καὶ οἱ θηρῶντές εἰσιν αἱ πονηραὶ δυνάμεις, καὶ πολλὴ συνοχή παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἢ ἐν τῇ κακίᾳ καὶ τοῖς πάθεσιν (“Certainly, it is among the non-Jews that there are hunters, evil powers, and among them great numbers of people gather together in wickedness and passions”).<sup>133</sup> He glosses the word “Canaanite” to mean “prepared for humiliation” (Χανααναία δὲ ἦν ἡ γυνή, ὅπερ μεταλαμβάνεται εἰς τὸ ἡτοιμασμένη ταπεινώσει),<sup>134</sup> and argues that the woman (the human soul) emerges metaphorically from a place (state) of humiliation and degradation to seek healing from Jesus.

Origen next makes a move that is repeated over and over again in both homilies and commentaries from the Church Fathers through nineteenth century commentators: the “we, too” move. It is a move from allegory and exegesis to moral exhortation, the first step towards prescription and regulatory discourse.<sup>135</sup> The spiritual drama, extracted in this case out of the geographical details of the gospel narrative, is applied to “each of us:”

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<sup>131</sup> Matt. 15:22, NA<sup>27</sup>, 42.

<sup>132</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.16.19-21. Origen, *Commentaire Sur L’Évangile Selon Matthieu, Tome I*, SC 162, ed. Robert Girod (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 354.

<sup>133</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.16.22-23 (SC 162, 356).

<sup>134</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.16.55-56 (SC 162, 358).

<sup>135</sup> In her brief overview of interpretations of the Canaanite woman, Louise Lawrence sees early exegetes like Origen and Hilary of Poitiers who read the Canaanite woman as a mother (whether of Jerusalem above, or idol-worshipping Gentiles, or the Gentile church) as belonging to a different category than later “Church Fathers” who read her prescriptively: “Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430 CE), is the main architect of reading this story as a ‘prescription’ for a proper Christian disposition...” Cf. Louise Lawrence, “Crumb Trails and Puppy-Dog Tales’: Reading Afterlives of a Canaanite Woman,” in Christine E. Joynes and Christopher C. Rowland, eds., *From the Margins 2: Women of the New Testament and Their Afterlives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009). While it is obviously useful to identify the particular preoccupations and emphases that characterize interpretations of the Canaanite woman in different times and places, Lawrence’s distinction misses the paranetic function of early

Καὶ νομιστέον γε ἕκαστον ἡμῶν ἀμαρτάνοντα μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὁρίοις εἶναι Τύρου ἢ Σιδῶνος ἢ Φαραῶ καὶ τῆς Αἰγύπτου ἢ τινος τῶν ἔξω τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ κληροδοσίας, μεταβάλλοντα δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας εἰς ἀρετὴν ἐξέρχεσθαι μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ τὰ φαῦλα ὁρίων, φθάνειν δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ ὅρια τῆς μερίδος τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>136</sup>

And we must surely believe that each of us, when he sins, finds himself in the territory of Tyre and Sidon, or of Pharaoh and Egypt, or else in whatever country foreign to the inheritance of God, but that, when he leaves aside evil and returns to virtue, he leaves the territories where sin rules, and hastens back to the territories which are God's.

From here, Origen develops his allegorical reading of the passage as the story of each soul's progress towards God. He defines the "lost sheep" to whom Jesus is sent in the exclusivity logion as elite, intelligent, clear-visioned, penetrating souls, and not Israel according to the flesh:

εἶπε τὸ οὐκ ἀπεστάλην, διδάσκων ὅτι εἰσὶ τινες προηγούμεναι ψυχὰι νοεραὶ καὶ διορατικαὶ ἀπολωλυταί, τροπικῶς λεγόμεναι πρόβατα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ, ἅπερ οἴμοι, οἱ ἀπλούστεροι ἐπὶ τοῦ «κατὰ σάρκα» Ἰσραὴλ νομίζοντες λελέχθαι.<sup>137</sup>

He said, "I was not sent...", teaching that the souls of the elite, intelligent and clear-visioned, which are lost, were represented by the sheep of the house of Israel, and I think that very simple people believe that these words apply to Israel according to the flesh."

Only simple readers (Girod suggests that Origen is referring to the Ebionites) do not understand this. The bread is Jesus' teaching. Some loaves are given to the more rational, while crumbs (other words) are given to those who will only be able to receive them as irrational "dogs" would:

Τάχα δὲ καὶ τῶν λόγων Ἰησοῦ εἰσὶ τινες ἄρτοι, οὓς τοῖς λογικωτέροις ὡς τέκνοις ἔξεστι διδόναι μόνοις, καὶ ἄλλοι λόγοι οἰονεὶ ψιχία ἀπὸ τῆς μεγάλης ἐστίας καὶ τραπέζης τῶν εὐγενεστέρων καὶ κυρίων, οἷς χρήσαιντ' ἂν τινες ψυχὰι ὡς κύνες.<sup>138</sup>

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exegesis that I delineate here. Augustine built on an already-existing *topos* in his use of the Canaanite woman as Christian exemplum as will soon be obvious.

<sup>136</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.16.43-48 (SC 162, 358).

<sup>137</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.17.56-60 (SC 162, 364).

<sup>138</sup> Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 11.17.99-103, (SC 162, 368).

Also, maybe among the words of Jesus, there are some breads which may only be given to the more spiritual, because they are the children, and other words, like crumbs of the great banquet fallen from the table of people of superior birth and of the masters, and left to be disposed on certain (other) souls, because they are the dogs.

The other seminal characteristic in evidence in Origen's *In Matthaeum* reading of the Canaanite woman is its significant intertextual development. Perhaps predictably, he takes the time to explain how Matt 1-20 and Matt 21-28 are related, just as other exegetes will later do, and to establish intertextual links between 21-28 and other miracle stories in the gospels. These connections (e.g., to the raising of the widow's son at Nain in Luke and the healing of the royal official's son at Capernaum in John) will also fuel later exegetical arguments. But Origen also provides a model for linking less obvious intertexts. For example, he brings Deuteronomy 32:8 and Roman 12:6 into play together in order to account for the Canaanite woman's border-crossing at verse 22. It is according to the proportion of her faith, a function of the grace given to her (Rom 12:6), that she transcends the borders between tribes that God laid down in Deuteronomy 32. So, in addition to his philological explanation of verse 22, Origen offers this intertextual explanation. In a similar way, as we saw above, he uses the distinction between knowing "according to the flesh" and "according to the Spirit" from 2 Cor 5:16 to interpret the "lost sheep" of 15:24 not as Jews but as "knowing souls." While some intertextual dexterity is present in Tertullian, in his combining of Matt 7:7 and Matt 15:24, and citing of Isaiah 8:23-9:1 and Matt 5:17 to back up his argument, Tertullian's practice does not come close to the latitude that Origen introduced into his practice of intertextual argumentation.

Returning to the spiritual allegory, then, Origen concludes with quite specific instructions: great slothfulness and negligence make for dogs, but virtue contributes greatly to the making of a child of God. The portrayal of the Canaanite woman is the story of the evolving

human soul: from a will which was more irrational, because of its neglect of reason, she turns and becomes a rational child of God. The Canaanite woman is a portrait of the human soul ascending in knowledge and understanding towards God.

The link between spiritual allegory and paranesis, then, resides in the extrapolation of generic instruction from specific illustration. The connection encourages an applied or lived narrative, not unlike the broader sapiential tradition and the books of the prophets, of wisdom and of proverbs in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is not only the Canaanite woman who can learn to be rational, virtuous, and tenacious, but all exemplary human souls. These ideal attributes define a child of God, while the other stages in the soul's progress serve a minatory function, particularly the image of "each of us" at the borders, surrounded by wickedness, evil, slothfulness, and irrationality. The exigent need for progress upon the path of spiritual evolution is the lesson.

Two distinct paranetic techniques are now evident in the earliest readings of the Canaanite woman which can be labeled, at least provisionally, as *historically-grounded* and *spiritually-based* paranesis. These two emphases are familiar; a similar distinction is standard fare in intellectual histories of biblical exegesis, and central to explanations of the early divide between Antioch and Alexandria. Such histories of interpretation tend to explain exegetical methods as theological and text-based. But this study examines the role of the interpretation of one gospel passage in the prescription of an ideal lived Christian orthodoxy. Exegetical schools are understood as paranetic techniques.<sup>139</sup> In this light, the first exegetical trajectory emphasizes the historical implications of the encounter in order to locate, contextualize, differentiate and

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<sup>139</sup> These two modes of interpretation, the historical and the spiritual, align with Popkes' basic definitions of paranesis as providing guidance in situations of (historical, social) transition and continuing the long-standing Jewish practice of extrapolating practical lessons, primarily of (spiritual, individual) conduct, from scripture. Cf. introduction, 3.

then actively build a fence around early Christian doctrine and praxis. The second exegetical trajectory emphasizes the spiritual imperatives implicit in the story in order to discipline individual Christian souls and regulate their spiritual development.

### 2.3.2 Hilary of Poitiers: *In Matthaeum*

That said, in practice, paranetic techniques shift and adapt to their particular environments and ends. For instance, Hilary of Poitiers's reading of the Canaanite woman in his *In Matthaeum*, written c. 353, not only takes historical reading to a new level, but also then combines it with an allegorical reading to powerful paranetic effect. This makes sense. Hilary's work was both doctrinal *and* pastoral; he was both anti-heretical polemicist and pastor, as bishop of Poitiers and later as founder of a monastery at Ligugé.

His *In Matthaeum* is the earliest *Latin* commentary on Matthew's gospel that has survived in its entirety to the present, though we have fragments of Matthew commentaries in Latin from Victorinus of Poetavio and Fortunatus of Aquileia. Jerome mentions having read all three in his own commentary on Matthew.<sup>140</sup> Hilary's commentary appears, stylistically, to have been written to be read, not preached, and probably by a small group of educated "frères,"<sup>141</sup> for Hilary addresses himself to "the reader" several times.<sup>142</sup> For the most part, Hilary ignores his immediate historical context, alluding very rarely in the commentary to political or religious

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Hilaire de Poitiers, *Sur Matthieu, Tome I, SC 254*, ed. Jean Doignon (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978), 19, n. 1.

<sup>141</sup> Jerome's descriptions of Hilary's style, "his dignified rhetoric," suggest that *In Matthaeum* was written for educated readers. Sanday notes that Jerome is critical of "Hilary's entanglement in long periods, which renders him unsuitable for unlearned readers" in Hilary of Poitiers, *Selected Works*, ed. W. Sanday; transl. E. W. Watson, L. Pullan, et al. (NPNF 9, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, repr. 1989), vii.

<sup>142</sup> E.g., *In Math.*, 19.2.12. Hilaire de Poitiers, *Sur Matthieu, Tome II, SC 258*, ed. Jean Doignon (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1979), 88: *Admonemus tamen legentium ut, quotienscumque de hac eadem quaestione se consulat, verborum virtutes et quibus Dominus respondit...*; "We invite the reader each time that he examines the question to pay careful attention to the value of these words that the Lord spoke..."

events. Whatever historical specificity does appear, Doignon attributes to “schemas” inherited from Tertullian and Cyprian, such as Hilary’s comments on liturgical practices or the responsibility of bishops.<sup>143</sup> Hilary’s later intense opposition to Arianism is notably absent, strengthening the argument for an early dating of the commentary, before Hilary had become an active opponent of Arianism.

Hilary’s dominant hermeneutic is typological, in the tradition of Tertullian and Cyprian (who were among the very few Christian exegetes writing in Latin before him). He seeks the New Testament in the Old, the “spiritual” in addition to the material sense of scripture, and reads all senses as prophetic. His search for another level of meaning, the “interior” sense, aligns with the allegorical interpretations of Origen, whom Sanday argues was also very influential on Hilary.<sup>144</sup> But the types of allegorical meanings that he plies are typological as well—meanings extended beyond their original context, revealing the prophetic import of Old Testament texts—allow for the logic of direct, immediate application to the reader, crucial to the use of commentary in the imposition of identity and conduct, for the moral and spiritual import of accrued meanings is never far behind the initial move beyond the literal.<sup>145</sup> They also attest again to the influence of Tertullian and Cyprian, specifically Tertullian’s debates with Marcion exemplifying “the projection of events of the Law into the life of faith,”<sup>146</sup> and Cyprian’s conferred lessons of “disciplined enthusiasm and Christian morality.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Jean Doignon, Introduction to Hilaire de Poitiers, *Sur Matthieu, Tome I* (SC, 254, 21).

<sup>144</sup> *NPNF*, 9, viii: “The exegesis is often the same as Origen... Hilary is independently working out Origen’s thoughts on Origen’s lines,” though “Origen is not named.” Sanday also notes continued influence of Origen on Hilary in his later works, especially his commentary on the Psalms.

<sup>145</sup> Frances Young makes a compelling argument, based in close readings of Origen, Chrysostom, Ephrem and many others, for deconstructing the “supposed distinctions” between allegory and typology, and between *allegoria* and *theoria*, describing all of these as interwoven in the project of “Christian *mimesis*, or figural representation,” making “a firm differentiation very hard to make” (Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 161).

<sup>146</sup> *SC* 254, 29.

<sup>147</sup> *NPNF*, 9, vi.



In his commentary on Matthew, Hilary interprets the Canaanite woman and her daughter both historically and allegorically. First, he acknowledges the immediate material sense, material or literal because the gospel passage is *about history and about particularity*. Hilary's argument is an interesting mix of particular historical contextualization in order to grasp the inner motive of the Canaanite woman, and general allegorical interpretation to get at her broader significance for the Church and his readers. He also incorporates a narrative element into his reading, assuming a logical progression in Jesus' words and deeds across pericopes. For instance, Hilary points out that the words of exclusion, privilege, and obligation that Jesus uses in Matt 15:21-28 are not evidence of willful obstruction on Jesus' part; rather, *they arise directly out of the previous pericope*, out of Jesus' argument with the Pharisees. Jesus has accused the Pharisees of superstitious attachments to the ways of men; they are lost sheep within the house of Israel.<sup>148</sup> But the Canaanite woman is not a part of that particular historical narrative—that of the salvation of the Jews—at least not directly. It is necessary, Hilary says, to define what kind of person she is. He begins by providing an alternative historical context for her:

*Fuisse atque etiam esse penes Israel proselytorum plebem fides certa est, quae de gentibus in legis opera transcendit et vitae statum anterioris egressa religione peregrinae dominantisque legis tamquam domo continebatur. Chananaei autem fuerunt terras, in quibus nunc Iudaea est, incolentes; qui vel bello consumpti vel in loca vicina dispersi vel in servitutem devictorum condicione subiecti nomen tantum sine patria sede circumferunt. Plebs igitur haec cum Iudaeis admixta de gentibus est. Et quia non est ambiguum in ea turba quae credidit partem nonnullam proselytorum fuisse, merito haec Chananaea proselytorum formam praeferens existimabitur fines suos egressa... quae pro filia, videlicet gentium plebe orat.*<sup>149</sup>

There is a firm belief that there was and still is in Israel a community of proselytes who passed over from the Gentiles into the works of the law. They had left behind their previous life and were bonded by the religion of a foreign

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<sup>148</sup> You could even argue, by this logic, though Hilary does not, that Jesus is clarifying that the previous argument was not about denouncing the Pharisees, but about seeking them out and helping them.

<sup>149</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matthaeum* 15.3.3-17 (SC 258, 36).

and dominating law as though from home. The Canaanites were living in the lands of present-day Judea. Whether absorbed by war or dispersed to neighboring places or brought into servitude as a vanquished people, they had only their name to carry everywhere, having no ancestral land. Intermingled with the Jews, therefore, these people came from the Gentiles. And since a portion of those among the crowd who believed were proselytes, this Canaanite woman most likely had left her territory, preferring the status of proselyte, this woman who prayed for her daughter, that is, for the Gentile people.

Hilary's history lesson establishes the Canaanite woman's daughter as representative of the Gentiles, and the Canaanite woman as a proselyte to Judaism and furthermore, one schooled in scripture:

*Et quia Dominum cognovit ex lege, David filium nuncupat. In lege enim virga de radice Iesse et David filius aeterni et caelestis regni rex continetur.*<sup>150</sup>

And since she knew of the Lord *from the Law*, she addressed him as Son of David. For we find, in effect, in the Law, that a branch will come from the stem of Jesse and the Son of David will be king of an eternal and heavenly kingdom.

He asserts her acceptance of Jewish prophecy and status as proselyte to Judaism, then builds on these to substitute Christianity for Judaism in this story of adoption. He does this by hinting that the Canaanite woman had some knowledge of Jesus' lordship based on Christian typological meanings assigned to Isaiah 11:1 and Jeremiah 23:5!

It is through this move that the historically-anchored portrait morphs into Christian conversion story. The new implication is that she brings her daughter for healing, knowing who and what Jesus was; as Hilary explains,

*Ipsa quidem curatione iam non eget, quae Christum et Dominum et David filium confitetur, sed filiae suae, plebe videlicet gentium dominatu immundorum spirituum occupatae opem poscit.*<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matthaeum* 15.3.18-20 (SC 258, 36).

<sup>151</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matth.* 15.4.1-4 (SC 258, 38).

The woman, who confessed the Christ, the Lord and the Son of David, did not need any healing. Her daughter was a type for all the Gentile people... that is, the Gentile people in the grips of unclean spirits.

Through the well-established typological reading of Isaiah and Jeremiah as direct prophecies of Jesus as Messiah, the historical explanation of a proselyte to Judaism becomes a story of a faithful Christian woman.

History, typology, and allegory collaborate to interpret the Canaanite woman's protest as catechism, and to interpret Jesus' behavior as consciously in line with what he understood the history of salvation to be; his words and actions were *ex ratione temporis*. Thus, Hilary tells us, Jesus came to his own people and was looking for the first fruits of faith from them. The Gentiles were destined to be saved by the preaching of the apostles. But when the Canaanite woman showed a premature faith and seemed to understand that the pagans would soon believe, Jesus relented. As a consequence, another narrative link between pericopes follows. Hilary points out that immediately, in the next verses (15:29-31), the pagans come to Jesus on the mountain to be healed: *Et continuo facti fides sequitur. Nam post praefiguratam in Chananaeae filia gentium plebem continuo in monte obsessi vario genere morborum a turbis Domino offeruntur* ("And the confirmation of facts follows logically. According to the prefiguration of the pagan peoples in the daughter of the Canaanite woman, people imprisoned by various types of sicknesses, presented themselves to the Lord on the mountain").<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matth.* 15.5.6-10 (SC 258, 40).

### 2.3.3 Hilary of Poitiers: *Tractatus Mysteriorum*

Hilary alludes a second time, obliquely, to the Canaanite woman, this time in his *Tractatus Mysteriorum*. The *Tractatus*, discovered relatively recently in 1887, may have been written after Hilary's exile in Phrygia (where the bulk of his theological writings were composed), during his renewed anti-heretical struggles in Paris and Italy, c. 361, and before his death in 367 or 368.<sup>153</sup> In comparison with Hilary's other exegetical works which are scrupulously detailed and gradually developed, ample and slow, the *Tractatus* is remarkably concise and rapid in its unfolding.<sup>154</sup> The text that we have is fragmented and we have only portions of the preface, in which Hilary outlines his method and general plan. Still, it appears the *Tractatus* was to be a series of tracts, covering episodes in Genesis and Exodus. The method is more strictly typological, producing extended delineations of Old Testament prefigurations of the Christian revelation. The text provides another example of history-laden exegesis: *Iunge personas compara effectus, gesta intueri, invenies in praesentium imitatione consequentium veritatem* ("Bring together the characters, compare the events, consider the facts: you will find the truth of the events to come imitated in those which we present").<sup>155</sup>

The allusion to Matt 15:24 occurs in the tract on Moses, which survives intact. Chapter 29 demonstrates how Moses prefigures Jesus in childhood and adolescence. The correspondences are as follows. Moses' sister follows his basket on the river, just as the Law follows Jesus to the sacred signs of wood and water. Just as Pharaoh's daughter saw only a small child but partially intuited his prophetic value, so also the nations saw Jesus. The Law (Miriam)

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<sup>153</sup> Hilaire de Poitiers, *Traité des Mystères*, ed. Jean-Paul Brisson, SC 19 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1947), 8.

<sup>154</sup> SC 19, 11.

<sup>155</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. Myst.* 1.29 (SC 19, 122).

presents to the Church (Pharaoh's daughter) the synagogue, as nurse and mother of the young child. Just so, it is by the Law (the Law itself teaches us) that Jesus was nourished according to the flesh; and it is by the Church that he was adopted. It is at this point that Matt 15:24 comes into play:

*Magnus factus Moyses detentos in servitio fratres requirit... Nonne Christus consummatae et perfectae aetatis cum esset, populum suum, qui secundum carnem eum fratres sunt, visitat... Venit enim ad oves perditas domus Israhel.*<sup>156</sup>

Having become an adult, Moses seeks his brothers who are detained in servitude... Does not Jesus when he has achieved a consummated and perfect age, visit his people, who are his brothers according to the flesh... He comes, in effect, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

As an adult, Moses returns to search out his brothers who continued to be enslaved and in the process kills an Egyptian who is brutalizing them. So Jesus, when he becomes a man, seeks out his people, his brothers according to the flesh. He comes to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and fights and conquers the devil who is dominating them: *Ita consummationem in Deo gratiae consequitur ea, quae in latore legis imitatio est* ("In this way, the Law-giver imitates the consummation that the God of Grace achieves").<sup>157</sup> Here, Matt 15:24 articulates a historical nexus, an encounter prefigured, thus predestined and intended, in which the Jews are liberated from their former dependence on their nurse, the Law, into the sustaining grace of God. Note that there is almost no paranetic imperative in this reading. The lesson is intellectual; its application or imperative resides in a correct understanding of salvation history and one's place within it.

Hilary's use of Matt 15:24 to confirm his version of salvation history shares much in common with the next reading of the Canaanite woman, that of Ephrem of Nisibis, even if Ephrem's context and career are very different. The link between Hilary and Ephrem resides in

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<sup>156</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. Myst.* 1.29 (SC 19, 124).

<sup>157</sup> Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract. Myst.* 1.29 (SC 19, 124).

their focus on verse 24 and in their supercessionism. Ephrem's readings are more explicitly paranetic, however, and more viscerally anti-Jewish, as he emphasizes the implicit lessons for Jews and Christians in the story of the Canaanite woman.

#### **2.3.4 Ephrem of Nisibis: Commentary on the Gospel**

Ephrem was one of the earliest and most influential of exegetes in Syrian Christianity. His commentary on Matt 15:24 in Tatian's *Diatesseron* offers an early 4<sup>th</sup> century Syrian interpretation of the Canaanite woman and her exchange with Jesus, from one of the most popular writers of that place and time. Three exegetical fragments on the Canaanite woman from this text provide entrée into a Syria of divergent paganisms, Judaisms, and a variety of Christianities, from Semitic Judaic-Christianity to Nicene orthodoxy.<sup>158</sup> The Canaanite woman who emerges in these texts becomes an object-lesson in faithfulness and in divine favor, intended as much for Jews who are censured for their faithless rejection of Jesus as for Christians who are urged to orthodox faithfulness.

Ephrem's *Commentary* has come to us in fragments. Even so, it is still the most reliable witness to Tatian's harmony of the Gospels that we have. Like Matthew 15:21-28 and the inter-religious dialogue it describes, the arc of biblical interpretation that runs from Tatian's teacher, Justin Martyr, to Tatian, and thence through Ephrem's commentary, is overt conscious inter-religious dialogue, albeit chauvinistic and triumphalist in spirit. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. 160, deployed typology and proof from prophecy in order to subordinate the best of antique philosophy and Judaism to Christianity. And Tatian was declared a heretic in 173 for his Gnostic

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<sup>158</sup> For the presence of Jewish academies in Nisibis, see Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia I* (Leiden: Brill, 1965). Also see Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 17, n. 62.

and Encratic sympathies. In spite of this fact, his *Diatesseron* remained the primary gospel text used in Syria from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and saw wide dissemination, even though his eclectic doctrinal leanings led him to harmonize the gospels in decidedly Gnostic, Encratic and Marcionite directions.<sup>159</sup> That Tatian's seemingly innocuous redactions and motivated translations had a broad audience is understood, given the *Diatesseron*'s status as primary gospel text in the region, but also given Ephrem's decision to write a commentary upon it, at the end of his own very public career (363-73). Both texts may well have been used in liturgical and catechetical settings.<sup>160</sup>

The likelihood of the *commentary*'s broad influence, particularly its authority in defining orthodox belief and conduct, is increased by the simultaneous authority and popularity of Ephrem's *madrêshê*, often translated as "hymns," though a better term, "teaching songs," has been suggested.<sup>161</sup> In addition to biblical commentaries and theological refutations of heretical thought, Ephrem wrote "teaching songs" which were inserted directly into the Syrian worship experience. Composed of a stanza followed by a responsive refrain, they mimicked catechesis even at the level of form. Jerome says they were recited after the Scripture lessons in the liturgy.<sup>162</sup> The songs were sung by women choirs who became, in effect, women teachers, both

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Leloir's introduction to Ephrem of Nisibis, *Commentaire de L'Évangile Concordant ou Diatessaron*, SC 121, ed. Louis Leloir (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 12-15. Leloir's examples of theologically-motivated translations in Tatian's harmonizing include the insertion of an anti-conjugal formula into the description of the birth of Jesus at Matt 1:18; the rendering of οἰνοπότης as simply "drinker" at Matt 11:19; the restriction of the obligation to uphold every iota of the law at Matt 5:19 to "the least of the precepts of the New Testament" (SC 121, 14); and his suppression of the genealogies (at least according to Theodoret, though they do appear in later manuscripts, perhaps added back in) in order to emphasize the divinity of Jesus, and not his incarnation specifically "according to the flesh of the race of David." Cf. *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium*, 1:20 (PG 83:372A).

<sup>160</sup> SC 121, 20. Leloir attributes this opinion about the practical utility of the *Diatesseron* to Ortiz De Urbina.

<sup>161</sup> Andrew Palmer, "A Lyre without a Voice, the Poetics and the Politics of Ephrem the Syrian," *Aram* 5 (1993): 371-399.

<sup>162</sup> E. C. Anderson, ed., *Hieronymus, Liber de Viris Illustribus* (Texte und Untersuchungen, no. 14.; Leipzig, 1896), 51.

songs and singers serving as “the effective instruments of catechesis in the Syriac-speaking congregations.”<sup>163</sup>

That Ephrem was concerned to, among other things, establish the boundaries of orthodox faith and thought is clear from the sheer range of his campaign for orthodoxy, from his *Prose Refutations*, which took on Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan, to his *Hymns Against Heresies*. Sidney Griffiths has called him “a religious polemicist of considerable acumen,” pointing to a self-portrait by the 4<sup>th</sup> century deacon himself from the last of his *Hymns Against Heresies* to illustrate. The passage provides not just a window into the role Ephrem saw for himself, but also for his texts, as religious boundary-markers, literally fences, “enclosing” Christian “sheep” and keeping out “the wolves.”

O Lord, may the works of your herdsman (*allānâ*) not be cheated.  
I will not then have troubled your sheep,  
but as far as I was able,  
I will have kept the wolves away from them,  
and I will have built, as far as I was capable,  
enclosures of teaching songs (*madrāshê*)  
for the lambs of your flock.  
I will have made a disciple  
of the simple and unlearned man.  
And I will have given him a strong hold  
on the herdsmen's (*allānê*) staff,  
the healers' medicine,  
and the disputants' armor.<sup>164</sup>

So it is in relation to his wider strategy and influence that we look to Ephrem's reading of the Canaanite woman to see what and how he used this inter-religious encounter between Jesus

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<sup>163</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, “A Spiritual Father for the Whole Church: the Universal Appeal of St. Ephraem the Syrian,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 1:2 (July 1998), n.p. [Cited 15 November 2010]. Online: <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol1No2/HV1N2Griffith.html>.

<sup>164</sup> Griffith, “A Spiritual Father,” n.p.



and a pagan woman to instruct.<sup>165</sup> Her story surfaces three times in Ephrem's commentary in sections on gospel passages about Jesus' ministry, Jesus in Nazareth, and Jesus' miracles,<sup>166</sup> thus, in the context of Jesus' ministry to diverse people in diverse contexts. In all three instances, Ephrem adopts a kind of classic Antiochene style, avoiding allegorical excess, yet acknowledging a deeper, often typological significance to the literal meaning of the texts. Indeed, it is characteristic of Ephrem to use parallelism and comparative examples to link every person, scene, and text in Scripture to a corresponding analogue or antithesis.<sup>167</sup> The establishment of orthodox identity and conduct through unforgiving contrasts is much in evidence in Ephrem.

The first mention of the Canaanite woman occurs within comments on Matt 9:2, the healing of the paralytic.<sup>168</sup> Ephrem chooses to focus on the faith of the paralytic's friends, specifically what the faith of some can accomplish for others. He then immediately compares their faith to that of the father of the epileptic boy in Mark/Luke, and of the Canaanite woman, mother of a demon-possessed daughter. In this sequence, he correlates the paralytic's faithful friends to a doubting father and a Gentile mother, the latter of whose faith is either non-existent

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<sup>165</sup> Germane to this question is Christine Shepardson's reference to scholarly controversy over the authorship of Ephrem's commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, and the Diatesseron, which "contain significantly less anti-Jewish rhetoric" than Ephrem's other work. (Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 12, n. 37.) Shepardson notes, for instance, that Ephrem's treatment of John 8:44 in *Comm. Diat.* scarcely registers the reference to Jews as children of the devil, while his hymns make much of this text. This question is also related to the extent to which Ephrem's exegetical thought reflects Jewish influence. And certainly there are passages in the *Commentary* that reflect a kind of measured tolerance that we would not expect to see in the author of *Hymns Against Heresies*. I find the following particularly striking: "Doubtless, there were in Israel sound and just people: it was not to them that the arduous effort of Jesus was addressed in order to heal and justify men. Among the pagans themselves, there were also sound and just people in the eyes of the Creator" (Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 5.21; SC 121, 117).

<sup>166</sup> Chapter 5, fragment 19; chapter 11, section 5, fragment 27; and chapter 12 with an entire section 5 dedicated to her. The critical edition consulted for this reading is Ephrem of Nisibis, *Commentaire de L'Évangile Concordant ou Diatessaron*, SC 121, ed. Louis Leloir (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), and not Carmel McCarthy's 1993 English translation.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Leloir, *Commentaire*, 31: "le procédé le plus caractéristique d'Éphrem paraît être l'emploi fréquent du symbolisme et du parallélisme, tantôt synonymique, tantôt antithétique... le lien des diverses parties, soit de l'Ancien, soit du Nouveau Testament, lui est apparu si intime que tout personnage, tout texte et toute scène de la Bible ont été évocateurs, pour lui, d'autres personnages, textes et scènes."

<sup>168</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 5:19 (SC 121, 116).

or in the process of being “called forth.” But what seems at first like an imperfect or forced correspondence of contrasting characters turns out to be an engaging array of spiritual states that stage the fragility and instability of faith. This, in turn, becomes a useful tool, since Ephrem also seeks in this section to establish some contested doctrinal points, namely, the divinity implicit in the healing power of Jesus and the universal salvation accessible through his forgiving of the sin of unbelief.

So it is that, instead of a concessive remark that acknowledges second-class citizenship, Ephrem’s Canaanite woman witnesses to Jesus’ immense power: “Even the dogs are filled abundantly.” In this way, the implication of a partial, subordinate reward for non-Jews is elided, indeed the issue of Jewish priority is removed entirely. Likewise, the Pharisees’ questioning of Jesus’ right to forgive sins in the healing of the paralytic is also ignored, as is any direct reference to the father’s questioning of Jesus’ ability to heal his son.

What remains is Jesus’ demand for faith, not from the sick, weak, or sinful, but from those whose faith can save the sick, weak, and sinful. It is a lesson immediately applied to his readers: “We must take care, then, of our soul, lest it languish like that of the paralytic because of his sins.” Here is the implicit lesson that the Canaanite woman and the others embody: “we” are precariously positioned between the status of the sickly/unfaithful, and those who save them.

The terms in question now in place, Ephrem asks why Jesus would save the paralytic (the unbeliever) – and by extension, a doubting father’s son or a Canaanite woman’s daughter – and presumably any others caught between faith and doubt who are not “his debtors.” His answer: It is the merciful goodness of the Lord that saves them. At the same time, though, the combination of paranetic goals in Ephrem’s commentary (the desired identifications it promotes) and the larger Christological concerns he inserts into his gloss of the passage suggest a more local and

particular lesson: The “fragile edifice” of the paralytic’s soul looks a lot like the embattled theological struggle of 4<sup>th</sup> century Nicene Christians. Those in Nisibis who have attained a strong orthodox faith, through the intercession of an omnipotent Savior, must save the Syrian church.

Ephrem’s second allusion to the Canaanite woman appears at the end of his reading of Jesus’ ill-fated teaching in a Nazareth synagogue in Matt 13 and continues the theme of Jesus’ ministry to the Gentile nations, this time much more explicitly at the expense of his Jewish detractors, though he doesn’t at first appear to have changed scapegoats.<sup>169</sup> While Ephrem concedes Jesus’ Jewishness in going first to the synagogue, he does so with impatient resistance: “Did he have no other people or country than that of the Jews?” Even so, he deftly finds a polemical use for Jesus’ visit to the synagogue “to refute the lies of Marcion.”<sup>170</sup> He then continues to mock Marcionite propositions, pointing out, for instance, that in this passage where Jesus is at first so well received, he could not possibly have been teaching the Jews about the good New Testament God of love, as opposed to the bad Old Testament God of justice.

But this is all preamble and collateral damage. The core message of Ephrem’s comments on Jesus at Nazareth focuses on Luke 4:25-28, where Jesus cites the good deeds of Elijah and Elisha towards Gentiles in the face of what Ephrem deems chronic Israelite faithlessness. In response to this lesson, Ephrem says, the people of Nazareth saw that Jesus “covered all the land of Israel with shame and disgrace, while he carried the Gentiles instead into the heavens.”<sup>171</sup> The argument culminates in a typological reading of the centurion and the Canaanite woman who honored “our Lord,” just as did Naaman of old and the widow of Zarephath. In these ways,

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<sup>169</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 11.23-27 (SC 121, 208-211).

<sup>170</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.*, 11.23 (SC 121, 208). Specifically, Jesus’ going to a temple would contradict Marcion’s rejection of any association between Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures, the synagogue, Jewish teaching, or the “Old Testament” God of wrath and vengeance.

<sup>171</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 11.26 (SC 121, 210).

Ephrem argues, Jesus demonstrated to his disciples and the Jews the long culminating spread of the Gospel, and of God's healing grace and favor to the Gentiles.

Finally, Ephrem's *primary* treatment of the Canaanite woman and Matthew 15 appears in chapter 12 of his commentary. Here, Ephrem performs some fast exegetical footwork to transform the story of an ignored, rejected Gentile woman into the story of an icon of Christian (and not Jewish) faith who, like the Gentiles of 1 Kings cited above, was favored over the Jews. He manages all this in spite of the fact that Jesus emphatically declares the priority of the Jews in the passage itself. First, Ephrem acknowledges the literal sense of the passage, but not without editorializing: "Jesus scorned her with his silence; he spurned her with his words; he honored Israel *who insulted him.*" He notes that the Canaanite woman's response sounds "as if the Jews were the masters of all other peoples,"<sup>172</sup> but not without a corrective clarification that Gentile dogs are daring and loving, while Jewish dogs are frenzied and enraged.

Ephrem also transforms the apparent literal sense of the passage by explaining Jesus' silence, not as indifference or disdain, but as his silent evocation of the woman's faith. This move may well be original with Ephrem,<sup>173</sup> as he explains, "The silence of Our Lord engendered an even more vehement cry in the mouth of the Canaanite woman" and later, "He shot this grave reproach [one does not take the bread from the children and give it to the dogs] into her ears, and filled them with it, so that her faith might be manifested."<sup>174</sup> This ingenious reading later becomes a standard of the exegetical tradition, from Ephrem through his contemporary Chrysostom, and on to commentary-writers from Calvin to Matthew Poole.

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<sup>172</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 12.13 (SC 121, 221).

<sup>173</sup> It is the earliest example that I have found, though it may be akin to Origen's earlier theories, in the context of Alexandrian allegory, of Jesus "vivifying" different souls in different ways.

<sup>174</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 12.13 (SC 121, 221). At the same time, Ephrem's contemporary Chrysostom offers a similar reading of Jesus "calling her forth" through his silence, turning his back, refusing to helCf. Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 52.2 (NPNF 10, 321).

And to what other end is this calling forth of faith directed than to the exposure of yet another unforgiving contrast upon which to build Christian identity? That is, the Canaanite woman is fashioned not just as a general exemplum of faith, tenacity in prayer, and humility, but also as a lesson specifically targeted at the Jews who rejected Jesus. The “more vehement cry” that Ephrem describes is given to the Jewish disciples as an example of “the insistent love of the Gentiles.”<sup>175</sup>

This lesson for the Jews is then developed further in a series of intertextual and typological correlations. Ephrem turns to *Numbers* 13 and 14 and creates a parallel between the Canaanite woman who submits to Jesus and the ancient Canaanites who submitted to Joshua in *Numbers*—who, Ephrem says, recognized in Joshua the prototype of Jesus. This parallel allows Ephrem to then equate 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews who rejected Jesus with the ancient Israelites in *Numbers* who balked at taking over the land of Canaan and threatened to stone Moses.

Not satisfied with these disparaging correlations, Ephrem next connects them to Matthew 12:43-45,<sup>176</sup> thereby depicting an ever-renewing unclean spirit that alternately possesses the Israelites and the Canaanites, inciting them to resist Joshua/Jesus at different points in the *Numbers* narrative. By way of this historical mirror, he equates the faith of the Canaanites with that of the Canaanite woman; it is by means of this faith that Jesus exorcises the unclean spirit from the Canaanite woman’s daughter. The notion that there is an unclean spirit that moves into and out of peoples and submits to Jesus leads to a particularly damning conclusion to this fragment of Ephrem’s commentary: “In all the religions, unclean spirits are expelled at the name

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<sup>175</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 12.13 (*SC* 121, 221).

<sup>176</sup> “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting-place, but it finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation.” (*NRSV*)

of Jesus. But if, yet, you look today at Israel, you will discover that all the fury and all the quarreling and quibbling of all the peoples live in Israel.”<sup>177</sup>

Intent on ensuring that this indictment meets its mark, Ephrem instructs his readers in how to interpret typologies, which he calls “parables” in this fragment. He speaks to his readers directly, instructing them not to get lost in the details of the comparison which are, in any event, provisory and only there to make a larger point. He tells them to throw away what is “not useful” and to regard *outcomes* as indicative of the larger point: “the Canaanites who fought against the name of Joshua/Jesus disappeared from the earth, and the Israelites were rooted out from the midst of their homeland.”<sup>178</sup>

The minatory use of Matt 15:21-28 to restrain an array of sinful behaviors and beliefs, not to mention any felt bonds with Jewish faith, praxis, or people, thus became a critical piece of its usefulness as spiritual paranesis, and as Ephrem’s readings demonstrate, rebuke could be directed strategically with a modicum of exegetical effort. The paranesis within the exegesis could not be more emphatic in its adamant separation of good faithful Gentiles who “honor our Lord” and are favored over the Jews from shamed and faithless Jews, a people possessed with an unclean spirit, wandering without a homeland. This passage is in some ways mild and antiseptic compared to the fevered anti-Jewish pitch of some of Ephrem’s hymns, e.g., “The people that does not eat from a pig is a pig that wallows in much blood.”<sup>179</sup> Still, it suffices to illustrate the ways in which the violent anti-Judaism of his collected writings demonstrates “a calculated effort

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<sup>177</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 12.14 (SC 121, 222).

<sup>178</sup> Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 12.15 (SC 121, 222-23).

<sup>179</sup> Ephrem, *Azym.* 19.27. *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Paschahymnen*, CSCO 248, SS 108, Louvain, 1964.

to leave his Syrian congregation with no alternative but to conform to the imperial orthodoxy of the Council of Nicaea.”<sup>180</sup>

Ephrem’s is a mind that routinely engaged in violent anathema, yet could describe Jesus falling from the cliff at Nazareth with extraordinary gentleness—“Audacity had pushed him, but the air, yielding itself to him, collected him into its wings.” Ephrem repels and compels. He writes with great sensitivity for, and interest in, women; his poems dwell on mystical union with God with beauty and subtlety. If there were ever a case that revealed the twisted effect of ecclesiological pressures on exegetical formulations, it is this deep divide between Ephrem’s mystical intuition and his practical anathema, between his other-worldly and this-worldly ideas.

### **2.3.5 Didymus the Blind: *In Zacharium***

A slightly more tempered reading of the Canaanite woman appears just a decade or so later in Alexandria in Didymus the Blind’s commentary, *In Zacharium*, written 387. Didymus’ interpretation of the Canaanite woman is in some ways traditional, but also contributes some new grist for the paranetic fruits of the exegetical mill. Heavily influenced by Origen, he relies on more liberal allegorical and associative techniques and thus offers a very different kind of paranesis than the doctrinally-focused exegetics of Ephrem, whose text Didymus probably did not read in any case, since it was in Syriac. Nor does the text betray undue influence from the Old Testament historicism of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s *In Zacharium*, written just 5-6 years before Didymus.’ Instead, Didymus’ allegorizing offers ample associations and digressions, imaginatively linked scriptural intertexts, and acknowledgement of a broad diversity of prior

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<sup>180</sup> Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*, 3.

interpretations, creating a broader sense of tradition than the authoritative exegeses considered thus far.<sup>181</sup>

The Canaanite woman surfaces at the very end of Didymus' commentary, in his exegesis of the final verses of Zechariah, thus not within the rehearsal of Israel's past history found in the early chapters of Zechariah, but rather within the apocalyptic vision of eschatological fulfillment of its final chapters. Zechariah 14 predicts Israel's decisive victory over "all the nations that have come against Jerusalem."<sup>182</sup> The salient verse is the last of the entire book, Zechariah 14:21b: Καὶ οὐκ ἔσται Χαναανῖος οὐκέτι ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ Κυρίου παντοκράτορος ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ("And there will be no more Canaanites at all in the house of the almighty Lord on that day").<sup>183</sup> Didymus at first offers a literal reading of all the nations coming together, but unlike Micah 4, they all take on the cultic functions of the Israelite priest, making sacrifices to God, by way of Reason (σὺν λόγῳ) or a knowing speculation (ἐπιστημονικῇ θεωρίᾳ). The Canaanite, in contrast, is an outlier, an impious foreigner, and he will disappear, either by becoming a genuine worshipper (ἰσραηλιτικῆς), or by being chased from the house of the almighty Lord entirely.

Didymus next glosses "Canaanite" according to its spiritual sense, ἀλληγορικῶς. He strings together several texts that equate Canaanites with idolatry, debauchery, and scandal (Daniel 13:56-7 and Hosea 4: 17). He then links these to 1 Corinthians where lapsed members of the Corinthian church, who are guilty of sexual transgressions and pride similar to those of the Canaanites, are expelled from the community. The intertexts demonstrate, for Didymus, that those who have strayed from correct belief and conduct are allegorical "Canaanites" and they are

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<sup>181</sup> SC 83, 32-45, passim, especially, 33: "le souci de Didyme de ne pas marcher dans le sillage d'un seul et de faire appel à une large tradition. Louable souci, mais qui, sur le plan des applications allégoriques, peut tourner à un insipide pluralisme d'opinions, dont Didyme ne sut pas toujours se garder."

<sup>182</sup> Zech. 14.16 (NRSV).

<sup>183</sup> Didymus, *In Zach.*, 5.200. Didymus the Blind, *Sur Zacharie, Tome 3*, SC 85, ed. Louis Doutreleau, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1962), 1080.



to be expelled from the community of the righteous. So far, Didymus' reading is perfectly in synch with the boundary-setting and anathematizing of Tertullian or Ephrem.

It is at this point that Didymus diverges slightly and differentiates his commentary and his reading of the Canaanite woman from other readings. Perhaps he wished to conclude his commentary with a hopeful word, with a possibility of redemption, in good paranetic fashion. In any case, it is Matthew 15:21-28 that provides the needed hopeful example:

Ἵτι δὲ οὐδενὸς ὄντος φύσει κακοῦ, ὡς δοξάζουσί τινες τῶν ἑτεροδόξων, μεταβολὴ προαιρετικὴ γίνεται, παρίσταται ἐκ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, μεταβαλοῦσης τῆς Χαναanaίας γυναικὸς ἐκ κυνὸς εἰς γυναῖκα, χρηματίζουσαν θυγατέρα τοῦ σώσαντος αὐτήν, εἰρηκότος τάδε: «Θύγατερ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.» Τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐτύγκανεν κύων πρὸ τῆς πίστεως, ὅτι ἀκόλαστος ἦν γυνὴ .....ορον γὰρ πρὸς ὀχείαν καὶ αἰσχροπαθῆ κολακεία.<sup>184</sup>

No one is evil by nature, as some heretics think; the proof that a change of (spiritual) state is an effect of the Will can be drawn from the Gospel, since the Canaanite woman became a woman again, from the dog that she was, when He who saved her named her his daughter in pronouncing these words: 'My daughter, your faith has saved you.' Perhaps, she may have been a dog before having faith, because this was a woman of evil ways.

This small detour and its focus on spiritual transformation through the will (προαιρετικὴ) is arresting, even if not altogether inconsistent with the vision that concludes Zechariah. There too the nations learn to live as good Jews, even if this is accomplished under threat of divine retribution. Certainly, Didymus' sense of souls capable of contributing to their own transformation is in line with Origen's reading of the Canaanite woman as figure for the human soul journeying towards God.

In the end, this intertextual illustration, this impromptu byproduct of Didymus' digressive and freer exegetical style, serves to exemplify not freely willed spiritual growth, but rather the compulsory worship of the Lord, who is king over all the earth at the eschaton. For while

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<sup>184</sup> Didymus, *In Zach.*, 5.210-211 (SC 85, 1084, 1086).

Didymus generally sticks less closely to Scripture and creates imaginative scenarios cobbled out of diverse intertexts, he concludes this commentary with an undiluted reiteration of Zechariah’s eschatological vision. There will be no Canaanites in the house of the Lord on that day, unless they have been transformed into genuine worshippers through a knowing speculation or Reason. This is how it will stand ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ καταγαζομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου τῆς δικαιοσύνης, τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, τοῦ Μονογενοῦς Υἱοῦ Θεοῦ (“On the day illuminated by the Sun of Justice, true Light, only-begotten Son of God”).<sup>185</sup>

Nevertheless, the exegetical thread that continued to build upon Origen’s original spiritual allegory had begun to move the Canaanite woman more squarely center-stage and to leverage her, and not the encounter per se, as an exemplum that alternately disciplines and rewards. As should now be evident, this sort of paranesis, in order to acquire disciplinary power, began to construct the Canaanite woman as reformed sinner. Over time, the shift from the daughter’s sickness to the mother’s sinfulness transforms the original miracle story into moral exhortation. The drama is achieved through her self-transformation by means of faith in Jesus; the discipline, through the fact that she is used to symbolize the sinfulness of Jews and of Canaanites.

The sinful nature of her former ways and those of her daughter becomes integral to reading Matt 15:21-28 as spiritual allegory. It is implied in Origen’s comparison of her to “each of us” sinning at the borders of evil, prey of wickedness and passion, sloth and irrationality. But it is Didymus, and later Jerome, who modify Origen’s universalist teaching about the sinfulness of “each of us,” and instead locate the woman’s sinfulness specifically in *her former religious belief and practice*. This is in contrast to earlier commentaries that focused on, and attempted to

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<sup>185</sup> Didymus, *In Zach.*, 5.211 (SC 85, 1086).

regulate, acts of interpretation—whether of Scripture, history, or Christology, and on religious practice only in an ancillary fashion.

### 2.3.6 Jerome: *Commentarium in Matthaeum*

Jerome had visited Didymus in the summer of 386 and encouraged him to write his *In Zacharium*, that is, to finish the work that Origen had started in writing his commentary on the first six chapters of Zechariah.<sup>186</sup> And so, perhaps predictably, Jerome, like Didymus, depicts a repentant Canaanite woman who renounces her former religious “error” and embraces her role as the embodiment of the faithful Christian Church. Jerome perceives the penalty for her past errors in her daughter’s sickness and in the torments suffered by the many “souls of believers” that her daughter represents:

*Inde novit vocare filium David quia egressa iam fuerat de finibus suis et errorem Tyrriorum ac Sidoniorum loci ac fidei commutatione dimiserat. “Filia mea male a daemonio vexatur.” Ego filiam ecclesiae puto animas esse credentium quae male a daemonio vexabantur, ignorantes creatorem et adorantes lapidem.*<sup>187</sup>

She learned to call him Son of David because she had already left her country, changing location and faith, she had renounced the error of Tyre and Sidon... in my opinion, she [the daughter] was the souls of believers tormented by the devil, not knowing the Creator and worshipping stone.

The allegory extends accordingly. The Canaanite woman represents the faith, patience and humility of the Church. Her humility causes her to label herself a “little dog.” But it is the pagans who are full-grown dogs, idolatrous, nourished by blood and cadavers, and enraged. This vivid distinction, which ratchets up Ephrem’s earlier distinction between Jewish and Gentile

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<sup>186</sup> SC 83, 23-24.

<sup>187</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 2.15.22. Jerome, *Commentaire sur Saint Matthieu*, SC 242, ed. Émile Bonnard (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1977), 330.

dogs, establishes contrasting group identities with grisly severity in order to redeploy the Canaanite woman's concession as a claim. She is not a dog like the pagans are dogs, not wildly feeding on dead things, but domesticated, waiting under Jesus' table for his crumbs. Her daughter represents all the pagan souls that remain tormented until the Church intercedes on their behalf. For Jerome, then, it is a short step from a Canaanite woman who is the Christian church to a Canaanite woman convinced of Jesus' divinity: *Nota quod ista Cananitis perseveranter primum filium David, deinde Dominum vocet, et ad extremum adoret ut Deum* ("Notice that without becoming discouraged, this Canaanite woman first calls him Son of David, then Lord, and finally adores him as God").<sup>188</sup>

Here are shades of Hilary's proselyte, not so much schooled in Scripture as imbued with an inevitable unshakeable faith. Jerome's emphasis on her maternal faithfulness and its ability to raise up a Church full of healed daughter-souls moves seamlessly into the supercessionist motif that follows:

*O mira rerum conversio. Israhel quondam filius, nos canes. Pro diversitate fidei ordo nominum commutatur... Nos audimus cum Syrophoenissa et muliere quae sanguine fluxerat: "Magna est fides tua."*<sup>189</sup>

Oh admirable reversal! Before Israel was the son, and we were the dogs. Faith being moved, the names are inverted... We, with the Syrophoenician woman and the hemorrhaging woman, hear, "Great is your faith..."

Here again is the quintessential paranetic moment when "we," the Church, the Christian readers of Jerome's commentary, are conflated with the Canaanite woman, implicated in her narrative, identified with her sin and repentance, and consigned to her humility and unwavering faith. Jerome may have begun his comments on Matt 15:21-28 with historical concessions to the restriction Jesus had imposed on his disciples at Matt 10:5 to preach only to Jews, and with

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<sup>188</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 2.15.25 (SC 242, 332).

<sup>189</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 2.15.27 (SC 242, 334).

descriptions of the mystery of Jesus' plan to delay the salvation of the Gentiles to the time of his passion and resurrection, but the allegory superimposes future reversals into the encounter itself. This exegetical thread would develop in later commentaries into a reading of Matt 15:21-28 as the moment when the Gentile mission began. The rewriting of the history of Jesus' ministry is based on the transcendence of history at the heart of allegorical signification.

But the project of the "scriptural ratification of the election of the Gentiles" was already a sustained preoccupation during the patristic period, as was the substitution of the Church for the Jewish people. Indeed, the readings considered thus far make clear what Deirdre Good has also pointed out, "the model of substitution was another, if not the primary way of establishing Christian identity over and against the Jews."<sup>190</sup> And if typology was an integral piece of the oft-repeated justification of scriptural, religious, and cultural appropriation, its use to these ends reaches a kind of acme in the *Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei* of Quodvultdeus.

### **2.3.7 Quodvultdeus: Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei**

Building on the earliest Latin rhetorical and exegetical foundations of Tertullian and Cyprian, Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage, was, alongside Augustine, one of 5<sup>th</sup> century Africa's most prominent Christian moralists. Just a little over 200 years after Tertullian's references to Matt 15:24, Quodvultdeus also made use of the story of the Canaanite woman, and like his compatriot Tertullian also found the exclusivity logion to be the most fungible verse for his purposes.

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<sup>190</sup> Deirdre Good, "The Canaanite Woman: Patristic Exegesis of Matthew 15, 21-28," in *Figures due Nouveau Testament Chez Les Peres*, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 3 (Strasbourg: Centre D'Analyse et de Documentation Patristiques, 1991), 169-177 (169).

Quodvultdeus' *Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei*, the Book of Promises and Prophecies, was written between 445 and 451 and depicts an uninterrupted, indeed inexorable, salvation history, the prediction and sanction of which he locates in a plethora of scriptural testimonies from the Old and New Testaments, which he exhaustively accumulates and presents.<sup>191</sup> The book is divided into three parts: *ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia (manifestata)* (before the Law, under the Law, and under Grace (manifested)). This borrowing of Augustine's division of sacred history into the time before Mosaic Law (from the patriarchs to Moses), the time under the Law (the age of the Jews, their judges, kings, and prophets), and the time under Grace (from Jesus' incarnation to the eschaton) is just one of many indications of Augustine's considerable influence on Quodvultdeus. The *Liber Promissionum* focuses on high points in the history of salvation, from the creation of humanity to the coming of Christ, the birth of Christianity, the establishment of the reign of God and the imminence of eschatological fulfillment.<sup>192</sup> It emerges out of the Carthaginian school of exegetics, the rhetorical tradition and the polemical early exegetical battles of Tertullian.

The purpose of Quodvultdeus' *Liber Promissionum* is to establish the Hebrew Scriptures as a prefiguration of the Christian gospel. Its exegetical style is allegorical and typological; Quodvultdeus simply refers to his interpretations as "spiritual." Roughly one-third of the book consists of Biblical citation.<sup>193</sup> The typological correspondences are for the most part conventional, standard since the first centuries of Christianity, including such types for Christ as

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<sup>191</sup> The *Liber Promissionum* was attributed, as early as 100 years after its composition and several manuscripts, to Prosper of Aquitaine, another follower of Augustine. But it is also true that the attribution is absent in other editions, including the oldest extant manuscript of Trèves. Braun reviews at length critical discussion of the book's contested authorship and concludes that it was written by Quodvultdeus. Cf. René Braun, introduction to Quodvultdeus, *Liber promissionum et praedictorum Dei*, SC 101, ed. Claudio Moreschini; transl. René Braun. (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 112.

<sup>192</sup> SC 101, 24-25. Braun notes the influence of Augustine's *De civitate dei* as a model for Quodvultdeus' choice of biblical passages and his overall vision of salvation history.

<sup>193</sup> SC 101, 44.

Adam, Noah, Isaac, Joseph, and Moses; and for the Church, Eve, Rahab, Deborah, Ruth, and Esther. On the other hand, Braun notes Quodvultdeus' ingenious use of narrative details to illustrate and enlarge upon the basic correspondences he inherited,<sup>194</sup> which are often sustained beyond the scope of traditional typological treatments and draw in many new combinations of intertexts. This is certainly true in the case of Quodvultdeus' eight-chapter long delineation of Joseph as a prefiguration of Jesus. (1.25-32)

The *Liber Promissionum* contains not one but three allusions to the story of the Canaanite woman, but they are not extended considerations of the story or the woman. They are, at least in the first two instances, only some, among many, intertexts that Quodvultdeus brings together in order to establish his typologies. In all cases, predictive implications and original scriptural contexts are loosely and imaginatively held together.<sup>195</sup>

All three references to Matt 15:21-28 appear in Book 1, *ante legem*. The first reference is to the exclusivity logion of Matt 15:24. It begins the second of eight chapters (25-32) that develop a traditional Joseph-Jesus typology. Chapter 26 maps how both Joseph and Jesus were sent to their brothers, their "sheep," and how both met with hatred. A short schematic of Quodvultdeus' accrual and combination of disparate Scriptural intertexts will provide a clear picture of how he performs his brand of "spiritual" typological interpretation.

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<sup>194</sup> SC 101, 42-3.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 109 for her discussion of how the practice of classical literary allusion which yielded "fresh inspiration arising from imitation" was applied in Biblical allusion to create "new statements woven out of words, phrases or ideas culled from both Old and New Testaments."

<p><u>Gen 37:13-14</u>--Joseph was sent by his father to look for his brothers and his sheep.</p>	<p><u>Matt 15:24</u> Jesus, "our Joseph," was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: <i>Mittitur Ioseph a patre ad visitandos fratres suos et oves. Dicit et noster Ioseph Christus dominus: Non sum missus nisi ad oves quae perierunt domus Israhel.</i></p>
<p><u>Gen 37:11</u>—Joseph's brothers hate him because of his dreams.</p>	<p><u>Ps 35:19; Jn 15:25</u>—The words of Psalm 35 are Christ's, not David's, who says of "the Jews, his brothers": <i>Quoniam odio habuerunt me gratis.</i> (They hated me without reason.) This is a fact prefigured in the Psalm, and a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, according to John 15:25.</p>
<p><u>Gen 37:19-20</u>—Joseph's brothers see him and plan to kill him to see what his dreams really were (that is, how true they were, and what they were good for).</p> <p><u>Gen 37:19-20</u>—Joseph's brothers see him and plan to kill him to see what his dreams really were (that is, how true they were, and what they were good for).</p>	<p><u>Wis 2:12</u>--The same words were spoken by the impious about "our Joseph": <i>Venite, occidamus iustum quoniam insuavis est nobis.</i> (Come, let us kill the just man, since he is vexing to us.)</p> <p>Again, in <u>Wis 2:13 and 17</u>--the words apply to Jesus: <i>Promittit scientiam Dei se habere et filium Dei se nominat, and Videamus si sermones illius veri sunt et temptemus quae ventura sunt illi.</i> (He pretends to possess the knowledge of God and calls himself a son of God... Let us see if his words are true and let us examine what will happen to him.)</p> <p><u>Matt 21:38</u>--Also Jesus himself confirms the prediction when he tells the story of the son of the vineyard owner is sent to the vineyard workers, who say: <i>Hic est heres, venite, occidamus illum et nostra erit hereditas.</i> (Here is the heir. Let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.)</p>
<p><u>Gen 37:23-24</u>--Joseph's brothers strip him of his embroidered robe and throw him in a pit.</p>	<p><u>Ps 88:6</u>--This is what "our Joseph" says, through the intermediation of the prophet, in Psalm 88: <i>Proiecerunt me in lacum exteriorem, in tenebris et in umbra mortis.</i>(They threw me into a foreign pit, in the dark and in the shadow of death.)</p>

**Figure 1.** Quodvultdeus Intertext Schematic

Quodvultdeus' construction of this extended patchwork parallelism forces Matt 15:24 into the service of a typology, and hence a history, of familial hatred, rivalry between brothers, betrayal, and murder. Narrative anticipation and typological prediction rewrite the version of history that Matt 15:24 articulates, in effect erasing Jesus' commitment and bond with his people, his "brothers." The logic of prefiguration implicit in the parallel with Joseph's betrayal



and suffering works proleptically to insert Jesus' passion into his ministry, not unlike the gospels themselves. It establishes hatred, rivalry and competition as the predetermined relationship between Jesus' original "brothers" and his subsequent followers. Substitution becomes inevitable.

It makes sense, then, that the turning over of dispensations should follow closely upon this reading. In the very next chapter, in recounting how the brothers took the blood of a baby goat and smeared it on Joseph's cloak to convince Jacob that he had died, Quodvultdeus discusses the three types of sacrifices that "Abraham" – that is, Israel – made. In earlier passages, Quodvultdeus reads these three sacrifices as representative of the three ages delineated in his *Liber Promissionum*: the ram is killed for Isaac; the kid is killed for Joseph; and the fatted calf is killed for the prodigal son. Typological thinking yields the staging of a historical turning point, and a preoccupation with the justification of the Gentile church. The story of Joseph's betrayal by his brothers is correlated to the story of Jesus' passion and Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman is an integral piece of the historical turn.

The second allusion to the story of the Canaanite woman in the *Liber Promissionum* works in precisely the same way. Book 1, chapter 47 uses 15:24 to create a *Moses*-Jesus typology. This constellation of intertexts weaves together verses from Exodus that narrate Moses' reluctant return to Egypt to free his people and verses from Matthew, John, Psalms, and Acts that narrate Jesus' mission to the lost sheep of Israel and highlight the more resigned moments in that ministry, when his power would not extend to the Jews and his courage faltered in Gethsemane.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> An interesting parallel is also drawn in this chapter between Aaron and Paul, by way of Exodus 4:28-30 and Acts 9:15 [Ex. 4:28-30: "Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had charged him. Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to

Quodvultdeus' final allusion to the Canaanite woman cites Matt 15:27, the moment that she accepts the terms of Jesus' argument. It is different in method and character from the first two references. It is not a typology built out of multiple interconnected intertexts, but rather a straightforward exemplum that drives home a behavioral imperative. It appears in Book 1, chapter 36, and is the fourth of ten chapters that correlate the ten plagues in Egypt to the ten commandments. In 1.36.51, Quodvultdeus discusses the fourth plague, which he calls *caninae scilicet muscae*, that is, flies of dogs, which inflict pain in the secret parts of the body, *secretis etiam membris poenas morsibus infligentes*.<sup>197</sup> This is a strange elaboration. Perhaps the reference to private parts is some sort of bridge to the fourth commandment to honor one's father and mother. At any rate, Quodvultdeus emphasizes that this commandment moves away from the theological focus of the first three commandments towards the regulation of human conduct. Those who do not venerate their parents are like dogs, exercising their hideous passions, and they are not long for this world (*longaevi in terra esse non possunt*). But the Canaanite woman had cut her ties with dogs like them:

*...a quorum consortio Chananaea fide mundata humili pioque latratu et sibi gratiam et filiae salute nullis praecedentibus meritis impetravit.*<sup>198</sup>

From her attachment to them (wild dogs) the Canaanite woman was purified by means of her faith, and her humble and pious barking was worth her obtaining grace for herself, health for her daughter, without any other prior merit.

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Moses, and performed the signs in the sight of the people." And Acts 9:15: "Go, for he (Paul) is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel.]: *Sic enim Moyses et Aaron Hebraeo populo praedicantes missos se a Deo ut eos ex Aegypto eruerent firmaverunt... Praedicante vero Paulo gentibus ac Iudaeis, salutem animarum per Christum fiducialiter promittente, signa dum faceret...* In this secondary typology, Quodvultdeus stages the consistent intervention of God in the salvation, first of the Hebrews and then of the Gentiles, through Moses-Jesus, with the additional help of Aaron-Paul. (Quodvultdeus, *Liber Promiss.* 1.34.47; SC 101, 258: "It is in this way that Moses and Aaron cajoled the Hebrew people and announced to them that they had been sent by God to take them out of Egypt... As for Paul, he preached to the nations and to the Jews, promising confidently the salvation of souls through Christ and performing miracles...")

<sup>197</sup> Quodvultdeus, *Liber Promiss.* 1.36.51 (SC 101, 266).

<sup>198</sup> Quodvultdeus, *Liber Promiss.* 1.36.51 (SC 101, 266).

She was purified by faith. Her words in 15:27 are described as humble and pious barking that obtained grace for her and health for her daughter, without any prior merit. With this reading, Quodvultdeus shows himself to be familiar not just with the historical typological implications of Matt 15:21-28, but also its minatory use as allegory of the spiritual condition and the divergent prospects of compliant and defiant Christians.

### **2.3.8 Conclusion**

The commentaries above move from an emphasis on regulating acts of interpretation to establishing historical-typological and spiritual-moral grounds for new ideals of Christian conduct and identity. The interdependence of exegesis, catechesis and paranesis is perhaps unusually foregrounded in interpretations of Matthew 15:21-28, since it begs questions of religious and ethnic identity and privilege, and represents a moment of becoming, being transformed, through Jesus' teaching and urging. Three main prescriptive areas have surfaced in the commentaries. The first focuses on catechesis, whether explicitly within the context of proselytism and conversion, or more implicitly within pedagogical metaphors like "silent inspiration." The second is related, but results in a less pragmatic, more philosophical treatment of the human capacity for spiritual transformation; nonetheless, this category includes minatory and regulatory discourse about sinful behaviors. The third prescriptive area engages in the scriptural justification of supercessionism, of the substitution of Christianity for Judaism as a new chapter in salvation history. Metaphors of reversal are prominent.

## 2.4 SERMONS AND HOMILIES: TEXTUAL COMMUNITIES AND THE CALL TO LIVED NARRATIVE

In discussing the unlicensed preaching engaged in by 12<sup>th</sup> century Waldensians, Brian Stock uses the term “the real text” to refer to the agreed-upon meanings assigned to gospel texts by the members of that textual community. He opposes the “real text” to any biblical original, as well as to “the many verbal interpretations that were possible.”<sup>199</sup> The real text, furthermore, produces not just a message, but an entire “microsociety organized around the common understanding of a text” for whom “the basis of action was textual.”<sup>200</sup> While Stock applies these notions to a marginal group, the dynamics and functions of texts and interpretations are equally applicable to the earliest Christian preaching and community-building. Certainly, the story of the Canaanite woman is used in the sermons and homilies discussed below to urge internalization of her predicament and imitation of her actions. In short, they are a call to live out the biblical narrative.

In comparison to the polemical and commentary texts considered so far, these sermons and homilies demonstrate a paring down of nuance, a hyped-up binarism, unrestrained rivalry and antipathy, and a triumphant supercessionism. What is lost in perspective is gained in intensity and clarity of exhortation. The form, for instance, of catechetical homily entails brevity, precision and economical instruction. The added element of active congregational response, often acknowledged within the transcripts of the sermons, also speaks to the dynamism and the

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<sup>199</sup> Brian Stock, *Listening For The Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 27-28.

<sup>200</sup> Stock, *Listening*, 23.

situated nature of these interpretations and their reception. The very popular sermons of Ambrose of Milan illustrate well this mix of vehemence, censure, and exhortation.

#### **2.4.1 Ambrose: Easter Sermon and Sermon on Dives and Lazarus**

An alternately ascetical, hortatory and pragmatic sensibility informs the work of Ambrose of Milan, and these sometimes contradictory impulses are manifest in two sermons that he delivered between 386-87 that discuss the Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus. Ambrose, along with Hilary of Poitiers, is credited with popularizing the Eastern allegorical methods of Philo and Origen in the West, and for combining these with his solid Roman education and his intimate knowledge of Greco-Roman orators, ethicists, historians and poets. In the *Treatise on the Gospel of Luke* alone, Ambrose quotes extensively from Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, Homer, Ovid, Pliny, and Sallust.<sup>201</sup>

While he was one of the last of a dying breed of bilingual, bicultural Christian leaders, Ambrose found himself positioned not just on cultural, but also on political fault lines, confronted with a battling imperial family that shifted its economic and military support back and forth in East and West between Nicene orthodoxy, Arianism, and paganism. His magnanimous, affable paternalism, with its roots in his Roman patrician pedigree, was interrupted by the demand for a leader, an arbiter, in the politics of religious dogma (cf. *De spiritu sancto*; *De mysteriis*), the conduct of ecclesiastics (cf. *De officiis ministrorum*), and the essential ingredients of the Christian life (cf. *De paenitentia*; *De virginitate*). According to Jerome, Ambrose's exhaustive attention to the benefits of virginity, and to the regulation in

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<sup>201</sup> Gabriel Tissot, introduction to Ambrose of Milan, *Traité Sur L'Évangile de S. Luc*, SC 45, ed. Gabriel Tissot (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1956), 15.

particular of female behaviors and morals (e.g., *De lapsu virginis consecratae*), is unparalleled.<sup>202</sup>

Ambrose's exegesis is thus practical and prescriptive in its formal status as homily, but also political and cultural, arbitrating shifting imperial religious sanctions, immersed in the church's apologetic endeavors, and deploying Eastern and Western traditions. His practical homilies, which move back and forth from the allegorical to the moral, are aimed at directing and regulating Christian lives. They acknowledge and then quickly leave behind the literal sense of Scripture to extrapolate with energy and urgency the practical implications and life-lessons that Scripture engenders. But as in the case of Ephrem's typology, Ambrose's method of allegorizing literal stories in order to construct authoritative standards can produce harsh and divisive texts. Was it the combination of abstraction in the allegorical method and pragmatism in Roman ethics that enabled this reportedly kind and generous man, who began his treatise on penance with a call to gentleness and forgiveness,<sup>203</sup> to read the story of the Canaanite woman in such aggressive, even violent terms?

Ambrose first uses Matt 15:21-28 in an Easter sermon that he delivered on Luke 7:18-35, an interesting combination of verses to set apart and explicate together. While Ambrose follows the gospel in linear progression in his *Treatise on the Gospel of Luke (Exp. Luc.)*, the way that he bundles pericopes is sometimes idiosyncratic. The two prior sections in *Exp. Luc.* are logically divided, each covering a miracle, first the healing of the centurion's servant and then the raising of the widow's son at Nain. But the section in which Matt 15:21-28 is cited (Luke 7:18-35)

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<sup>202</sup> *The Letters of St. Jerome* (eds. Johannes Quasten and Walter J. Burghardt; Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), 155.

<sup>203</sup> Ambrose, *La Pénitence* 1.1, SC 179, ed. Roger Gryson (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 52: *Si virtutum finis ille est maximus qui plurimorum spectat profectum, moderatio prope omnium pulcherrima est, quae ne ipsos quidem quos damnat offendit, et quos damnaverit dignos solet facere absolutione*; "If the highest achievement of the virtues is the one that intends the advancement of the greatest number, gentleness is the most beautiful of all, which does not offend even those whom it condemns, and makes those whom it condemns worthy of absolution."

combines John's questioning message to Jesus from prison, Jesus' response, his rebuke to the crowd about John's greatness, his comparison of them ("this generation") to children who are never satisfied, and his final pronouncement that Wisdom is vindicated by her children.

Ambrose reads this entire sequence as validating the supplanting of the old with the new: the old Law with the new Law; the old Self with the new Self of Colossians 3, the old Prophet (John) with the New Prophet (Jesus), and the old generation (the Jews) with children vindicated by Wisdom (Christians).

In 7:18-23, Ambrose explains, John is the old Law, which has prophesied Jesus' coming but remains imprisoned in the hearts of unbelievers. He seeks additional knowledge (*supplementum scientiae*) from Jesus, the fulfilled Law. Jesus' disciples represent both the Jews who believed and the Gentiles who believed only when they had heard, when acts of liberation and healing had supplemented the testimony of Old Testament typologies: *quia sicut fides a vetere incipit testamento ita inpletur in novo* ("for if faith begins through the Old Testament, it is completed through the new").<sup>204</sup>

Building on this question of what and how people believe, Ambrose moves to Jesus' exchange with the crowd. He explains that whatever the crowd expected to see when they went out to see John, they encountered an ascetic who disdained this life, a model who pointed the way to a new Self that rejects the vanity of this world, a world that is sterile, filled with carnal men and noisy emptiness, men like reeds cut off from the root. Christ is the true reed. Ambrose tells his listeners to imitate that reed through mastery of their flesh. Soft clothes stand for licentious acts and habits of pleasure. But the new clothes to which Christ points are human bodies that, in imitation of Christ's body, suffer courageously. Jesus is the new Prophet. The old

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<sup>204</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 5.99 (SC 45, 219).

Prophet was John, greater than all the others, yet less than Jesus and less than the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>205</sup>

And now, from this small point about who rules and who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, Ambrose jumps to Matt 11:12<sup>206</sup> and thence to the outright incitement of his congregation to actively pursue a triumphant supercessionism. The Canaanite woman, among others, figures large in this call to dominance. For even as the Kingdom of Heaven is within us and we must take it by force through self-command, so it was also offered to the Jews, who having turned away from it, have left its conquest to “us.” This Easter sermon, up to this point an exhortation to wake up and renounce earthly enticements, now becomes a call to seize the salvation that was promised to “others” and to thereby hasten the coming of the Kingdom. Matt 15:24 explains why this is so: John was sent to render the Jews just; the Lord was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; he sent the apostles to establish the faith amongst the Jewish people, but all to no avail. Then follows a litany of faithful exempla, many of them female, who strengthened and pressed forward the Kingdom: publicans, sinners, the hemorrhaging woman (8:43-48), the daughter of the synagogue official (8:49-56), the widow who prevailed over the unjust judge (18:1-8), and the Canaanite woman:

*Diripit regnum illa Chananaea, quae a finibus suis egressa clamabat dicens: “miserere mei, domine, fili David; filia mea male a daemone vexatur.” Vere haec regnum coegit pertinax in precibus, sapiens in responsis, fidelis in verbis. Praetereuntem revocat, tacentem rogat, excusantem adorat, negantem inclinat. Nonne tibi videtur eripere, cum elicit quod negatur, praeripere quod aliis reservatur? Negaverat enim dominus panem filiorum dari canibus oportere; at illa consensit et consentiendo diripuit decens: “utique, domine; nam et catelli edunt de micis, quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum.”<sup>207</sup>*

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<sup>205</sup> Ambrose interprets “the least in the Kingdom of Heaven” as angels.

<sup>206</sup> “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the violent take it by force” (NRSV).

<sup>207</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 5.113 (SC 45, 225).



She seized the Kingdom, this Canaanite woman who, having left her country, cried out, saying: “Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly tormented by a demon.” She truly forced the Kingdom, persistent in her prayers, wise in her responses, faithful in her words. She calls back He who passes her by, prays to him when He is silent, adores Him when He recuses Himself, submits to his refusal. Does she not seem to you to steal, when she coaxes from him that which was refused, when she snatches away that which was reserved for others? The Lord had said that it was not right to give the bread of the children to the dogs: she admitted it and, even in admitting it, seized it: “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

Ambrose is quick to clarify that, in spite of her stealing, she does not stand for dishonesty or debauchery or pleasure. He cites Jesus’ approbation at Matt 15:28 to reinforce this. Having established her righteousness, her wisdom, and her faithfulness, he is free to use her as exemplum to exhort his congregation to steal their faith and salvation from the Jews, at the expense of the Jews:

*Cogamus igitur et nos, diripiamus illud ... Ecce rapuit quae quod voluit inpetravit, quod rogavit extorsit ... Rapuit igitur ecclesia synagoga regnum. Regnum meum Christus est; rapio illum Iudaeis missum sub lege, natum in lege, nutritum iuxta legem ut me qui eram sine lege servaret. Rapitur Christus.*<sup>208</sup>

Let us force it too, then; let us steal it ... Look: she took what she wanted, she got it ... Likewise the Church stole the Kingdom away from the Synagogue: my Kingdom is Christ and I seize him. He was sent to the Jews under the Law, born within the Law, raised according to the Law, *to save me*, I who am outside the Law. Christ is stolen.”

The language of hostile takeover continues throughout the passage. No regret for the Jews is voiced; in fact, a rationale is set up against any such protest: “*Vides mortuos esse qui dormiunt. Et ideo non invidemus aliis, sed providemus nobis; non enim mortui poterant servare*

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<sup>208</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 5.114 (SC 45, 226).

*Viventem.*” That is: Those who sleep [who have not awakened to Christ] are dead. We do no wrong to the others, but we look to ourselves; for the dead cannot serve the Living One.<sup>209</sup>

Taking into account the readings of the Canaanite woman presented so far, Ambrose’s supercessionist logic is not all that unusual, though the antagonism with which he directly incites his congregation to live out its implications may be. Indeed, this level of applied moral pragmatism is recognized as a trademark of the *doctor vitae*. At the same time, such rivalry and antipathy are not foreign even to the gospels themselves, which relentlessly set up characters as contrasting examples of good and bad faith, as have many of the readings of Matt 15:21-28 that precede Ambrose. And so, perhaps predictably, they resurface in Ambrose’s second deployment of the Canaanite woman in a sermon on Luke 16:19-31, the story of Dives and Lazarus.

In this sermon Ambrose denounces a variety of negative types in order to exhort his congregation to forsake the things of this world and to thereby become witnesses to, and defenders of, orthodox Christianity. The rhetorical punch of this sermon lies in the long list of binaries, negative correspondences, which create a series of either/or lifestyle choices: poverty versus wealth; piety versus sinfulness; “apostolic men” versus heretics; Gentiles versus Jews; the Word versus false belief, showy language and artifice of reason; and the poor, pious apostolic man versus the rich, false, over-rational, language-twisting derisive man. The latter Ambrose equates with Jews, Manicheans, Marcionites, Sabellians, and Arians. The paranetic thrust of the passage, however, is not a simple admonition about good and bad attributes or behavior. It is about linking the ascetical virtues that Ambrose espouses and orthodox faith, witness, and salvation.

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<sup>209</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 5.115 (*SC* 45, 226).

To that end, Ambrose uses a visceral image, comparing the oozing ulcers on Lazarus' legs, licked by dogs, with Paul's bleeding wounds when he was flogged. Paul's wounds served as a witness which nourished the "dogs," the Gentiles, and led them to conversion.

*Cui similem illum puto, qui caesus saepius a Iudaeis ad patientiam credentium et vocationem gentium ulcera sui corporis lambenda quibusdam velut canibus offerebat.*<sup>210</sup>

I find a resemblance [between Lazarus described in the prior paragraph as rejected from the table of the rich because the stink of his ulcers horrified the rich] with he who, many times flogged by the Jews in order to give patience to believers and to call the Gentiles, offered, so to speak, the ulcers of his body to the dogs to lick.

The story of the Canaanite woman becomes an almost inevitable intertext within this array of allegorized terms—dogs, Gentiles, hunger, rejection from rich tables. She enters as the one who understands and reveals "the mystery" (*mysterium*), the subject of Ambrose's paranesis, that links voluntary suffering and self-sacrifice to witness, faith, and salvation:

*Quod agnovit Chananitis illa mysterium, cui dicitur: "nemo tollit panem filiorum et mittit canibus." Agnovit hunc panem non panem esse qui videtur, sed illum qui intellegitur, et ideo respondit, "utique, domine; nam et Catelli edunt de micis quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum." Micae istae de illo pane sunt. Et quia panis verbum est et fides verbi est, micae velut quaedam dogmata fidei sunt.*<sup>211</sup>

The Canaanite woman recognized this mystery, to whom it was said, 'No one may take the bread of the children and throw it to the dogs.' She recognized that the bread was not bread that you *see*, but bread that you *understand*; so she answered, 'Without doubt, Lord; but the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' tables.' These crumbs come from the bread; and the bread is the Word, and faith in the Word; the crumbs are, so to speak, the dogmas of the faith.

Poverty and physical suffering, dogmatic faith, and the conversion of "enemies," howling like dogs in Psalm 59—by analogy, the conversion of heretics threatening Ambrose's orthodox

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<sup>210</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 8.15 (SC 52, 105, 107).

<sup>211</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 8.15 (SC 52, 107).

church in Milan—have all become interdependent. The listening congregation is to understand that the Kingdom of God is not about words, but about virtue as witness. And the “happy dogs,” on whom the liquid of such ulcers has dripped, are filled up, so that they may guard the house, defend the flock, and keep watch against wolves (*custodire domum, servare gregem, cavere adsuescant lupos*).<sup>212</sup>

Ambrose urges his congregation to personally embody suffering and humility *as* acts of orthodox witness and defense against heretical “wolves.” The same exhortation to internalize Scripture and enact it as lived narrative is also present in the work of Augustine. For Augustine, who took the personal application of Scripture to new levels in the *Confessions*, achieves in his preaching a tightly-bound synthesis of the historical, ecclesial, and spiritual implications of Scripture. In practice, a robust intertextuality, in the tradition of Origen and Ambrose, provides Augustine with rich linkages between moments in salvation history and personal spiritual growth. His extensive use of intertexts is predicated upon the coherence of Scripture in its entirety, as is Ambrose’s.<sup>213</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Augustine: Sermon 77 and Sermon 121**

Augustine provides extended readings of the Canaanite woman in two homilies.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Ambrose, *ExLuc.* 8.16 (SC 52, 107).

<sup>213</sup> The unity of Scripture endured and resurfaced in strength in the Reformation commitment to *sola scriptura*, in many maxims like *Scriptura scripturae interpretres, Scriptura seipsam interpretatur, Scriptura scripturam interpretatur, Scriptura sui interpretres*, and more formally in liturgical materials like the Westminster Confession of Faith 1.9: “The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”

<sup>214</sup> There are other homilies in which she is cited in an ancillary fashion, as a frame or parallel. E.g., *Sermon 77A*, written between 414 and 416, is a call to unceasing Christian struggle against temptation, sin, and error. The example of the Canaanite woman frames this Pauline-like paranesis in which Augustine, using traditional *agon* language of perseverance, endurance and forbearance, warns against a litany of vices and urges his listeners to be

Sermon 77, *De verbis Evangelii Matthai, cap. xv, 21-28*, is of unknown date and focuses on the Canaanite woman as model of humility and symbol of the Gentile nations. Sermon 121, *Tractatus Sancti Augustini de Sanctissimae Paschae Die Prima*, is the first of ten Easter Sermons that Augustine wrote between 412-413, and a good example of a catechetical homily on the occasion of the baptism of new converts during the Easter season.

In the case of *Sermon 77*, Augustine begins by laying the groundwork for both moral and typological instruction. The Canaanite woman is introduced as a model to be imitated, *humilitatis exemplum et pietatis viam: ab humilitate in alta surgere ostendit* (“a model of humility and the path of tender duty: she shows how to rise from humility to the heights”).<sup>215</sup> But Augustine also immediately makes clear that she is not from the people of Israel like other exemplary figures to be imitated, namely the patriarchs, the prophets, Jesus and Mary. For this reason Jesus initially resisted her, even though he intended to “inflamm” her desire for him in the end.

Exploring the contradiction that the Canaanite woman’s insistent plea for Jesus’ healing is ultimately successful even though she is not Jewish, Augustine asks historical and typological questions:

*Unde nos ad ovile Christi de Gentibus venimus, si non est missus nisi ad oves quae perierunt domus Israel? Quid sibi vult hujus secreti tam alta dispensatio, ut cum Dominus sciret quare veniret, utique ut Ecclesiam haberet in omnibus Gentibus, non se missum dixerit, nisi ad oves.*<sup>216</sup>

That is: How did “we” come from the Gentiles into Christ’s sheepfold? And why did

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vigilant and fight the daily combat. The Canaanite woman appears again in Augustine’s short, efficient treatment of her story in his *De Consensu evangelistarum* 2.49. There, Augustine sees a difficulty in harmonizing the location of Mark’s Jesus who is hiding in a house and Matthew’s Jesus who appears to be outside walking when the Canaanite woman approaches and follows, beseeching. Augustine resolves the contradiction by explaining that Jesus speaks the exclusivity logion to the disciples only, in the house, and then comes out and answers her with the statement about the children’s bread.

<sup>215</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.1 (PL 38, 483).

<sup>216</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.2 (PL 38:483).

Jesus go first to the Jews, if he was going to build his Church from among all the nations? Augustine's answers to these questions feature an extended metaphor of Jesus as *medico Deo* and of his incarnation as the epitome of humility itself, thus *magna medicina*, both fitting devices in explicating a gospel healing miracle. Jesus went to the Jews first, on this reading, not because he was ignoring or excluding the Gentiles, but because the Jews had to see him, reject him and slay him in order that he might become a cure for all: *occidendo medicum nescientes, sibi medicamentum facientes* ("killing the doctor unwittingly, and making for themselves a cure").<sup>217</sup>

The notion of Christ as medicine created by the Jews breaks down the kind of dichotomous opposition that typically characterizes interpretations of Jewish and Christian response to Jesus. The result is a more speculative, marginally less malicious portrait of the Jews, in light of the power of the Christ-medicine:

*Non enim damnata illa plebs est, sed ventilate. Ibi erat paleæ multitudo, ibi granorum occulta dignitas: ibi quod incenderetur, ibi unde horreum repleretur. Nam unde Apostoli nisi inde? Unde Petrus? Unde cæteri?*<sup>218</sup>

That nation wasn't condemned in a lump, it was winnowed. There you had the big heap of chaff, there too the hidden value of the grain; there something to be burned, there much with which to fill the barn. After all, where else are the Apostles from? Where's Peter from? Where are the rest of them from?

These questions prompt Augustine to offer examples of what he considers to be unlikely Jewish recipients of Christ's "healing," understood as converts to Christianity. He locates the prediction and authorization of their healing in Deuteronomy 32:39, *Ego percutiam, et ego sanabo* ("I wound and I heal").<sup>219</sup>

The sins of this group are not glossed over. Saul, for example, was a person on fire, a great persecutor of the innocent and the ruin of the church, and he was struck down, humbled,

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<sup>217</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.4 (PL 38:485).

<sup>218</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.2 (PL 38:484).

<sup>219</sup> Deut 32:39, NRSV.

and became the least of the apostles.<sup>220</sup> For Augustine, Paul’s humility at 1 Cor 15:9 follows logically and demonstrates the nature of God’s “tough love.” Similarly, Augustine describes the Jews to whom Peter preached in Acts 2:37 as, *ex populo Judaeorum quaesierunt consilium salutis suae, intelligentes se reos sanguinis Christit: quod eum ipsi crucifixerint* (“[some from the] Jewish people asked for his advice about being saved, realizing that they were guilty of the blood of Christ, because it was they who had crucified him”).<sup>221</sup> Yet “even” they are baptized and their sins forgiven: *Conversi sunt ex ipso populo Judæorum: conversi sunt, baptizati sunt* (“some from the Jewish people are converted: they are converted and baptized”).<sup>222</sup>

Having moved from Deuteronomy to Acts, Augustine now turns to the Psalms to complete the typological progression towards the saving of the Gentiles. He cites Ps 18:43-44 and Ps 106:47. In Psalm 18, David sings about being saved from the hands of his own persecuting Saul and thanks God for freedom from strife with the peoples: *Populus quem non cognovi, servivit mihi ... In auditu auris obaudivit mihi* (“People whom I had not known served me. As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me” ).<sup>223</sup> Augustine interprets this passage to be a prophecy of Gentile worship of Jesus. In Psalm 106, the Psalmist prays for God’s mercy in the face of Israel’s sins and asks that God gather the Israelites together “from among the nations,” that they might praise his holy name and glory in his praise.<sup>224</sup> Augustine reads this text as referring to the “new Israel,” gathered from among the Gentiles. And he continues to compile texts that witness to this transfer of healing mercy to the Gentiles. Matthew 8 and John 10 enter the discussion. The daughter of the synagogue leader in Matthew 8 represents the Jewish people;

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<sup>220</sup> Augustine, *Serm. 77.3 (PL 38:484): primo suberbo, post humilis ... tunc persecutor innocentium, tunc vastator Ecclesiae ... Christi voce prostratus est persecutor, erectus est praedicator.*

<sup>221</sup> Augustine, *Serm. 77.4 (PL 38:484).*

<sup>222</sup> Augustine, *Serm. 77.4 (PL 38:484-5).*

<sup>223</sup> Ps 18.43-44; NRSV.

<sup>224</sup> Ps. 106:47 (NRSV).

the woman with the flux who interrupts his journey and is cured is the Church. John 10 is also thrown in as legitimating the redirection of Jesus' power: *Habeo alias oves quæ non sunt de hoc ovili; oportet me et has adducere, ut sit unus grex et unus pastor* ("I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must lead them too, so that there might be one flock and one shepherd").<sup>225</sup>

Having established the historical and typological implications of the Canaanite woman's story, Augustine turns for the remainder of his sermon back to the moral paranetic level where he began. In the turn to paranesis, more rigid and negative contrasts reappear. Even so, Augustine's reading remains more nuanced than what has come before him. For instance, Augustine links Matt 7:7 to the Canaanite woman, just as Tertullian did, but he also acknowledges that it comes right on the heels of 7:6 and confronts the difficulty of harmonizing their meaning in relation to Matt 15:21-28. Yes, she knocks and asks and perseveres per 7:7, and this is useful in constructing her as exemplum to be imitated, but what to make of the fact, given that she confesses herself to be a dog, that in 7:6, not to mention in Matt 15:26, Jesus has said not to give what is holy to the dogs? *Gentes quare canes. Et unde discernimus (tanquam responderent) qui sint porci, qui sint canes? Hoc in ista muliere demonstratum est* ("How are pagans dogs? And how are we to tell, as if they answered, 'who are the pigs, and who are the dogs?' We are shown how in the case of this woman").<sup>226</sup> In answer to the disciples' hypothetical questions, Augustine suggests that the proximity of 7:6 and 7:7 and the story of the Canaanite woman teach that it is precisely by knocking that a dog/pagan becomes a human being/Christian: *pulsando, homo facta est ex cane* ("By knocking, she was made a human being out of a dog").<sup>227</sup>

He then goes on to ask what the knocking is: of what does it consist? Humility. Knocking

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<sup>225</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.8 (PL 38:487).

<sup>226</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.10 (PL 38:487).

<sup>227</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 77.10 (PL 38:487).



is humble perseverance in the face of apparent insult. Once this paranetic ideal has been identified and articulated, Augustine turns to the oppositional, antagonistic mode and a lengthy denunciation of the Jewish people, “bloated with pride,” proud of their prophets and Moses, of God’s intervention on their behalf in Egypt, and of the gift of Torah. They are unwilling to have their pride lanced by the *medico Deo*. Romans 11:17-24 is brought into play: the Jews are the natural branches broken off by pride. Matt 8:7-10 also proves useful in this section of the sermon, the centurion who found himself unworthy to even host Jesus in his home serving as antithesis to the prideful Jews. Matt 8:11 supplies the concluding word to a long final exhortation about the eschatological feast which includes the denunciation of earthly well-being, riches, and even need itself. These are all diseases of pride. Only humility will gain one a place at the eschatological table.

A detailed look at the large variety of texts at play in Augustine’s sermon reveals how dependent his homiletic prescriptions and paranesis are on canonical intertextuality. Augustine authorizes his own exhortations, just as did Ambrose: the two construct compulsory ideals of Christian identity by combining allegory, ethics, and intertextuality. Anathema is the consistent byproduct of their fusion of typological and moral instruction.

Augustine used the Canaanite woman to define what it means to be Christian again in his *Sermon 121*, delivered on the first day of Easter 412 or 413. The catechetical form of the sermon, its pronounced and sustained question and answer format, reflects even more explicitly the goal of suturing new communicants to the faith during their rites of initiation, including baptism, during the Easter season.

This sermon is on John 1, particularly verses 10-13, the reading for the day, which

Augustine relates strategically to Luke 3:7-8<sup>228</sup>, John 8:33-40<sup>229</sup> and Luke 19:37-40,<sup>230</sup> in order to differentiate those who have become Christian from those who have not. A series of questions and answers governs the structure of the sermon.

Question: If Christ was in the world, and he made the world, but the world did not know him, then what or who is this world that he made, and what or who is the world that knew him not?

Answer: The world that Christ created is the heavens and the earth, *caelum et terra*. But *these* are not the world that did not know him, since the sun darkened and the earth shook during his passion (Luke 23:45, Matt 27:51). The “world” that did not know Christ is made up of evil people, the unfaithful, and they get their name from that which they love:

*Homines mali mundus vocantur, homines infidels mundus vocantur. Inde acceperunt nomen ex eo quod amant. Amando deum, efficitur dii. Ergo amando mundum, dicimur mundus.*<sup>231</sup>

Evil men are called “the world;” the unfaithful are called “the world.” They have received their name from the object of their love. Loving God, we become gods. Likewise, loving the world, we are called “the world.”

Furthermore, John 1:11 tells us Jesus came not just to evil men, but to his own people, so these who are called “the world” are also the Jews, the people to whom he sent advance notice of his coming, to whom he gave the Law, whom he saved from Egyptian slavery, and for whom he chose Abraham as father.<sup>232</sup>

Question: Who are those who *have received him* (John 1:11)? Who are the rocks that may be made into sons of Abraham (Luke 3:7-8)? How do they become sons of Abraham (John 8:33-

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<sup>228</sup> Jesus’ warning to the Jews who came out to see John that they too must “bear good fruit,” that they are not automatically redeemed as descendents of Abraham and that God can make the rocks themselves into sons of Abraham.

<sup>229</sup> Jesus’ pronouncement that Jews that do not love him are not sons of Abraham because they do not behave as Abraham would and they are slaves to sin.

<sup>230</sup> Jesus’ retort to the Pharisees who tell him to silence his disciples who are praising him that even if they were silent, the stones would shout out.

<sup>231</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 1:13-16 (*PL* 38:678).

<sup>232</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 2:20-23 (*PL* 38:678).

40)? How do they become sons of God, born of God (John 1:13)?

Answer: John 1:11 refers to the apostles, those who received Jesus in Jerusalem singing “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Luke 19:37-40). Even if the Pharisees tried to silence these who proclaimed Jesus, even if Jewish children remained silent as a result, the rocks, that is young and old pagans, would witness to him.<sup>233</sup>

At this point in the sermon, there is a break in the preaching, and Augustine acknowledges that the congregation, amongst whom there were certainly “newborn” Christians, has cried out: *Modo audistis et clamatis. Impletum est: lapides clamabunt!* (“Just now, you have heard and cried out. It is accomplished: the stones have cried out!”)<sup>234</sup> Suzanne Poque tells us that the faithful in the city of Hippo were not a passive group. They would shout out during the sermons, *Deo gratias! Deo laudes!* (Thanks be to God! Praise God!) And Augustine would often acknowledge their reactions.<sup>235</sup> But in the case of *Sermon 121*, on the occasion of the baptism of “newborn” Christians and the delivery of this catechetical homily initiating them into a new way of life, their spontaneous cries enact the connection between text and “lived narrative.” They are a historical instance of the substantive links between catechesis, paranesis and lived orthodoxy. Augustine tells them: *Nos videbat quando ista dicebat: si isti tacebunt lapides clamabunt* (“It is us he had in view when he said, ‘If they are silent, the rocks will cry out’”),<sup>236</sup> and the Christian converts in his audience duly shout out.

It is at this point that the Canaanite woman appears. Like the converts, she had fathers who adored stones (idols). These ancestors (like the Canaanite woman) were called dogs because dogs lick stones anointed with libations. Jesus’ statement about the children’s bread at 15:26

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<sup>233</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 3:37-38 (PL 38:679).

<sup>234</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 3:60-61 (PL 38:679).

<sup>235</sup> Augustine, *Sermons Pour La Pâque*, SC 116, ed. Suzanne Poque (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 227, n. 1.

<sup>236</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 3:35-37 (PL 38:679).

proves that such a heritage was no longer tenable for the Canaanite woman, nor is it for the new converts. Like her, through divine grace, they have been given the power to become sons of God. And again, the *Sitz im Leben* of catechetical homily is visible in Augustine's direct discourse, as he addresses the congregation, instructing them to consider the converts before them: *Ecce habetis modo natos: dedit eis potestatem filios dei fieri*: "Behold, you have before you those who have just now been born: he has given them the power to become sons of God."<sup>237</sup> The rest of the sermon consists of a Christological lesson that explains how Christ's incarnation has transformed the initiates: *propter vos qui erat Filius Dei, factus est filius hominis; ut qui eratis filii hominum, efficeremini filii Dei* ("For you, he who was the Son of God became a son of Mankind, so that you, who were sons of men could be made into sons of God").<sup>238</sup>

Augustine's typological intertexts and allegorical dramas depict the Jewish people as the daughter of the synagogue leader, the Gentile Church as the woman with the flux, the rocks as young and old pagans, the Canaanite woman as prototype for new converts, and so on. To all of this, John Chrysostom's *Homily 52*, which begins with a discussion of the Canaanite woman, provides a useful counterpoint.

### **2.4.3 John Chrysostom: *Homily 52***

The readings of Augustine and Chrysostom share much *as* moral paranesis; both are more explicitly paranetic than some of the commentary readings already discussed. The instruction of a congregation is their chief aim. However, Chrysostom, as the dominant representative of Antiochene interpretation, predictably uses more historical and literal reading

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<sup>237</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 3:70-71 (PL 38:679).

<sup>238</sup> Augustine, *Serm.* 121, 4:92-95 (PL 38:679).

methods and delivers a different sort of exhortation. While he sometimes pursues anagogical readings in his sermons, he most often sticks to the logical, grammatical, and commonsense levels of interpretation. He also stands out for post-modern readers as having what we think of as a psychological explanation for everything. The combination of his historical situating of Biblical texts and the immediacy with which he applies their lessons to human experience and behavior can be misleading, making him appear less historically distant.<sup>239</sup> But Chrysostom's interpretive method is based not on historical-critical assumptions, but on his understanding of Scripture as divine condescension or accommodation, *συνκατάβασις*. Consequently, the act of biblical interpretation becomes an act of devotion in its attention to every detail of the text, including who wrote it, when, and under what conditions.<sup>240</sup> He deduces the nature of the accommodation by examining the conditions under which the divine message was reproduced and received. Chrysostom also uses the idea of *συνκατάβασις* to argue for a doctrine of progressive revelation, most explicitly in his *Fourth Homily on the Letter to the Colossians*, in which the Jews appear as children, their doctrines as childish, and Jesus' incarnation as the signal of a new stage in human development.<sup>241</sup>

Chrysostom's belief that Scripture is divine revelation tailored to the needs of evolving audiences infuses his homilies with catechetical authority and parnetic conviction. These are both in evidence in his reading of the Canaanite woman in *Homily 52* and particularly in his description of Jesus as *instructing* her in the gospel passage. For even as he presents the

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. M. B. Riddle's description of Chrysostom as pre-eminent amongst all early church fathers; because he avoids both allegorical and dogmatic "errors," he "is probably nearer to us than any Father of the Eastern Church." [Chrysostom, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of Matthew*, introduction (NPNF 10:xix.) Equally surprising to the idea that Chrysostom is somehow modern in temperament is Riddle's assumption that there was a uniform "us" in 1994 that would value literal over allegorical readings of scripture, presumably in a fashion similar to Chrysostom.

<sup>240</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. princ. Act. 1.3* (PG 51:71-72).

<sup>241</sup> Stephen D. Benin, "Sacrifice as Education in Augustine and Chrysostom," *Church History* 52:1 (March 1983), 17-18.

Canaanite woman as exemplum, rehearsing the virtues she displays—endurance, faith, wisdom, assiduity in prayer, high self-command, and most important of all, humility—he focuses equally, if not more, on Jesus’ dialogue with her as a “teaching moment” in which she rises to a new level of understanding and faith.

In its focus on the Canaanite woman as human soul, spiritual learner, and exemplum, Chrysostom’s homily dramatizes the Christian soul being transformed into an ideal state, in the tradition of Origen, Didymus, Ambrose, and Augustine, though this reading is much less directly dependent on allegory to do so.

Also underemphasized is any real interest in the salvation-historical angle of the Canaanite woman’s story so prevalent in the earlier polemical and exegetical literature, though Chrysostom does place the pericope in relation to the passages which precede and follow it. For example, acknowledging Jesus’ debate with the Pharisees in 15:1-20, Chrysostom notes that Jesus teaching “frees” the Pharisees from the food laws in the first pericope and “opens a door” for the Gentiles in the second: Ὅτε τῆς τῶν βρωμάτων παρατηρήσεως ἀπήλλαξε, τότε καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσι θύραν ἀνοίγει (“When he had set them free from their food observances, then also to the Gentiles he opened a door”).<sup>242</sup> These appear to be congruent and not contrasting acts of instruction. Similarly, the immediacy with which Jesus heals Gentiles on the mountain in 15:29-31 is not a signal that the Gentile mission has begun, as Hilary of Poitiers suggested. Instead, it simply indicates that they had less faith and could withstand less testing than the Canaanite woman: Εἶδες πῶς τὴν μὲν γυναῖκα μετὰ τσαύτης μελλήσεως ἐθεράπευσε, τούτους δὲ εὐθέως; οὐκ ἐπειδὴ βελτίους ἐκείνης οὗτοι, ἀλλ’ ἐπειδὴ πιστοτέρα ἐκείνη τούτων (“Do you see how he

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<sup>242</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.1 (PG 58:517).

healed first the woman with such delay, but these quickly? Not because they are better than that woman, but because she was more faithful than they”).<sup>243</sup>

Or, for another example, like Jerome who saw the encounter with the Canaanite woman as a turning point in salvation history, Chrysostom acknowledges that Jesus’ actions contradict his directive to his disciples at 10:5. However, Chrysostom perceives therein no decision on Jesus’ part to turn from the Jews to the Gentiles, but rather he attributes the discrepancy to more benign, pragmatic and in the end affirming, realities: Rules that applied to the disciples simply did not govern Jesus. Further, while he may not have gone intentionally to preach and heal Gentiles, to turn them away in their need would have been unworthy of his love of humanity.<sup>244</sup>

Indeed, the closest Chrysostom comes to engaging in any anti-Jewish argument is when he cites the interpretations of *others* who read the Canaanite woman allegorically as the Church: Τινῆς δὲ καὶ ἀλληγοροῦντές φασιν, ὅτι, ὅτε ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ὁ Χριστὸς, τότε αὐτῷ προσελθεῖν ἐτόλμησεν ἡ Ἐκκλησία, καὶ αὐτὴ ἐκ τῶν ὀρίων αὐτῆς ἐξελθοῦσα (“But some, allegorizing, report that when Christ went out from Judea, then the Church dared to approach him, coming out herself from her own lands”).<sup>245</sup> But he develops this only through a lovely intertextual play; he quotes from Psalm 14, a royal wedding song, to describe the meeting of Jesus and the Canaanite woman: “Hear, O Daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house....”<sup>246</sup> Or again, while Chrysostom argues that Matthew “speaks against” the woman (κατηγορέω) in labeling her a Canaanite and that this will bring to his congregation’s mind the wickedness of that nation, he concludes that this only demonstrates the

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<sup>243</sup>Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.3 (PG 58:521).

<sup>244</sup>Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.1 (PG 58:519).

<sup>245</sup>Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.1 (PG 58:519).

<sup>246</sup>NRSV.

power of Jesus' coming, that such a wicked people should come out and approach Jesus, while the Jews were driving him away.

That is the extent of anti-Jewish polemic in the homily. This temperance is unexpected, to say the least, given the virulent tenor of Chyrostom's eight homilies against the Jews delivered in Antioch, c. 387.<sup>247</sup> All the same, that polemic is not reproduced in this text. Instead, the rest of his exegesis is a dramatization of how spiritual transformation happens, and in particular Jesus' role in spiritual transformations. First, Chrysostom builds a portrait of the Canaanite woman replete with feminine vulnerability, filled with pathos, a picture of an afflicted woman who is a mother with a grievously ill daughter. Next, her humility comes center-stage. She does not dare to go to Jerusalem but waits in the outer lands; she does not even dare to bring her daughter into his presence or to ask him to come to her house as the royal official of John 4:49 did. Adding to the pathetic effect, Chrysostom emphasizes how offensive Jesus' rebuffs are. Who would not be moved by her affliction? Who would not be offended by his denials? The disciples, he says, were certainly troubled by her predicament, and in a characteristic "psychological" explanation, he suggests that they used reverse psychology on Jesus to get him to help her. Even in their troubled state, they couldn't bring themselves to speak on her behalf, so they told him to send her away, for "we too, when we wish to persuade anyone, oftentimes say the contrary:" Καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ὅταν βουληθῶμέν τινα πείσαι, τάναντία πολλάκις λέγομεν.<sup>248</sup>

Within this dramatic group encounter, the exclusivity logion is crucial not because of its soteriological or ecclesiological import, but rather as a psychological provocation that Jesus uses

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<sup>247</sup> Cf. Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4<sup>th</sup> Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983) for a thorough reconstruction of Antioch, the critique of Christianity leveraged by the emperor Julian, and relations between pagans, Jews, Judaizers, and Christians during the time that Chrysostom was presbyter at Antioch and delivered these sermons.

<sup>248</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.2 (PG 58:520).



to induce the woman's self-mastery and faith. Chrysostom argues, as Ephrem did before him, that Jesus and not the woman is the engine, or agent, of her responding faith and, further, that his motive is to exhibit her high "self-command:" διὰ ταῦτα ἠρνεῖτο τὴν δόσιν, ἵνα δείξῃ αὐτῆς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν.<sup>249</sup> But, lest the paranesis lose urgency, lest the desired appropriation lack a clear model, pattern and process, Chrysostom composes a vignette, a small dramatic skit, to delineate precisely how one becomes "shameless with a good shamelessness."<sup>250</sup> Not content to merely reproduce and interpret the controversy dialogue within Matthew's miracle story, Chrysostom breaks into the debate and interrogates the woman himself, questioning her motives and the source and nature of her tenacity. This theatrical ploy results in a kind of psychological voyeurism, but more to the point, a kind of roadmap for his congregation to follow in their own tenacious prayers.<sup>251</sup> Chrysostom comes on stage just after Jesus has uttered the exclusivity logion. The Canaanite woman has surprised everyone by not relenting. Instead, she has come nearer, knelt down, and continued to pray for help. Chrysostom confronts and cross-examines her:

JC: Οὐκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ.  
 CW: Κύρις, Βοήθει μοι.  
 Chrys: Τί τοῦτο, ὧ γύναι; μὴ γὰρ μείζονα παρρησίαν ἔχεις τῶν ἀποστολων; μὴ γὰρ πλείονα ισχὺν;  
 CW: Παρρησίαν μὲν καὶ ισχὺν, οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἰσχύνης γέμω. ἀλλ'

<sup>249</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.3 (PG 58:520). I have reproduced the *NPNF* translation of φιλοσοφία as "self-command" here and throughout my description of Chrysostom's exegesis, though it is at best metonymic. Still, it aligns with Pierre Hadot's main thesis in his *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Blackwell, 1995) which I find compelling. Hadot argues that the historical categories of "philosophy" and "philosophical discourse" should be understood as distinct. Philosophy is what philosophers *did*; philosophical discourse is what they *said*.

<sup>250</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.2 (PG 58:520): ἀπηναισχύντησε καλὴν ἀναισχυντίαν.

<sup>251</sup> Matthew's tendency to enlarge dialogue between Jesus and supplicants is thus imitated in Chrysostom. However, it is also true that ventriloquism, as a device of amplification or narrative dilation, has a long-standing tradition of its own in depictions of biblical women, whether in commentaries on women actors in the Bible, in "translations" of the Bible like the LXX, in historical haggadah like *Jubilees*, or, more predictably, in depictions of biblical women in extra-canonical primary sources. A good example is the increasingly verbose wife of Job in the LXX and in the *Testament of Job*. This device has obvious rhetorical force, adding drama to any exhortation as well as more ready identification with the Christian soul in process, be it male or female.

ὅμως αὐτὴν τὴν ἀναισχυντίαν ἀντὶ ἰκετηρίας προβάλλομαι.  
αἰδεσθήσεται  
μου τὴν παρρησίαν.

Chrys: Καὶ τί τοῦτο; οὐκ ἤκουσας αὐτοῦ λέγοντος, ὅτι Οὐκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς  
τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ;

CW: Ἦκουσα, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς Κύριός ἐστι.

JC: Οὐκ ἔστι καλὸν λαβεῖν τὴν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων, καὶ δοῦναι τοῖς  
κθναρίοις.

CW: Εἰ γὰρ κυνάριον εἰμι, οὐκ εἰμι ἀλλοτρία.<sup>252</sup>

JC: I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...

CW: Lord, help me...

Chrys: What is this, O woman? Do you have more confidence than the apostles?  
More abundant strength?

CW: Confidence and strength, by no means; no, I am even full of shame. Yet  
my very shamelessness do I put forward for entreaty.

Chrys: But, didn't you hear him say, "I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house  
of Israel?"

CW: I heard, but He is Lord.

JC: It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

CW: Even though I am a dog, I am not a foreigner.

Having tested her himself, having amplified the way in which blunt questions act to reveal strength and tenacity, Chrysostom goes on to compare Jesus' encounters with the centurion and the hemorrhaging woman and the way in which he also called attention to their faith. He then completes the apologetic argument: "Ὅστε οὐχ ὑβρίζοντος ἦν ἅπερ ἔλεγεν, ἀλλὰ ἐκκαλουμένου, καὶ τὸν ἐναποκείμενον θησαυρὸν ἐκκαλύπτοντος ("Not in insult then were his words spoken, but calling her forth, and revealing the treasure laid up in her").<sup>253</sup> Jesus' definitive pronouncement of the woman's great faith follows and Chrysostom concludes by exhorting his congregation to be equally assiduous in prayer.

For Chrysostom, however, it is not faith per se, but the spiritual struggle to keep faith that is the lesson. This is why from the very start he changes the woman's simple prayer, "Lord, have

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<sup>252</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.2 (PG 58:520).

<sup>253</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.2 (PG 58:521).

mercy,” into a longer and more elaborate spiritual *agon*, putting the following words into the mouth of the Canaanite woman:

καὶ οὐ λέγει, Ἐλέησον τὴν θυγάτερά μου, ἀλλ', Ἐλέησόν με. Ἐκείνη μὲν γὰρ ἀνεπαίσθητός ἐστι τῆς νόσου. ἐγὼ δὲ ἢ τὰ μυρία πάσχουσα εἰμι δεινὰ, ἢ μετὰ αἰσθήσεως νοσοῦσα, ἢ μετὰ τοῦ εἰδέαι μαινομένη.<sup>254</sup>

For she [the daughter] indeed is insensible of her disease, but it is I that suffer her innumerable woes; *my disease is with consciousness, my madness with perception of itself.*

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 discussed above are just a drop in the ocean of biblical exegesis that constructed early Christian ideals in late Antiquity. In spite of their prescriptive aims, they do not define the early church as a whole, nor do they open to us the breadth of lived experience of early followers of Jesus. The very presence of those they anathematize makes this clear. The prescribed identities that emerge out of these readings are no more definitive of early Christian identity than Matthew 5:43-48,<sup>255</sup> with which they stand in tension. The disparity should be instructive. The texts we have looked at, far from loving their enemies, provoke judgment, division, factionalism and hatred of gnostics, Marcionites, “faithless” Jews, Canaanites, pagan stone-worshippers, and more generally, slothful irrational souls, faithless people, and people who do not follow the commandments.

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<sup>254</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 52.1 (PG 58:519).

<sup>255</sup> Although, it is true that even here in Jesus’ statement of universal loving-kindness several disparaging contrasts are used to instruct a superior code of conduct: “You have heard it said, ‘You shall love your neighbor but hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes this sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? *Do not even the tax-collectors do the same?* And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? *Do not even the Gentiles do the same?* Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (NRSV)

The Canaanite woman teeters precariously within these early Christian manifestos. She may be the archetype of, and star witness for, a Gentile church, but she is also an exegete, an interpreter of Jesus' words, and in that role she prevaricates, protests, hedges her bets. Her liminal identity and even more uncertain fate are resolved within Jesus' pronouncement only with difficulty and precipitously, both in Matthew's gospel and in later readings of the encounter. In the earliest readings of Matt 15:21-28, the Canaanite woman is almost beside the point. At best she is conflated with the exegetes themselves, *as interpreter* witnessing to an inexorable Judeo-Christian salvation history. But in some cases, and relatively quickly over time, she moves center stage, and proves herself useful as a vehicle for divisive polemic and denunciation on the one hand and exemplum of spiritual transformation on the other. She was used to warn against and recommend an array of individual qualities. From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the initial interpretations of the Canaanite woman as sinner and marginal "other" spawned a subgenre of readings of Matt 15:21-28 which were intent upon constructing ideal Christian attributes by denouncing a wide variety of "others." How these developed is the subject of the next chapter.

### **3.0 NECESSARY OTHERS IN MATTHEW 15:21-28: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER**

The early focus in interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 on conflictual readings of the Canaanite woman as bad exegete, bad Jew, and then redeemable and teachable sinner served initially to help establish a coherent Christian church, compliance with orthodox doctrine, and at least a modicum of consensus about core exegetical methods and Scriptural interpretations. The use of this type of interpretation does not decrease over time. Given the flexibility and adaptability of exegetical strategies described in Chapter 2, it should come as no surprise that readings of the passage that marginalize and anathematize others endure, in the service of both continuing and emerging debates about contested religious and cultural ideals, identities and adversaries.

#### **3.1. THE RACIAL-ETHNIC OTHER: *ADVERSUS JUDAEOS***

Denunciation of the “faithless” Jews within readings of the Canaanite woman’s story continued over time, even while other groups came under scrutiny. At the same time, in the case of anti-Jewish readings, the range of interpretive invective narrowed to one or two *topoi*, *topoi* which did double duty. They served apologetic ends, by explaining Jesus’ reasons for interacting with the Canaanite woman in such an apparently callous manner while yet healing her daughter, and they interpreted Jesus’ behavior as intentionally silencing and shaming the Jews.

### 3.1.1 Ishodad of Merv: Commentary on Matthew

These *topoi* are succinctly joined together relatively early by Ishodad of Merv in his commentary on Matt 15:21-28. Ishodad was a leading East Syrian Bible commentator in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, writing some 500 years after Ephrem of Nisibis. He offers three explanations for Jesus' silence with the Canaanite woman: "one, that her faith might be made manifest; second, that the unbelief of the Jews might appear; third, *that the mouth of these people [the Jews] might be shut.*"<sup>256</sup>

### 3.1.2 Theophylact: Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew

Just two centuries later, in an almost identical formulation, Theophylact, bishop of Bulgaria, reiterates the argument:

Ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἀποκρίνεται αὐτῇ λόγον, οὐκ ὡς καταφρονῶν, ἀλλ' ἵνα δείξῃ, ὅτι διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἦλθε προηγουμένως καὶ ἐμφράξῃ τὰς συχοφαντίας αὐτῶν, μὴ ἐχόντων ὕστερον λέγειν, ὅτι τοὺς ἐθνικοὺς εὐεργετεῖ. ἅμα δὲ, ἵνα καὶ τὴν ἐπίμονον πίστιν τῆς γυναικὸς ἐπιδείξῃ.<sup>257</sup>

He did not answer her a word, not out of contempt, but to show that He had come, in the first place, for the Jews, and *to stop their false accusations, in order that they not be able to say later that He was doing good to Gentiles.* He also did not answer her so that He might reveal the persevering faith of the woman.

Theophylact was Byzantine in outlook and heavily influenced by Chrysostom. His commentaries are markedly derivative, often copying directly from Chrysostom whose work, along with others, he knew and used extensively. In his reading of Matt 15:21-28 alone, he

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<sup>256</sup> Ishodad of Merv, *The Commentaries of Ishodad of Merv*, Vol. 1, ed. and transl. Margaret Dunlop Gibson (3 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 64.

<sup>257</sup> Theophylact, *Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew* 15:21,23 (PG 123:310). Two of Ishodad's three explanations are reiterated here.

repeats Origen’s etymologies of “Tyre,” “Sidon,” and “Canaan” to the letter. He notes, along with Chrysostom (and Jerome), the reversal whereby Jews, once sons, have become “dogs” and Gentiles, once dogs, have become “sons.”<sup>258</sup> And his description of Jesus shutting the mouths of the Jews recalls Chrysostom’s claim that Jesus had *stitched shut the mouths of the Pharisees and shut up their shameless tongues* whenever they sought to catch him breaking Sabbath law or blaspheming.<sup>259</sup> While this image of shutting the mouths of opponents was a common one, it seems to have been one of Chrysostom’s favorites.<sup>260</sup>

### 3.1.3 Chrysostom: *Adversus Iudaeos* and *Homiliae in Matthaem*

We find it in his *Hom. Matt.* 62.3, as noted above, and also in his *Adv. Jud.* 3.3 where he praises the bishops at the Council of Nicaea for silencing heretics (καὶ τὰ τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐμφράξασα στόματα, καὶ καθάπερ τεῖχος ἀρράγαγες τὰς ἐπιβουλὰς αὐτῶν ἀποκρουσαμένη πάσας; “Because they blocked up the mouths of heretics and, like an impregnable wall, they repelled the treachery of every hostile attack”).<sup>261</sup> It appears again in *Adv. Jud.* 5.1:

Οὕτω καὶ σὺ δυνήσῃ τὸν Ἰουδαῖον ἐπιστομίσαι... πρὸς μὲν οὖν τὸ τὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀναισχυντίαν ἐπιστομίσαι, καὶ δεῖξαι παρανομοῦντας αὐτούς, ἱκανὰ καὶ τὰ τῆ προτέρα διαλέξει πρὸς τὴν ἀγάπην ὑμῶν εἰρημένα. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ οὐ τοῦτο ἐσπουδάκαμεν μόνον, ἐκείνων ἀπορράψαι τὰ στόματα...<sup>262</sup>

<sup>258</sup> Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.* 1.2 (PG 47:845): Κάκεῖνοι μὲν εἰς υἰοθεσίαν καλούμενοι, πρὸς τὴν τῶν κυνῶν συγγένειαν ἐξέπεσον ἡμεῖς δὲ κύνες ὄντες ἰσχύσαμεν διὰ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριν ἀποθέσθαι τὴν προτέραν ἀλογίαν, καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῶν υἰῶν ἀναβῆναι τιμὴν; Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 2.15.27 (SC 242, 334): *Israhel quondam filius, nos canes. Pro diversitate fidei ordo nominum commutatur...*

<sup>259</sup> Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 62.1 (PG 58:596): πανταχοῦ ἀπορράψας αὐτῶν τὰ στόματα, καὶ τὴν ἀναισχυντον ἐμφράξας γλῶτταν, οὕτω παρέπεμψεν: “On every occasion having stitched shut their mouths, and shut up their shameless tongue, He thus sent them away.”

<sup>260</sup> This image is ubiquitous, visible in *Job*, *Isaiah*, *Daniel*, in classical histories, funeral orations, in Galen, Philo and Strabo, to name just a few. Of all instances of the verbs ἐμφράσσω, ἀπορράπτω, ἐπιστομίζω, στόμα in *TLG*, however, roughly ¼ are from Chrysostom. In the case of ἀπορράπτω and ἐπιστομίζω, roughly ½ are from Chrysostom.

<sup>261</sup> Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.* 3.3 (PG 47:865).

<sup>262</sup> Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.* 5.1 (PG 47:883).

This is the way you, too, can silence the Jews ...What I have said to your loving assembly both here and in my previous discourse is enough to silence the shameless arguments of the Jews and to prove that they are transgressing the Law... It was not my sole purpose to stitch shut the mouths of the Jews....

Used in readings of Matt 15:21-28, the image supports Ephrem of Nisibis' old argument that Jesus' behavior with the Canaanite woman is a lesson specifically targeted at the Jews who rejected Jesus.<sup>263</sup>

### 3.1.4 Epiphanius Scholasticus, *Interpretatio Evangeliorum*

It was an inference not limited to the Eastern tradition. It resurfaces in Epiphanius Scholasticus, 6<sup>th</sup> century translator of Greek works into Latin, who says of the exclusivity logion, *Quibus dominus respondit: 'Non sum missus nisi ad oves perditas domus Israel.'* *Hic iam ad cumulum Iudaeorum, ut nulla sit eis in die iudicii excusatio* ("He said this to the crowd of Jews that they might have no excuse on the day of judgment").<sup>264</sup> Moreover, this "lesson trope" appears again in Calvin's interpretation of the passage in his *Harmonia Evangelicam*, c. 1558, though in Calvin's reading the Jews are not explicitly silenced by the example of the Canaanite woman and thus deprived of self-defense on Judgment Day. Instead the whole trial has become a *fait accompli*; they have lost their elect status entirely:

*Insignis etiam fidei imago depingitur in muliere Cananæa, ut comparatione facta sciamus, promissa redemptione merito privatos fuisse Iudæos, quorum tam stupida fuit impietas.*<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Cf. chapter 2, 80.

<sup>264</sup> Epiphanius Scholasticus, *InterEvang.* 58 (PL Sup 3:954).

<sup>265</sup> Calvin, *Commentarius in Harmonia Evangelicam, Matth. XV.21/Marc. VII.24*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Eduard Reuss, *CorReform* 45:455-460 (Brunswick, NJ: C. A. Schwetschke and Son, 1870; reprint, Johnston Reprint Corp., 1964): 455.



A remarkable image of faith is depicted in the Canaanite woman, to teach us by comparison that the Jews, whose ungodliness was so stupid, were justly deprived of the promised redemption.

In Epiphanius, the Jews are silenced by the positive example of the Gentile woman's faith; in Calvin, Christians are taught by the negative example of Jewish "stupidity." In all cases, the silencing motif defines Jews and Gentiles in terms of unbelief and stupidity vs. faith and shamelessness in order to establish the failures of the Jews and justify Christian priority.

### **3.1.5 John Hutton: The Proposal of Jesus**

This tradition, that Jesus was silencing the Jews through his behavior in Matt 15:21-28, may be set in even sharper relief by looking at its iterations in more recent times and its distillation into the harsher allegation that he was shaming them. In a 1919 lecture at the University of Glasgow, John Hutton, Doctor of Divinity, striking a gallant and chivalrous pose, objects strenuously to the slightest suggestion that Jesus might have been testing the Canaanite woman when he did not respond to her ("A horrid idea!"), or that Jesus might have been unsure of her "theological equipment" and thus would not comfort her ("Impossible! Nay, almost blasphemous!").<sup>266</sup> Instead, in the tradition of Epiphanius, Ishodad and Theophylact, Hutton holds:

He was leaving the woman's question to burn its way into their Jewish hearts... It is as though he said: "Well, but you know if I help this woman I shall be acting in contravention of all that you Jews believe and protest. If you really mean what you say, you mean that this woman, because she is a Canaanitish woman, is not eligible for the charity of God. That is to say, God, in your view, can close His ears and is right to close His ears to any appeal

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<sup>266</sup> John A. Hutton, D.D., *The Proposal of Jesus: The Alexander Robertson Lectures Delivered at the University of Glasgow in the Winter of 1919* (London, New York, Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1921), 127-29.

that comes from any human heart if that human heart is not a Jewish human heart.”<sup>267</sup>

The utter dissociation of Jesus from Jewish thought and practice, however perversely represented they are here, is noteworthy. Higher criticism and the historical-critical method had been in play for close to 100 years. The historically-determined Jewish self-consciousness of Jesus was a mainstay of Schweitzer’s *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.<sup>268</sup> But Hutton applies historical critical findings only selectively and for rhetorical purposes, later admitting for instance that the Jews were Jesus’ “own people” only to emphasize the greater slight when Jesus rebukes them. For Hutton was by all accounts a very effective preacher “of great fervor and power,”<sup>269</sup> author of such tracts as “The Weapons of our Warfare,” “That The Ministry Be Not Blamed,” and “The Victory over Victory.” Admitting that Jesus refused to help the Canaanite woman would, in his own words, drive him “into the darkness:”

He never said that, meaning it. Once more He was holding up a mirror to the soul of His own Jewish people, and to the soul of their representatives, His own disciples, Jews every man of them. It was as though He were saying: “You see how these principles of yours work out. It is one thing for a rabbi, sitting in his study, to develop with a horrid intellectual consistency some doctrine about the necessary exclusiveness of God; but it is another matter to apply that doctrine to life, to life with its pathos and its agony.”<sup>270</sup>

Eventually, Hutton explains, Jesus abandons his instructive pretense. Like Joseph with his brothers, Jesus pours out his true heart, acknowledging the Canaanite woman’s faith. Hutton even suggests that when Jesus finally praises her faith, he is in actuality saying, “Woman, forgive me.”<sup>271</sup> With all pretense gone, Hutton segues from his portrait of a Judaism in need of

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<sup>267</sup> Hutton, *Proposal*, 129-30.

<sup>268</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911), 396-401.

<sup>269</sup> Rev. S. J. Fisher, D.D., “The Presbyterian Alliance,” *The Herald and Presbyterian: A Presbyterian Family Paper* 152:40 (Oct 5, 1921), 5.

<sup>270</sup> Hutton, *Proposal*, 131-32.

<sup>271</sup> Hutton, *Proposal*, 133.

forgiveness to a depiction of Paul realizing on the road to Damascus that Judaism is “a caricature of God” that features “petty racial distinctions.”<sup>272</sup>

Yet it is Hutton who caricatures Judaism. And so it appears incongruous, if not disingenuous, when he announces that Paul, ashamed of his Jewish “stupid morality,” recognizes that “Jesus was the only true Jew of them all.”<sup>273</sup> This last rhetorical flourish is illogical by the lights of his own reading as it stands. It is certainly unearned. It imports the topoi of the new Israel and of the righteous remnant into his diatribe, along with the logic of supercession.

The paranetic claim, earned or not, is significant. Reading Matt 15:21-28 as a shaming of the Jews allows Hutton to oppose Jewish particularism to Christian universalism, the latter of which he then claims as “true” Judaism embodied in the examples of Jesus and Paul. This reading makes particularly clear the triangulated role that the Canaanite woman plays in the contest between Judaism and Christianity. She is the third party who is leveraged as diversionary ammunition within the conflict between the primary dyad. Through this sort of compounding of interests the aggression involved in the Christian shaming of the Jewish people may profess to be a universalist defense of the Gentiles.

### **3.1.6 Hugh Martin: Jesus and the Gentile Dogs**

Just a little over a decade later in a sermon delivered at Balham Congregational Church, South London, Hugh Martin, M.A., reproduced “the lesson trope” once again in his reading of Matt 15:21-28, but the tone and tactics of Martin’s reading are markedly different from those of Hutton. There are several hints, for example, that Martin was well aware of some of the

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<sup>272</sup> Hutton, *Proposal*, 134.

<sup>273</sup> Hutton, *Proposal*, 134.

arguments and principles of “higher criticism.” More definitive, though, is how the lesson trope is here leveraged in support of the evangelical global perspective of Martin, an outspoken advocate for “the missionary enterprise.” This is a context worth discussing at some length.

Martin’s interest in evangelism and missionary work as the highest form of humanitarianism both sustained the chauvinism of earlier readings, yet had to move beyond reductive forms of anathema if it was to encourage mission at all. The London evangelical scene from the 1820s through 1860 was the site of increasingly cooperative efforts between Anglicans and Nonconformists and provides very clear instances of their concerted efforts to “sew their seed on the barren soil of the working classes,”<sup>274</sup> not to mention the work undertaken to evangelize London Jews by the London City Mission and the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. Indeed, the London City Mission engaged in a variety of specialized forms of evangelism. In addition to Jews, they specifically targeted “Asiatics,” gypsies, prostitutes, Welshmen, Germans, soldiers, and more.<sup>275</sup> But the Anglicans, in particular, viewed the conversion of the Jews as a necessary step in world evangelism.<sup>276</sup>

But by the time Martin published his sermon in 1932, notions of the roles that different peoples were destined to play within evangelical and millenarian accounts were changing and expanding in new and challenging directions. The 1928 Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council, to which Martin appeals at the end of his sermon, was the venue for an even more intensely ecumenical Christianity. Ministers and academics of the period called attention to the shift. Samuel Cavert, a Presbyterian minister who had been at the meeting, emphasized a

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<sup>274</sup> Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness: The Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London, 1828-1860*, Contributions to the Study of Religion, No. 19 (New York; Westport, Conn.; London: Greenwood Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>275</sup> Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, 205.

<sup>276</sup> Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness*, 206. Lewis cites an article by F. W. Faber, a Catholic who worked tirelessly for the Irish working poor in London, in the May 1846 *Churchman’s Monthly Review* in which Faber argued “that the Jews would be converted en masse to the Christian faith and would then in turn be the agents for the conversion of Gentiles; thus the conversion of the Jews was the key to world evangelization.”

general consensus that the Western churches were no longer seen as sole sources and arbiters of the true Gospel.<sup>277</sup> He wrote of a new tolerance, if not full recognition, of other religions and their followers as “high-minded non-Christians,” even while maintaining the uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ.<sup>278</sup> He also reported a widening of the definition of mission beyond instilling belief and creed to include responsibility for social, economic and industrial problems.<sup>279</sup> Likewise, in 1930 Professor A. G. Baker of the University of Chicago identified “the hindrances to the building of the kingdom of God arising out of the conflict of races and nations”<sup>280</sup> as a major challenge faced by the Council in Jerusalem two years earlier. These developments appear to be behind Martin’s concluding remarks as he struggles to both acknowledge and restrict their implications.

Martin’s sermon is entitled “Jesus and the Gentile Dogs.” It was published in *The Christian World Pulpit* in November, 1932. *The Christian World Pulpit* was a weekly newspaper that reproduced sermons by preachers of all denominations, Church of England and Nonconformists alike. Established in 1871, it was one of the earliest of its kind and held its own against the many similar newspapers and magazines that came on the scene over the next few decades. It was published by James Clarke & Company, a religious publishing house in London that produced religious novels, printed sermons, devotional books and a variety of religious newspapers, including the *Christian World*, *Family Circle*, *Literary World*, and the *Sunday School Times*.<sup>281</sup> Its publisher in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was James G. Clark, son of

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<sup>277</sup> Samuel McCrea Cavert, “Beginning at Jerusalem,” *The Christian Century*, May 10, 1928, n.p. [cited 29 September 2010]. Online: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=463>: “It was a high-water mark in the history of foreign missions when the council declared that the churches of the West need to receive Christian missionaries as well as send them.”

<sup>278</sup> Cavert, “Beginning at Jerusalem,” n.p.

<sup>279</sup> Cavert, “Beginning at Jerusalem,” n.p.

<sup>280</sup> A. G. Baker, “Ecumenical Christianity,” *The Journal of Religion* 10:2 (Apr., 1930), 302.

<sup>281</sup> Henry S. Lunn, M.D., ed. *The Review of the Churches*, Vol. 4 (London: John Haddon & Co., 1893), 235-36.

the original founder of the paper. The *Christian World Pulpit* appears to have been a relatively uncontroversial paper; its primary purpose and most radical move being “to give the best possible representation of the outstanding preachers of all denominations without favour and without prejudice....”<sup>282</sup> In principle, it was an exercise in rejecting “dogmatic consideration and ecclesiastical prejudice.”<sup>283</sup> In practice, it was advertised as a tool for disseminating sermons to shut-ins who could not make it to church; to families so that parents could discuss homiletic messages with their children; to other preachers (Clarke reported in an 1893 interview that the majority of walk-in purchases were by Church of England clergymen);<sup>284</sup> and to Sunday School teachers.<sup>285</sup>

These objectives seem benign enough, yet Martin’s text presents greater challenges and attempts more than the edification of shut-ins. Furthermore, his combination of traditional content, progressive ambition and Christian conviction is not unlike that of his publisher, James Clarke. In a telling interview by the 1893 *Review of Churches*, Clarke was presented with critiques of one of his newspapers, *Christian World*. When he was asked about complaints that the newspaper “upset people’s religious opinions and ideas,” he answered:

The criticism is unfounded. All that it [*Christian World*] has done has been to put into words what has been forming in other people’s minds.... The *Christian World* is content to state its position as founded on the teachings of the New Testament, unencumbered by the ecclesiasticism and traditional accretions of a later time, and interpreted in the light of the instructed Christian consciousness of to-day.... It holds all truth as sacred, and has no fear that the revelations of science or the verdicts of sound criticism and philosophy will ever invalidate the claims of essential Christianity.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> This text appeared in a 1908 advertisement in *The Cambridge University Calendar for the Year 1908-1909* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Company; London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 48.

<sup>283</sup> James Hastings, M.A., ed., “A Review of the Christian World Pulpit,” *The Expository Times*, Vol. 6 (Oct 1894-Sept 1895), 557.

<sup>284</sup> Lunn, *Review of Churches*, 236.

<sup>285</sup> The paper was advertised, for instance, in the “Reviews” section of *The Teachers’ Storehouse and Treasury of Material for Working Sunday-School Teachers*, No. 1 (London: Elliot Stook, 1884), 26.

<sup>286</sup> Lunn, *Review of the Churches*, 236.

Adopting a very similar stance, relying on science and “sound criticism,” Martin begins his sermon acknowledging some uncomfortable interpretations of Matt 15:26 (“it is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to the dogs”). This line, Martin admits, has been used to argue that Jesus was not sinless, that he held the same prejudices and demonstrated the same failings as other men. It has also been used, he continues, to prove that Jesus was “only a Jewish teacher after all, and had not thought of any wider appeal to the world at large.”<sup>287</sup> What, he asks, can we say to such criticisms?

To begin with, Martin reconstructs the incident in rational scientific terms. Describing the “serious illness” of the Canaanite woman’s daughter, he finesses any suggestion of supernatural effect: “We do not know the nature of the disease; the ancients attributed almost all sickness to demon possession.”<sup>288</sup> And when he gets to the point of describing Jesus’ “heartless silence” he assesses its plausibility or authenticity according to what scholars have come to call the criterion of embarrassment: “Such seemingly heartless silence appears to contradict all the rest of the Gospel picture. Yet no evangelist, for that very reason, could have invented the story. It must be true.”<sup>289</sup>

So, Martin has set up the conundrum: how may Jesus’ strange behavior be explained? His answer, like Hutton’s, depends upon the “lesson trope.” Martin argues that Jesus was challenging his disciples, preparing them for a broader mission, by means of “a divine irony” that would become “a fulcrum to move the world.”<sup>290</sup> He describes Jesus as having been, from the beginning, concerned and sympathetic towards the Canaanite woman: “all the time He wanted to

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<sup>287</sup> Hugh Martin, M. A., “Jesus and the Gentile Dogs,” *The Christian World Pulpit*, Vol. 122 (Nov 17, 1932): 232.

<sup>288</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 232.

<sup>289</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 232.

<sup>290</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 233.

help. He was using her appeal to quicken a response in the hearts of the disciples.”<sup>291</sup> Like Hutton, he introduces direct discourse into his reading with the very same words, “It was as if He was saying.” Both are reminiscent of Chrysostom’s scripted dramatic vignette, though this time the elaborated words are put into the mouth of Jesus and not the Canaanite woman:

It was as if He was saying: “Do you not begin to realize now what your Jewish exclusiveness really means? It is easy to despise the people of other nations at a distance, when you mass them all together. But here is this mother in your very presence pleading for her child, as your mother might have pled for you....”<sup>292</sup>

The signal of this tacit or implicit lesson, Martin imagines, was a telltale sign in Jesus’ voice and in the look on his face that clued the Canaanite woman into the irony in his words. In Martin’s reading she is “quick to fasten upon it” and she and Jesus proceed to teach the disciples together until they “learn the lesson in the end” that national distinctions are irrelevant.

Having taken these steps, Martin can climb up onto his own soapbox and teach his own contemporary lesson. Quoting Archimedes, he explains that Jesus was seeking a fulcrum in the Jewish world, “to win them to an acceptance of their long neglected missionary vocation which some of the great Old Testament prophets had preached.”<sup>293</sup> He cites other gospel passages that establish Jesus’ sympathy for foreigners and his universalist spirit, especially Matt 8:5-13.<sup>294</sup> But in the end even this sort of historical proof texting is unnecessary according to Martin, for he sees Jesus’ teaching about the universal Fatherhood of God as definitive for “the missionary

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<sup>291</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 233.

<sup>292</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 233.

<sup>293</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 233.

<sup>294</sup> These include Jesus’ healing of the centurion’s servant at 8:5 and Jesus’ prediction at 8:11: “I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (NRSV).



enterprise,” whether or not the Great Commission had ever been spoken.<sup>295</sup> It is for this reason that Jesus “made Jewish snobbery seem mean and unworthy,” to move his disciples to evangelize the world.

Martin’s reading is strategic; it authorizes his agenda to “free society of cramping custom and blighting social practices and political bondage”<sup>296</sup> through Christian evangelism. His interpretation of Matt 15:21-28 establishes Christian priority and the ideal of a Christianized world through shaming the Jews. Yet, his sermon distinguishes itself memorably from his predecessor exegetes as it moves towards its conclusion. In an effort to encourage missionary spirit by establishing the common humanity and need of all people, Martin ends up quoting Shakespeare (a British playwright) scripting Shylock (a Jewish merchant) arguing his common humanity against Christian persecutors in *The Merchant of Venice*. Yet Martin does this in a sermon about a Jewish savior shaming Jewish disciples into a Jewish prophetic calling to reform hearts which he then redefines as the global evangelization of the Christian gospel. The dissonance is palpable: in a sermon about Jesus silencing Jews, Martin literally and unexpectedly moves a Jew center-stage and rehearses his angry soliloquy:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 233: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (*Matt 28:19, NRSV*)

<sup>296</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 234.

<sup>297</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 234. From William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 3, Scene 1, 58-68.

Martin's use of a portrait of Jewish outrage in the service of Christian evangelism seems strange on one level, especially in light of the straw man of "Jewish snobbery" that his reading has depended upon to this point. Not to mention the fact that if his audience were at all literate, they would know that Shylock's speech does not stop at line 68; that it, in fact, goes on to articulate a not-so-intentional "lesson" that Christians have taught Jews:

And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute: and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.<sup>298</sup>

Martin chose not to reiterate this second lesson. His condemnation of bias and exclusivity is intended for Christian ears, in the interest of constructing Christian evangelists, a task that requires balancing an open-minded stance with a discrediting of Jewish claims to priority. "Jewish exclusiveness" remains the negative object lesson in his construction of "a Christ-like world,"<sup>299</sup> even while Jews are granted a voice of protest against Christian prejudice.

In this, Martin may be an object-lesson himself in the uneven fits and starts of Christian ecumenism. When Martin closes with a quotation from the meeting of the International Missionary Council in Jerusalem, he does not choose a repentant statement of past insensitivities or economic exploitation or even the notion that "every race will make its own indispensable contribution to the building of a Christian world,"<sup>300</sup> as his near-contemporary Samuel Cavert had done. He chooses this Council statement:

The Gospel is the answer to the world's greatest need... Its very nature forbids us to say that it may be the right belief for some but not for others. Either it is true for all, or it is not true at all...We believe in a Christ-like

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<sup>298</sup> Shakespeare, *Merchant*, Act 3, Scene 1, 69-76.

<sup>299</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 234.

<sup>300</sup> Cavert, "Beginning at Jerusalem," n.p.

world. We know nothing better; we can be content with nothing less. Christ is our motive and Christ is our end.<sup>301</sup>

The aim of Martin's "common humanity" is universal Christianity.

### 3.2 THE FEMALE OTHER: MULIERES HOMINES NON ESSE

Matt 15:21-28 has mainly been treated as a story about religious, racial and ethnic differences, with the three functioning metonymically. The fact that the Canaanite woman is a *woman* has rarely been articulated as the *primary* concern of the passage until very recently in feminist biblical criticism and within homiletic contexts. While particulars of her womanhood have punctuated readings of Matt 15:21-28 from the beginning, usually to heighten pathos, strong readings of her gender have been sporadic to say the least. In other words, interpretations of Matt 15:21-28, until recently, have *not* been interested in demonstrating how being female—as opposed to being Gentile or faithful—is integral to being Christian. Why?

The answer is fairly straightforward, to be found mainly in the androcentric logic of early Christian texts and interpretation. The widespread assignment of typological, allegorical, or corporate representation to actors in the gospel narratives transforms individuals, male and female, into examples of a generically male humanity. Through such means, the femaleness of women actors becomes superfluous or it becomes characteristic of a feminized, understood as a flawed and weak, humanity. To be female, or feminine, in early Christian literature is very often to be a compromised Christian, inescapably human and sinful.

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<sup>301</sup> Hugh Martin, *Jesus and the Gentile Dogs*, 234.

This resilient patriarchal logic informs the biblical interpretations in this study that subsume the female subjectivity of the Canaanite woman under a generic male subjectivity. At the same time, this underlying patriarchal logic dovetails with historically-specific social and theological issues in many instances.<sup>302</sup> As Elizabeth Clark has explored in another context, there is a “social logic” to such interpretations—a combined effect of their “social and formal concerns”—that uses the supposed nature and social status of femaleness to represent any number of historical identities and relationships.<sup>303</sup>

### 3.2.1 Gil Vicente: *Auto da Cananeia*

One of the most culturally dynamic examples of this process within a representation of the Canaanite woman is a 1534 mystery play, written by the Portuguese playwright, Gil Vicente, entitled *Auto da Cananeia* or *Play of the Canaanite Woman*. Vicente’s staging of the Canaanite woman’s encounter with Jesus and his disciples is a complex blend of medieval popular and folkloric types, religious allegory, and liturgical language, presented in a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese. The resulting production, written for the cultivated and aristocratic abbess Violante of the Convent of Odivelas (*Ouvidelas*) and her nuns, interprets the story of one woman’s prayer on a number of levels, from the historical succession of the ages of Natural Law, Jewish Law, and Grace, to the cosmic import of Jesus’ power over the demonic, to the claims of the foreigner, the dispossessed and womankind. In this way, Vicente’s play represents something of a

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<sup>302</sup> For instance, in another context, Elizabeth Clark has explored the same phenomenon in the accounts of fourth- and fifth-century women ascetics: Elizabeth Clark, “The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the ‘Linguistic Turn,’” *Church History* 67 (1999), p1-31.

<sup>303</sup> Elizabeth Clark, “The Lady Vanishes,” 24.

transition between more allegorical and typological readings of the Canaanite woman and readings that are focused specifically on her gender.

Vicente himself is a fascinating figure, striking as a singular portrait of ambivalence, cross-cultural urbanity, linguistic virtuosity, and religious and cultural impulses, highly attuned to both the medieval heritage and humanistic developments of his time. In 1502, he caught the eye of the Portuguese Dowager Queen Leonor, who commissioned him to write a play for her Spanish daughter-in-law on the birth of her son (Leonor's grandson), the heir apparent, João III. The play marked the start of Vicente's career as court playwright to the Portuguese kings Manuel I (João III's father) and João III.

Vicente was an actor, lyric poet, playwright, and polylinguist who incorporated popular songs and dances into his plays, 44 plays in total, ranging from morality and mystery plays to comedies and farces, written in Spanish, Portuguese, with Latin and even some local and ethnic dialects interspersed. The status he achieved at court gave him the latitude to develop a dramatic corpus that encompasses both profoundly religious and aggressively satirical themes, among which the passionate defense of the oppressed and the poor and the skewering of religious corruption and political vainglory figure prominently. Vicente could be predictably traditional—what we might call culturally-determined—for instance, in the decidedly anti-Jewish passages that color at least nineteen of his plays. And yet, towards the end of his career, he would address a defense of the Jews to his sovereign, in his *Carta a D. João III* (1531), in which he defends the Jews as redeemable, and affirms their role in God's plans for the final salvation of all. He argues against acts of intolerance and makes fun of superstitious claims that the Jews were responsible

for the 1531 Lisbon earthquake.<sup>304</sup> He lived and wrote at the intersection of Spanish and Portuguese political unification, in a land where Jews and Muslims had relatively recently been forcibly expelled from the peninsula or “converted” to Christianity; all of this, during a larger transition from medieval to humanist culture. What does the Canaanite woman become in such hands?

The *Auto da Cananea* was performed in the convent of Odivelas for an audience of educated aristocratic nuns, themselves the beneficiaries of royal favor ever since the founding of the convent by King João’s 13<sup>th</sup>-century ancestor, King Denis. The abbess had requested the play so that it would dovetail with the Gallo-Roman rite of the second Sunday in Lent which featured the Canaanite woman.<sup>305</sup> Thus, it was presented within a liturgical context to a religious audience of women at a convent. This performative scenario fits well with the conservative medieval elements in the play, the quoting of liturgy in Latin, the musical refrains, and the allegorized figures and demonic characters.<sup>306</sup>

The play begins with a pastoral prologue set in a rustic mountain terrain. Three shepherdesses meet and speak together in verse, singing about the mountain on which they tend their flocks. They are Silvestra, the Law of Nature, who watches over the pagan sheep; Hebreia, the Law of Scripture, who watches over the Jewish sheep; and Veredina, the Law of Grace, who

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<sup>304</sup> Cf. Celso Láfer, *O Judeu em Gil Vicente* (São Paulo: Conselho Estadual de Cultura, Comissão de Literatura, 1963). Inquisitorial documents indicate that there were close to 200,000 Jews or “New Christians” living in Portugal by 1624, when in reality there were probably no more than 6,000 “full-blooded” *conversos* left (Toby Green, *Inquisition: The Reign of Fear*, Macmillan, 2009, 321).

<sup>305</sup> Jack Horace Parker, *Gil Vicente*. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967, 72.

<sup>306</sup> There is no consensus amongst scholars of Vicente’s work about its primary ethos, whether medieval or of the Renaissance. *Auto da Cananea* displays much that could link it to the medieval liturgical music-dramas of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and their performance, on church grounds, of Scriptural vignettes, such as the *Visitatio sepulchri*, within the Divine Office or Mass. Solange Corbin and Walter Lipphardt have argued that there was an absence of this particular sort of liturgical drama in Portugal, but that liturgical ceremonies associated with the earlier forms are recorded by the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (Cf. Walter Lipphardt, *Lateinische Osterfeiern und Osterspiele*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975, II, 627-50 and Solange Corbin, *Essai sur la musique religieuse portugaise au Moyen Age, 1100-1385*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1952, 285-90.)

watches over the sheep of the Redeemer. Soon, Satan and Beelzebub enter,<sup>307</sup> lamenting Jesus' great power and their inability to defeat him. Beelzebub rejoices, however, at another opportunity to test Jesus' power: he is tormenting the daughter of the Canaanite woman and Jesus is going to Tyre and Sidon where she will ask for his help. The demons then depart, leaving the stage open for Jesus and six disciples to enter. Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray, explicating each line of the Lord's Prayer, when the Canaanite woman enters. She, like the shepherdesses, both sings and speaks, making her case while the disciples take up her cause and urge Jesus to help her. Beelzebub pops up, rather comically, arguing with the disciples to stop interfering. The Canaanite woman continues begging for help and Jesus finally heals her daughter, "*porque tens muito sofrido, como constante oradora,*"<sup>308</sup> because she has suffered so greatly in constant prayer. The play ends with a quasi-comic scene in which Beelzebub recounts this "misfortune" to Satan and all the devils become depressed about ever defeating Jesus. Peter and the Canaanite woman praise Jesus in the final lines.

Of particular interest to the argument of this chapter is Vicente's depiction of the different "flocks" that live side by side on the mountain. Standard anti-Jewish invective punctuates these opening lines. Certainly, both the pagans and the Jews are disparaged by their shepherdesses. The pagans refuse to acknowledge the one God and cannot see the Law of Nature

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<sup>307</sup> The distinction between Satan and Beelzebub is not uncommon within mystery plays of this period. Parker notes that in the hierarchy of devils (Lucifer, then Satan, then Beelzebub) in the *Auto da Cananeia*, Vicente mimicked the French mystery plays of the Middle Ages (Parker, *Gil Vicente*, 72).

<sup>308</sup> Bernardes, Diogo, ed., *Obras completas da Gil Vicente; com prefácio e notas do prof. Marques Braga* (Collecção de clássicos Sá da Costa, 3 volumes; Lisboa: Sá da Costa, 1945-46), 258. Thanks to Meghan Dabkowski, Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures, University of Pittsburgh, for her help with preliminary translations of the Vicente text and to Dr. Anthony Lappin, University of Manchester, for kindly reviewing and correcting the final translations.

clearly,<sup>309</sup> but it is the Jews who receive extensive negative profiling at the hands of their own Law, Hebreia, in her first monologue:

*sabes que gado é ?  
Tudo raposos e lobos,  
e eu te dou minha fé  
que é a mais falsa relé  
que há i nos gados todos...  
sempre o verás andar  
dum pecar em outro pecar,  
de cativo em cativo...  
Isso sam gados perdidos!  
Os meus, foram escolhidos  
e fizeram-se perversos  
Os patriarcas primeiros  
eram gados celestiais,  
ovelhas, santos carneiros,  
e os profetas, cordeiros;  
e os de agora lobos tais...*<sup>310</sup>

And do you know what flock it is?  
All foxes and wolves  
And I wholeheartedly assure you  
that it is the falsest rabble  
that there could be in any flock...  
You will always see it going  
from one sin to another,  
from captivity to captivity...  
These are flocks gone astray! [Jews and pagans]  
Mine were chosen  
and became perverse  
The first patriarchs  
were celestial flocks;  
sheep, saintly rams,  
and the prophets, lambs;  
and those of today such wolves...

It is at this point that the interplay between gender and unexpected redemption begins to surface in the play, in the figure of the Virgin Mary, whose significance is contested by Silvestra and Hebreia. While the shepherdesses are female, they simply belong to the category of

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<sup>309</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 234: “com que lágrimas me vem.”

<sup>310</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 235-6.



traditional feminine personifications, in this case of Nature, Hebrew Law, and Christian Grace. Jesus' mother, Mary, on the other hand, is unexpectedly leveraged by Hebreia at the end of her lament about her flock: "*Pois têm em mim ãa pastora, que nunca foi outra tal,*" to which Silvestra/Nature predictably replies, "*Nego eu esso por agora!*"<sup>311</sup> It is as a peace-maker, then, that Veredina, the Law of Grace, enters the scene, singing to Silvestra and Hebreia not to fight with one another. Veredina goes on to confirm Hebreia's claim about Mary's redeeming role: "*Outra mais alta pastora anda na serra, preciosa: emperatriz gloriosa, principal minha Senhora, esta dos anjos se adora, santa Raina na Terra...*"<sup>312</sup>

This rapprochement between Hebreia and Veredina, based on their mutual affirmation of Mary's importance within redemption history, is interesting. Veredina goes on to reassure both Silvestra and Hebreia that, while it is not yet their time, God will remember what he has promised and will fulfill completely as eternal truth with Abraham's seed.<sup>313</sup> The frame of the prologue, then, depicts three historical relationships with God—that of the pagans, the Jews, and the lambs of the Redeemer. And, through God's larger memory and plan, it achieves a kind of resolution of these diverse claims and histories with God. The rest of the play asks how one gets what one needs or wants from God.

The three segments that make up the rest of the *Auto da Cananeia* involve 1) Satan's failed temptations of Jesus, 2) the disciples' urgent request for catechesis in the ways of effective prayer, and 3) the Canaanite woman's plea for Jesus' help. These three act comparatively to make clear the credibility of the Canaanite woman and the validity of her claims. Satan's

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<sup>311</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 237: "But I have in me a shepherdess; there never was such a one;" "I disavow this now!" NB. The *Princeps* edition has "*Nego eu essa*": "I refuse to accept *her* now."

<sup>312</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 238: "Another, more noble shepherdess treads the beautiful hills: the glorious Empress, my Lady below none, this [lady] of the angels to be adored, holy Queen on earth."

<sup>313</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 239: "*e lembrou-se o Senhor Deus do que tinha prometido; e compria interiramente, como eternal verdade, com Abrahão sua semente...*"

description of his efforts to manipulate Jesus comprises a negative or reversed image of the Canaanite woman's words acts, tenacity, and initial (apparent) defeats: *porque eu tentei a Cristo com muita arte e descrição. Mas não me há-de valer isto... Hei-de haver tanta pancada, porque o nam venci de feito.*<sup>314</sup> He goes on to focus on his own tenacity and wit ("cunning") in pressing Jesus (attributes understood as virtues within the history of interpretations of the Canaanite woman's analogous moves!): *Pude eu melhor pelear? Pude eu melhor resistir? Pude eu mais negociar? Lutei, ousado e manhoso. Que culpa me poerão?*<sup>315</sup>

In contrast, when Peter asks Jesus to teach the disciples how to pray, he is a figure of humility, describing the disciples and himself as languishing "in the region of the ignorant, simpletons, beginners."<sup>316</sup> The instruction that they receive from Jesus is focused as much on an inflamed heart and soul, as it is on the content of prayer. Indeed, the content of the Lord's Prayer is basically an enactment of humility, comprised of devotion, blessing God, his kingdom, and his will, and crying out for release from sins. Jesus prescribes "clean, pure souls," speaking "with great love" and an "attentive spirit," "cries from the heart," "groaning tension," and meekness and devotion.<sup>317</sup> Nothing could be further from Satan's art, tenacity, wit, cunning, and audacity.

It is at this point that the Canaanite woman enters, crying out to Jesus to help her. She explains her daughter's possession. Her macabre dramatic descriptions of her daughter's symptoms are vivid: twisted arms, bloodthirsty eyes, and disheveled hair. The pitiable state of her daughter and the sadness of the Canaanite woman are foregrounded. Jacob, John, and Peter

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<sup>314</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 240: "Because I tempted Christ with much art and sleight-of-hand. But this was of no use... I will receive so many blows [in punishment] because I really did not prevail over him."

<sup>315</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 241: "Could I have fought better? Could I have resisted better? Could I have negotiated more? I fought, audacious and cunning; what fault can be put on me?"

<sup>316</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 245: "*porque estão na região de inorantes, smprezes, principiantes.*"

<sup>317</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 246-48: "*almas limpas e puras,*" "*com grande amor,*" "*com 'spíritu atento,*" "*com choros do curação,*" "*com gemente tenção,*" "*humildos e devotos.*"

repeatedly intercede on behalf of “this woman,” “the mother of those who despair.”<sup>318</sup> But Jesus simply responds with the exclusivity logion: “*senão socorrer ao gado que pereceu no montado das ovelhas de Israel.*”<sup>319</sup> Then ensues a debate between the disciples and Beelzebub in which Beelzebub explains the automatically cursed fate of human beings born under certain astrological conjunctions, conjunctions that match the positions of the planets at historically fatal moments, such as the moment Lucifer sinned or the moment that the Hebrews worshipped the golden calf: the Canaanite woman’s daughter is such a soul, he says. Peter denounces his “false astronomy,” “bad doctor’s wisdom,” and “empty subtleties.”<sup>320</sup>

In contrast to these esoteric “vanities,” the Canaanite woman’s continued prayer relies upon heartfelt entreaty and the acknowledgement of her foreign and disenfranchised status. She admits that she is a dog, but continues to ask about the grounds for his refusal: he provides for the beasts of the forest, but hides his bounty only from her? She was born excommunicated; will he abandon her? Finally, she asks:

*E se, por ser cananeaia  
e filha de perdição,  
desprezas minha oração,  
a mísera anima mea  
onde achará redenção?”*

*Se perco por mulher ser,  
por meus erros profundos,  
Senhor, deves tu de ver  
que nasceste de mulher  
escolhida antre mil mundos!*<sup>321</sup>

And if, because I am a Canaanite,  
a daughter of perdition,  
you scorn my prayer,

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<sup>318</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 251: “*mãe dos desconsolados.*”

<sup>319</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 252: “I was sent to help the flock that is perishing on the mountain, the sheep of Israel.”

<sup>320</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 255: “*que falsa estrolomia! Que mau siso de doutor!*,” “*vãs sutilezas!*”

<sup>321</sup> Bernardos, *Obras*, 258.

my wretched soul,  
where will it find redemption?

And if I lose because I am a woman  
for my profound errors,  
Lord, you must see  
that you were born of a woman  
chosen before [the creation of] a thousand worlds!

The Canaanite woman's appeal here, her claim to be entitled to Jesus' salvific powers *because of her gender* and the gender of his mother, does not appear before this date, at least amongst the readings in this study. Yet here it is, in a Portuguese mystery play of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, performed for a female audience of educated aristocratic nuns. Vicente, poised between the Spanish and Portuguese cultures in a land that had sent away the majority of its Jewish population, moves from anti-Jewish polemic, religious catechism, and the cosmic struggle between Jesus and Satan to the humble claims that foreigners and women, both disenfranchised and without "merit," have to Jesus' love and healing. The interpretations of the Canaanite woman in the early church readings described in Chapter 2 present her as exemplum of the convert, the faithful believer, not Gnostic, not Jewish, not Judaizing, reformed sinner, Gentile supercessionist, and so on. These constructions cum prescriptions of early Christian identities are not about gender. They *use* gender to signify some better or lesser "other" which (male) Christians should either emulate or reject. The only gendered category of identity that is stressed in the early readings is the Canaanite woman's motherhood and even in this she is often read allegorically as the Gentile (mother) church.

So, when representations or interpretations of the Canaanite woman finally arise that do emphasize her gender it is reasonable to explore to what degree gender is used as a cipher for

other identities, divisions or differences. In Vicente's play, the case based on gender stands on its own merit, the crowning argument in favor of her claim to Jesus' healing.

The second set of readings of the Canaanite woman in this section, comprised of a treatise and two argumentative refutations, provides very different case studies. The treatise and the first refutation are not concerned primarily with gender; only the last achieves a sustained focus on gender, even though they all belong to the literary genre known as the *querelle des femmes* (the debate about women).

### **3.2.2 Anon: *Mulieries homines non esse*; Simon Gedik: *Defensus sexus mulieribus*; Arcangela Tarabotti: *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini***

These three texts date from the period of the Protestant and Catholic Reformation and include an anonymous pamphlet whose author appears to have been Roman Catholic, published in 1595 and entitled *Mulieries homines non esse: Disputatio nova contra mulieres, qua probatur eas homines non esse* (*Women are not human beings: A new disputation against women, in which it is proved that they are not men*); a Lutheran response to that pamphlet, also from 1595, entitled *Defensio sexus mulieribus* (*Defense of the female sex*); and a later refutation of *Mulieries homines non esse*, written by a Venetian Benedictine nun, Suor Arcangela Tarabotti, under the pseudonym Galerana Barcitotti, in 1651. Tarabotti's response was entitled *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini* (*That women are of the human species*).<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> The particulars of authorship and provenance are from Theresa M. Kenney, ed. and transl., "*Women Are Not Human*": *An Anonymous Treatise and Responses* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 2-4. Kenney also indicates that the original anonymous author has been identified inconclusively but somewhat credibly as Valtin Havekenthal, a German humanist teaching on the border of Poland and Eastern Germany who was the son of a Lutheran preacher and who converted in the last year of his life to Catholicism (Kenney, *Women Are Not Human*, 12-13).

Of course, the *querelle des femmes* was not unique to the Reformation period. It generated an entire corpus of Latin and French disputational texts that debated the relative merits of the sexes from the early 13<sup>th</sup> through the mid-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. These texts range in genre from clerical anti-conjugal diatribe to French romance, for instance, Jean de Meun's mid-13<sup>th</sup> century insertion of a cynical and misogynistic *fabliau*-style *ars amoris* into Guillaume de Lorris' poem about courtly love, *Roman de la Rose*. But in most cases, as de Beauvoir made clear in *The Second Sex* years ago, the *querelle* was almost always about something other than women:

Various clerics wrote "lamentations" and diatribes about woman's failings, the martyrdom of man in marriage, and so on; and their opponents tried to prove woman's superiority.... The truth of the matter was that this dispute concerned women only indirectly.... It was rather a matter of contrasting the life of the cleric with the married state; that is to say *it was a male problem* raised by the Church's ambiguous attitude in regard to marriage....<sup>323</sup>

The salient point is that the *querelle* has been understood as a scaffold upon which were built arguments about male (generic) problems, and that these problems were often linked to religious life, policy, creed, or morality. The "*Mulieres homines non esse*" group of texts appears to be no exception. So Theresa Kenney has argued and there are, indeed, two issues that obviously preoccupy at least the anonymous author of the first text, *Mulieres homines non esse*. Both involve biblical interpretation.<sup>324</sup>

First, the anonymous author was concerned about the effects of the principle of *sola scriptura* on reformed exegesis, in particular the promotion of univocal biblical interpretation, distrust of the traditional multiple levels of meaning, and the reductive fruits of over-literal reading. Second, he was intent upon ridiculing biblically-based arguments leveraged in support

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<sup>323</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (ed. and transl. H. M. Parshley; New York: Vintage Books, 1974; orig. publ. *Le Deuxieme Sexe*; Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1949), 118.

<sup>324</sup> In this, both hearken back to the earliest uses of Matt 15:21-28 to control exegetical methods, such as we saw in Tertullian's discrediting of both Gnostic and Marcionite interpretations of Scripture.

of Anabaptist and Socinian Christologies.<sup>325</sup> To mock both, he writes a treatise against women's humanity which he introduces as analogous to Anabaptist denials of Christ's divinity:

*Cum in Samartia,<sup>326</sup> ut in campo omnis licentiae, liberum sit credere & docere, Iesum Christum Filium Dei Salvatorem & Redemptorem animarum nostrarum, una cum Spiritu Sancto non esse Deum, licebit opinor etiam mihi credere & docere, quod multo minus est, mulieres scilicet non esse homines.<sup>327</sup>*

Since it is permitted in Samartia, as in a field where every license is given free rein, to believe and to teach that Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of our souls in unity with the Holy Spirit, is not God, I believe that I will be permitted to believe and teach something much less: that women are not of the human species.

That is, if Anabaptists can “stubbornly deny that Jesus is the one true God” by saying that this is nowhere asserted in Scripture, then he can argue that women are not human, since this is nowhere directly articulated either: *Nihil esse credendum, nisi quod in sacris literis expressum sit. Nec mulierem hominem esse credam, cum & hoc nusquam extet* (“Nothing is to be believed but what is expressly stated in the Holy Scriptures, and so I ought not believe that woman is human; it is not so now and it never shall be”).<sup>328</sup> The rest of the text is nothing more than a flamboyant demonstration of the outrageous conclusions that can be drawn from overliteral readings, beginning with the title itself and its backpedaling pun: Since *homines* in Latin can mean either “human beings” or “men,” the title—*women are not human beings/women are not*

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<sup>325</sup> The broader context for the author's concerns is described by Kenney in her introduction, in Kenney, “*Women Are Not Human*,” 7.

<sup>326</sup> Sarmatia was a late 16<sup>th</sup> century (fictional) name for ancient Poland, where Anabaptists were concentrated in numbers and influence.

<sup>327</sup> Clive Hart, ed. *Disputatio Nova Contra Mulieres/A New Argument Against Women: A Critical Translation from the Latin with Commentary, Together with the Original Latin Text of 1595* (Mellen Critical Editions and Translations, Vol. 1;1998; Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 137.

<sup>328</sup> Hart, *Disputatio Nova*, 138.

*men*—can be read as alternately shocking or mundane. The dangers of multivalence are caricatured from the very start.<sup>329</sup>

The Canaanite woman plays a major role in the treatise, along with two other biblical über-mothers, Eve and Mary. All three are mocked and their status diminished. This text's reading of the Canaanite woman is thus something of a watershed in the history of her interpretation, first, because she does not serve as a universal exemplum of faith as she had in the past, nor even as a cautionary example as sinner. She is not a gendered trope for male subjectivity at all. Rather, as a gendered aberration from the male norm, she has become irrelevant to questions of human morality and salvation.

Second, the interpretation itself is ironic in tone. It is a joke and, thus, a significant departure from the ponderous earnestness of prior readings. The question is whether it is a one-joke gag. Is there anything besides literal interpretation that is being laughed at?

Third, the text professes to take Jesus' problematic behavior towards the Canaanite woman at face value. The apologetic tradition that had developed through attempts to explain Jesus' callousness is, on one level, ridiculed. Yet on another level the same tradition is shored up because of the text's ironic premise that literal interpretation (in this case, of Jesus' actions) is itself reductive and leads to absurd conclusions.

The inflammatory content of this treatise, then, is gainsaid before it is even read. It enacts the form of *sic et non* so typical of *querelle* texts, not just in its inclusion of conventional arguments that it then shoots down, but also in its fundamental rhetorical premise. The very familiarity of the conventional attacks on women that the author cites and the reassuring

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<sup>329</sup> Kenney, *Women Are Not Human*, 8.



knowledge that he is parodying a misguided form of interpretation could only have increased the entertainment value of the treatise. A few examples will illustrate.

The writer argues that Jesus' silence in Matt 15:21-28 signifies that he wished to have nothing to do with women. He then speaks directly to his women readers: *Auditisne mulieres Christum propter vos non esse missum? Intelligitisne iam viri, uxores vestras ad regnum coelorum non pertinere?* ("Do you women hear that Christ was not sent on your account? Do you men now understand that your wives have nothing to do with the Kingdom of Heaven?")<sup>330</sup> He denies that Jesus was rejecting the woman's Gentile background and not her gender, citing God's love for the whole (male) world and the fact that Jesus was never once rude to a Gentile man in the gospels. Then, in an intentionally scandalous move, he suggests that women simply stop trying to merit salvation: *...quae nihil aliud estis, quam ipsissimae bestiae foedae? Quid ergo tantopere de vestra salute laboratis? Cur supra voluntatem omnipotentis Dei vos effertis?*<sup>331</sup> His advice to women is to *Manete, obsecro, in eo quo vos natura posuit statu.... Humiliamini ergo cum Cananaea o mulieres* ("Remain in that state, I beg, in which nature has placed you...so be humbled with the Canaanite, O women").<sup>332</sup> These are exhortations tinged with irony even as they reproduce misogynistic commonplaces.

In increasingly blatant *non*-literal moves, the author next denies that Jesus' praise of the Canaanite woman's faith proves that she is human and capable of being saved through her faith. Her faith is not *veram illam fidem animam iustificantem*; it is *aliam historicam, quae non est hominum tantum, sed & mulierum & diabolorum* ("that true faith justifying the soul... [it is] that

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<sup>330</sup> Hart, *Disputatio Nova*, 144.

<sup>331</sup> Hart, *Disputatio Nova*, 145.

<sup>332</sup> Hart, *Disputatio Nova*, 145.

other faith attested by history, which is not only men's, but also women's and the devils''').<sup>333</sup> This other faith seeks only to save the body, and not the soul. It is this inferior faith that works its power on women's bodies. The process he describes is something like a placebo effect; the women's belief is the cause of their healing, not Jesus. Therefore, Christ does not intervene on their behalf; he did not come for them at all. If now the author has taken literal reading to the point of bearing no resemblance to the literal text, then his satire is fully realized. He concludes his treatise with the observation:

*Probavi, opinor, quinquaginta invictissimis sacrarum literarum testimoniis, mulierem non esse hominem, nec eam salvari. Quod si non effeci, ostendi tamen universo mundo, quomodo huius temporis haeretici, & praesertim Anabaptistae & Papistae, sacram soleant explicare scripturam, & qua utantur methodo ad stabilienda sua execranda dogmata.*<sup>334</sup>

I have proved, I hope, by fifty invincible testimonies from the Sacred Letters that woman is not human, nor is she saved. And if I have not accomplished this, I have nevertheless shown to the whole world how the heretics of this time—and especially the Anabaptists—are in the habit of explicating the Sacred Scripture, and what method they use to prove their accursed dogmas.

Given all of the above, it is perhaps surprising that this elaborate, over-the-top performance was granted any response at all. The two responses that we do have are the work of an apparently humorless Lutheran, Simon Gedik, “Doctor of Sacred Theology,” and of an unorthodox Benedictine nun, Suor Arcangela Tarabotti. Did these two share the original author's concerns about literal exegesis? To what degree, if any, did each subordinate the category of gender to other questions?

Simon Gedik's text may be dispensed with in relatively short order since its author and argument are conventional and add no new terms to the interpretation of the Canaanite woman or her story. First, the subtitle to his refutation of *Mulieres homines non esse* suggests that he took

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<sup>333</sup> Hart, *Disputatio Nova*, 146.

<sup>334</sup> Hart, *Disputatio Nova*, 146-47.

the text to which he was responding very seriously. He has either missed the joke or is playing along in exceedingly deadpan fashion: *Defensio sexus muliebris, opposita futelissimae disputationi recens editae qua suppresso authoris & typographi nomine blasphemè contenditur, Mulieres homines non esse: Confutatio spurcissimi scripti, quo ἀνώνυμος scurra humanam naturam foeminei sexus impugnat* (“A defense of the female sex opposed to the recently published, pointless disputation in which the disguised author and printer blasphemously argues that women are not human: A confutation of that most filthy document in which an anonymous buffoon impugns the human nature of the feminine sex”).<sup>335</sup> This earnestness is sustained when he faults his opponent’s text for having suggested that *quasi appendix sit Mulier, neq; ad societatem, vel potius perfectionem generis vitæ que humanæ pertineat* (“Woman is like an appendix and has little to do with society or with the perfection of the human race and human life”).<sup>336</sup> Ironically or not, in contrast to the playfulness of the original treatise, Gedik is quite sober, even if there is some vitality in the memorable epithets and insults he hurls at his opponent: *ἀνώνυμος scurra, stolide, tu fanaticè Spiritus* (“anonymous buffoon,” “you fanatical Spirit”)<sup>337</sup> and as follows:

*Nec enim es HOMO (arrige aures Sycophanta) si manifeste possum videre. Cum namque tanquam asinus recalcitres, lascivias autem ut taurus, tanquam equus vero post mulieres hinnias, ventri tanquam urfus indulgeas, & ut mulus carnem impingues, & malum memoria teneas velut camelus.*<sup>338</sup>

For you are not a man (and you, Sycophants, prick up your ears) as far as I can see. For you are as obstinate as an ass, as lascivious as a bull, you actually whinny after women like a horse, and you indulge your stomach as a bear, and you fatten your flesh like a mule and you bear a grudge like a camel....

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<sup>335</sup> Simon Gediccus, *Defensio Sexus Muliebris*, Kessinger Publishing Legacy Reprints (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010).

<sup>336</sup> Gediccus, *Defensio*, Prol.

<sup>337</sup> Gediccus, *Defensio*, A3, B, C.

<sup>338</sup> Gediccus, *Defensio*, C3.

In the end, Gedik's point-by-point refutation of the earlier text is relatively dry and by the book. In response, Kenney observes that Gedik is "definitely not amused, but it is because he thinks one ought not be amused."<sup>339</sup>

In any case, Gedik's strategies are conventional. He disapprovingly cites the original text's points, as well as early misogynistic commonplaces, and then counters both with positive portrayals of women in traditional *sic et non* form. He provides detailed etymologies that silence the anonymous text's wordplay, irony and punning. He documents broad word usage in both biblical and classical traditions to establish benign or general meanings for the contested terms *homo*, *humo* and *dog*. And he repeats long-established exegetical readings of the Canaanite woman and her story, for instance, that Christ remained silent not to extinguish but to enflame her faith.

Two observations will account for Gedik's contribution to the *querelle*. First, while Gedik is clearly talking about women and not some other category, he is doing so to argue that Matt 15:21-28 was *not* talking about women, as the anonymous author had ironically contended. In the end, then, the two authors are in agreement, though Gedik either does not see or does not acknowledge this. Gedik's argument that words in the Bible have implied meanings is precisely the point of the anonymous author's parody. But neither text is really concerned about women *per se*.

Second, Gedik refutes his opponent's argument about the inferior, false nature of women's faith. But he does so by arguing that Jesus' pronouncements about the faith of women in the gospel serve to demonstrate *not* that women are incapable of faith but that salvation is a product of human-divine synergy: *Sententia pronunciata a Christo ad utramque mulierem*

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<sup>339</sup> Kenney, *Women Are Not Human*, 9.

*memorabilis plane indicat, Tunc demum sieri salutare dei aeterni donum, cum nobis applicator. Applicatio autem est fidei donum* (“The memorable sentence pronounced by Christ to both women plainly indicated that *to be saved* is a gift from the eternal God alone, when the word is applied to *us*. But the application of the lesson is a gift of faith”).<sup>340</sup> In this, Gedik makes that standard move, translating gendered questions into generic human questions, as discussed above. But he also moves into questions of spiritual process and human-divine give-and-take that will emerge as the dominant motif in my Chapter 4 below. Gedik’s short summation of the synergy of faith and grace—*Salutis igitur efficiens est Fides in ijs quibus salus contingit* (“Faith effects salvation in those whom salvation affects”)<sup>341</sup>—belongs to that larger conversation that is already present in Origen’s reading of Matt 15:21-28 and comes to dominate readings of the Canaanite woman over time.

Some 50 years later, an acerbic Benedictine nun wrote and published the third and final installment in this quarrel, an outraged harangue in which the Canaanite woman features prominently again. Suor Arcangela Tarabotti’s contribution to the debate takes us out of the world of German Protestant scriptural gatekeepers into the antipapal skeptical cultural vanguard that was mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Venice. Tarabotti’s reading of the Canaanite woman makes use of some conventional topoi, to be sure, but for the most part it is original, strategic and political, progressive even for the intellectual and libertine circle in which she published.

Tarabotti was author of several hard-hitting books between 1640-1651 featuring a realpolitik feminism *avant la lettre*, including *La tirannia paterna* (*Paternal Tyranny*), *L’Inferno monocale* (*Convent Life is Hell*), *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini*, and finally

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<sup>340</sup> Gediccus, *Defensio*, B3.

<sup>341</sup> Gediccus, *Defensio*, B3.

*Antisatira* (*Antisatire*) which was yet another refutation of a misogynist text, this time F. Buoninsegni's *Contro il lusso donnesco* (*Against the Luxuries of Women*).

The two earliest texts (*La tirannia paterna* and *L'Inferno monocale*) certainly reflect Tarabotti's life experience. Born lame, she was forcibly placed by her father in a Benedictine convent at the age of 11, a practice that was widespread amongst the Venetian aristocracy. Between 50 to 82 percent of aristocratic women in Venice were in convents during this period, most often involuntarily.<sup>342</sup> Tarabotti's books are nothing less than incisive protests against this political alliance between the convents and the ruling elite. Letizia Panizza has described Tarabotti's *Paternal Tyranny* as:

predominantly an invective against the oppressions of patriarchy; but it is also a treatise on the evils of forcing young girls into a life they are not suited for, a psychological autobiography on the torments of childhood and adolescence in the Venetian family of her day, a confession to God of a soul's suffering, a literary critique of major texts of contemporary misogyny, a feminist commentary on the Bible, and finally, the first manifesto about women's inalienable rights to liberty, equality, and universal education.<sup>343</sup>

Yet, even—or especially—in light of this appreciative account of her proto-feminist credentials, which I do not question, Tarabotti presents something of an enigma. On the one hand, her books were famous and controversial, published by the openly anti-Catholic and libertine Accademia degli Incogniti.<sup>344</sup> She was befriended by the academy's founder, Giovanni Francesco Loredan, and engaged in alternately admiring and adversarial public exchanges with

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<sup>342</sup> Jutta Gisela Sperling, *Convents and the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice*. Women in Culture and Society. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 28. Further, Sperling argues that this high rate of monachization was due, not to economics as has often been maintained, but to an ethos of insular exclusivity that pressured noble families to marry conspicuously and *only* amongst peers. Marrying daughters beneath their rank diminished the family's class standing. Thus, the elite intermarried when they could and sent any extraneous daughters without adequately impressive prospects away.

<sup>343</sup> Letizia Panizza, "Introductory Essay" in Arcangela Tarabotti, *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini* (ed. Letizia Panizza; London: Institute of Romance Studies, 1994), I.

<sup>344</sup> Edward Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Sceptics, Libertines, and Opera* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 103.

him and other members of the academy.<sup>345</sup> That is to say, she was an active, dynamic, intellectual presence within the Libertine circle in Venice during the 1640s and 50s, a city known for its antipapal sentiment and intellectual freedom, its protection of controversial authors and its banning of Jesuits in 1606 after suffering papal interdict.

Even more provocative than what we might deduce from Tarabotti's close association with the Incogniti, however, is the probability that some of her writing proved too inflammatory (or close to home) even for them. The original version of *Paternal Tyranny* featured a direct address to the city of Venice, questioning its reputation as a preeminent seat of republican liberty because it had "embraced the infernal monster of Paternal Tyranny." In it she wrote:

The [book] *Paternal Tyranny* is a gift that well suits a Republic that practices the abuse of forcing more young girls to take the veil than anywhere else in the world.... It is fair.... to dedicate my book to your great senate and its senators, who, by imprisoning their young maidens....<sup>346</sup>

This sort of direct local critique of the economic and political disenfranchisement of women within their own city was apparently not what the "liberal" Incogniti men had in mind when they fashioned themselves champions of free thought. Indeed, it is possible that Loredan himself was instrumental in the suppression of Tarabotti's first books.<sup>347</sup>

On the other hand, Tarabotti's rhetoric and self-presentation in *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini* is traditional and religious. She speaks for *i veri Catolici*, true Catholics, and addresses the anonymous author of *Mulieres homines non esse as vero figlio del Diavolo* and *sceleratissimo eretico, campion dell'Inferno* ("the true son of the Devil," "you criminal heretic,

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<sup>345</sup> Muir, *Culture Wars*, 102.

<sup>346</sup> Cited in English only in Muir, *Culture Wars*, 104. I have been unable to find Tarabotti's direct address to the city in any of the editions of *Paternal Tyranny* that I have been able to look at.

<sup>347</sup> Muir, *Culture Wars*, 104-5. I have closely followed Muir's account of Tarabotti's relationship with the Incogniti here. The suggestion that Loredan was behind the suppression of *Paternal Tyranny* comes from Panizza, "Introductory Essay," 15.

champion of hell”).<sup>348</sup> This may be due to the highly stylized genre in which she was writing; its propensity for *ad hominem* insult is certainly evident in her numerous labels for the author of *Mulieres homines non esse: Signor Interprete-falso-della-Sacra-Scrittura, Signor Intelligente-Salvatico*, and *il quinto Evangelista* (“Mister False Explicator of the Scriptures,” “Mister Brilliant Clodhopper,” and “Fifth Evangelist,” because his interpretations of the gospel effectively create an entirely new one).<sup>349</sup> It may also be that the more general demand for entertaining public debate in Venice influenced her choice of this combative yet pious role. Edward Muir has suggested that it may be best to consider “the academy, its debates, and its relations with the lame nun with the acerbic pen as a kind of theater. It is not always clear whether someone is playing a role, or if so what part is being played.”<sup>350</sup>

Yet, Tarabotti’s posturing is consistent. In her work as a whole, she mounts a sustained political critique of the oppression of women, both in the texts she refuted and in the life of her city. Her texts do not have the feel of cynical opportunism, even if we assume their marketability as crowd-pleasing entertainment. Furthermore, while the Incogniti may have converted their private academic debates into public and theatrical fare, as Muir contends,<sup>351</sup> the content of their obsessions, like the content of Tarabotti’s critique, was decidedly gender-related and relevant to social developments in their world.<sup>352</sup> All of which is to say that the intellectual and socio-political worlds in which Tarabotti wrote her refutation of *Mulieres homines non esse* were gender-saturated. Is this reflected in *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini?*

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<sup>348</sup> Tarabotti, Arcangela, *Che le donne siano della spezie degli uomini* (ed. Letizia Panizza).

<sup>349</sup> Panizza, *Che le donne*, 6, 34, 6.

<sup>350</sup> Muir, *Culture Wars*, 102.

<sup>351</sup> Muir, *Culture Wars*, 71.

<sup>352</sup> Muir, *Culture Wars*, 107. Muir counts among the preoccupations of the Libertine circle kabbalistic magic, eroticism tinged with overt homosexuality, parodies of Christian virtues, blasphemy, religious speculation, sexuality and contested gender roles. The latter he relates to the disintegrating institutions of aristocratic marriage and family life at the time (Muir, 71, 106-07).



Tarabotti's arguments in her reading of the Canaanite woman are sometimes conventional, often original, but in all cases they are firmly focused on the Canaanite woman's gender and on the status of women in the eyes of God and men. She begins her discussion of the Canaanite woman by refuting her opponent's contention that Jesus' silence signals his utter indifference to all women. She refutes this not by focusing on any particular attribute of the Canaanite woman, but by intertextually linking Matt 15:23 ("he did not answer her at all") with Matt 9:13 ("I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners"). Through his silence, she explains, Jesus *venne a dichiarare l'amore che portava alle donne, a ripudiare la Sinagoga, ed a sprezzare la Gentilità* ("declared the love he bore to women, to repudiate the Synagogue and to scorn the gentiles").<sup>353</sup> Thus, Tarabotti restores all women to divine favor at the expense of Jews *and* Gentile unbelievers. Continuing on the offensive, Tarabotti adds that while the Canaanite woman was *not* treated unkindly in this instance, many Hebrews, *rabini e grandi del Vecchio Testamento* ("rabbis and great men of the Old Testament")<sup>354</sup> were. So also were those who accused the adulteress and those selling goods in the Temple. She concludes that Jesus does not judge women harshly, but men.

In like manner Tarabotti demonstrates how ubiquitously the canine epithet is applied in the Scriptures and in exegetical tradition, and always against men. Jerome compared heretics to Aesop's dog; Christ referred to his enemies as dogs in Psalm 21. Building on these images, she continues with a description of the general depravity of men, a topic which she considers to be the only possible response to the anonymous author's *bestiale proposizioni* since his suggestions that women are dogs and not human *non meritano che d'essere detestate ed abborrite da una*

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<sup>353</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, "Disinganno 21" (Panizza, 34).

<sup>354</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, "Disinganno 21" (Panizza, 34).

*penna fedele*” (“bestial proposals,” “do not deserve anything but to be detested and abhorred by a faithful pen”).<sup>355</sup>

Tarabotti returns repeatedly to this taunt that her opponent’s arguments against women and the Canaanite woman in particular do not merit any but the most derisive response:

*Ché se volete poi che i lettori vi giudichino non dall’opinione, ma dalla verità, come i filosofi, mi fate da ridere; il deridervi serva dunque per risposta a questi periodi; Poverello, mi fate ridere...*<sup>356</sup>

That you want your readers to judge you not by opinion but by truth like philosophers makes me laugh; ridicule is the only response that will suit your assertions; you poor sap, you make me laugh.

Yet, at the same time, the contest does not always appear to be so easily won. A series of worried protests contradict her jocular bravado: *Voi, con sofisticati argomenti, vi sète messo ad assalir quel sesso che per mancanza di studi no può risponder alle vostre inventate malvagità* (“You, with sophisticated arguments, set yourself up to attack that very sex which, because it is deprived of the opportunity to study, cannot answer your malicious inventions”).<sup>357</sup> Tarabotti’s lament at the lack of education for women in her day appears in some of her other writings as well, but it seems particularly apropos in an argument about a woman besting the Son of God in an argument.

Within this theme of unequal contest that repeatedly links questions of power relations to questions of truth, Tarabotti’s tone vacillates between aggression, sarcasm, and professed anxiety:

*Ed a gloria delle donne le vostre ciancie fanno in loro quell’effetto che son solite di fare l’ingiurie della mano alla cetra, che la fa più armoniosamente*

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<sup>355</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 22” (Panizza, 36).

<sup>356</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 3, 10, 26” (Panizza, 10, 18, 43).

<sup>357</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “All’autore anonimo” (Panizza, 6).

*risuonare. O Dio buono, ponno pur le donne ribatter i colpi de'loro nemici con le loro stesse armi?*<sup>358</sup>

Your mutterings have the same power over women that a hand has to do injury to a lyre—it only makes it resound more harmoniously. O good God, can women fight off the blows of their enemies with their own weapons?

Likewise, in her prologue, she describes wise women as *come di saette da debolissimi archi scoccate* (“arrows shot from a very weak bow”), then advises them, *Anzi deridono la loro beffagine* (“make fun of their [misogynists’] jokes”).<sup>359</sup> The archery image returns with a vengeance in a later section as well, where Tarabotti warns her opponent: *che le donne rinovassero quell’antiche leggi delle prudenti Amazzone, e che voi foste il primo trafitto dalle loro saette* (“Women should revive the ancient laws of the wise Amazons, and you should be the first one wounded by their arrows”).<sup>360</sup> Then again this aggression is tempered in the very next line with a more conventional qualification:

*Ma elleno, essendo di natura dolcissima, e volendo imitar quelle deità di cui sono imagini in terra, sanno contribuire beneficij anche a gl’ingrati.*<sup>361</sup>

But women, being of a very sweet nature, and wanting to imitate that deity whose images they are on earth, know how to give good things even to ingrates.

It is hard to imagine that these inconsistent digressions about the gendering of intellectual power are anything other than sarcastic or ironic, particularly in the context of the theatrical excesses of the *querelle* genre, and yet the unevenness in tone may indicate an anxiety behind the posturing, anxiety about power, intellect, and who gets to define the truth. This would certainly align with Tarabotti’s other works.

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<sup>358</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 26” (Panizza, 42).

<sup>359</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “A Chi Legge” (Panizza, 3).

<sup>360</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 19” (Panizza, 31).

<sup>361</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 19” (Panizza, 31).

In any case, in her focus on women as a group contending for power, Tarabotti has not moved far from the earliest exegetical *method* of reading Matt 15:21-28. That is, the Canaanite woman's story is still a tool of corporate representation, now not of Jews or pagan worshippers or Gnostics, but of all women. What *is* new—at least in the history of interpretation of Matt 15:21-28—is the use of the Canaanite woman not as a prescription for, but as a symbol of, virtue *in all women*. Indeed, much of Tarabotti's text is devoted not to the Canaanite woman alone, but to all of her sex, deducing *her* particular worth and humanity and favor with the Lord from the examples of *le innumerabili donne favorite da Dio nella Nuova e nella Vecchia Legge* (“the innumerable women favored by God in the New and the Old laws”):<sup>362</sup> Mary and Martha, the prudent woman of Sirach, Esther, Judith, the two Elizabeths, and the Virgin Mary. Why, Tarabotti asks, does the anonymous author pass them over? In response, she leverages an arsenal of virtuous and exemplary women, in a move reminiscent of Christine de Pisan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*. The connection is not implausible. De Pisan was also born in Venice, though she lived in Paris most of her life, and engaged in the *querelle des femmes* of her day, responding directly to Jean de Meun himself. Like de Pisan, Tarabotti gathers her women exempla not just from the biblical tradition, but from classical sources. The Sybils and the Amazons make a showing, for instance. In Tarabotti's reading, then, the Canaanite woman is not the marginal, solitary and humbled figure of the Church Fathers. She is one of an army of strong and virtuous women.

One final detail in Tarabotti's treatment of the Canaanite woman is worthy of comment, not least because it resurfaces in later interpretations. It is found in Tarabotti's explanation of the apostles' astonishment when Jesus speaks harshly to the Canaanite woman. She contends that

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<sup>362</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 25” (Panizza, 40).

they were surprised not because he did not come to save women and therefore had no reason to talk to her, as her opponent maintains, but rather because he was speaking to a woman so unkindly at all:

*Bisogna ch'io vi dichiaro perché loro si stupivano, e perché Cristo non trattava da cavalier con le femine. Sapeva egli come scrutator de' cuori che gl'uomini sono tanto inclinati al fare ed al pensare male, che non glie l'averebbero perdonata né anche a lui. Sapeva, dico, che quando la Maddalena andò a' suoi piedi, se ne scandalezzarono i maggior satrapi della legge; sì che non volse dar materia a quei Scribi e Farisei di taciarlo d'impudico, come aveano fatto di biastemiatore e seduttor del popolo. Perciò andava cauto e guardingo con le femine di maniera che fino gli Apostoli istupidivano, sapendo loro la benevolenza che quella maestà sacrosanta portava a quell sesso...*<sup>363</sup>

I need to explain to you why they were astonished, and why Christ did not act the part of a gallant swain with women. He knew, as the one who could see into all hearts, that men are so inclined to think and do evil, that they would not have wanted her pardoned even by him. I say that he knew that when the Magdalene came to his feet, the biggest bigwigs of the law would be scandalized by it; he did not want to give those Scribes and Pharisees material to charge him with immodesty, as they had already charged him as a blasphemer and seducer of the people. Therefore he behaved carefully and circumspectly with women, in such a way that in the end the Apostles were amazed, knowing the benevolence that his most holy majesty bore toward that sex...

On this reading, the Canaanite woman poses a threat to Jesus' sinless reputation. If he speaks to her in reassuring or intimate terms, if he appears in any way "cavalier," he will be liable to an accusation of immodesty, that is, sexual impropriety. On one level, this reading follows the same logic as Theophylact's earlier contention that Jesus was silent with the Canaanite woman in order to "stop their false accusations, in order that they not be able to say later that He was doing good to Gentiles."<sup>364</sup> The potential accusers (the Jews, Pharisees and Scribes) are even the same. But it is not the same. The threat that this woman poses to Jesus does

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<sup>363</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, "Disinganno 27" (Panizza, 45).

<sup>364</sup> Theophylact, *Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew* 15:21,23 (PG 123:310) .

not lie in inciting him to a betrayal of God's covenant with Abraham, as in the argument regarding his kindness to Gentiles. It is her female body thrown down at his feet and the very physical need that she presents to him that are the threat; just as her daughter's body, possessed by a demon, is a threat. With great rhetorical efficiency, then, Tarabotti follows up this reading with a sensual depiction of Jesus' very physical experience of women:

*Ho detto perché quella bontà infinita non volse esser toccata dale donne. Dico talvolta perché leggiamo che la madre santissima le ricevè nel suo ventre, lo partorì, lo lattò; sì come molte altre donne lo lasciarono, l'accarezzarono, lo abbracciarono, e l'adorarono.... Ma degli uomini, Gioseffo lo servì, Herode volse occiderlo bambino; gli altri lo schernirono, l'infamiarono, lo vilipesero, lo flagellarono, e lo crocifissero.<sup>365</sup>*

I have told you now why this infinite goodness [Jesus] did not want to be touched by women. I will tell you sometime why we read that his most holy mother received him in her womb, gave birth to him, and nursed him, just as many other women will swaddle him, caress him, embrace him, and adore him... But if we look at the men: Joseph served him, Herod wanted to kill the child; and others mocked him, insulted him, scourged him and crucified him.

Images of the female body, physical intimacy, touch and love are opposed to images of male vendettas, insult, and physical violence. In Tarabotti's text, the female body is not the threat. Jesus avoided the touch of women because "men are so inclined to think and do evil." To explain his unkind behavior, we need only "look at the men."

The paranesis within Tarabotti's exegesis is not difficult to find, however qualified it may be by the irony and sarcasm of public disputation in libertine Venice. Tarabotti exhorts men to stop arguing facetiously about women and she exhorts women not to be fooled by their arguments. Once again, the problem to be eradicated is primarily the danger of misinterpretation and the practice of disingenuous exegesis. Tarabotti concludes her refutation by informing the anonymous author of *Mulieres homines non esse: Par'a me d'aver domato a bastanza a*

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<sup>365</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, "Disinganno 27" (Panizza, 45-6).

*quest'idra ereticale delle vostre scelerate opinion* (“It seems to me that I have sufficiently tamed this heretical hydra of your villainous opinions”).<sup>366</sup> *Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose*.

### 3.2.3 William Jay: Lectures on Female Scripture Characters

Two hundred years later in the *Lectures on Female Scripture Characters* of the Reverend William Jay, questions of how women read biblical texts and respond to biblical interpretations are newly articulated. William Jay was a Nonconformist preacher during the Regency period who was mentored by the Methodist evangelist Cornelius Winter. He preached for most of his professional career at a Congregationalist Chapel (Argyle) in Bath. His reading of the Canaanite woman's story appears in a book of lectures on female characters in the Old and New Testaments which he dedicated to “the Right Honorable, the Dowager Countess of Ducie”<sup>367</sup> in 1853. Countess Ducie, the Honorable Elizabeth, was an aristocrat, the daughter of the Baron of Sherborne and the mother of eleven sons and four daughters. At the time that Jay dedicated the lectures to her, she had just become a widow, her husband having died six months previously. From the opening lines of the book, the dedication makes clear that this female reader embodies the texts, as woman, widow, mother and exemplum:

I dedicate this work to your Ladyship, in token of my full persuasion—that you realize in your experience what it pleads for in doctrine—that you exemplify in your practice what it enjoins as duty—and that, while many in superior life desecrate their rank, talents, and influence in the service of pride, dissipation, and vice, you consecrate all by which you are distinguished to the honor of God....<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Tarabotti, *Che le donne*, “Disinganno 57” (Panizza, 94).

<sup>367</sup> William Jay, *Lectures on the Female Scripture Characters* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1856), iii.

<sup>368</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, iv. Note that the contrast between Lady Elizabeth and “many in superior life” also mimics traditional readings that juxtapose the Canaanite woman's faithfulness to the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, who were so much more entitled to God's favor than she.

Thus, the initial staging of the lectures establishes an ideal female reader and, in the dedication and preface, Jay openly aspires to a broader, equally edified, female readership as well. Does the gendering of his audience determine the content, or change the meaning, of Jay's interpretations of biblical women and, if so, how? Indeed, these are questions first voiced by Jay himself in the preface, revealing his own concerns about rhetorical means and paranetic ends.

These particular questions are critical because, coming on the heels of the explicitly gender-savvy readings of Arcangela Tarabotti, Jay's interpretation of the Canaanite woman can seem a throwback to the earliest uses of her story as a universally-applicable and genderless exemplum. But Jay's relationship to the category of Woman is of an altogether different nature. In the early interpretations of Matt 15:21-28, the Church Fathers leveraged the Canaanite woman's gender or womanhood as little more than a trope for aspects of the (male) Christian soul. In contrast, Jay repeatedly voices concern about defining precisely what the role of women and feminine response is in religious teaching and practice. This concern is mediated by the available discourses of his time, especially prevailing images of women, but also developing representations of the Nonconformist denominations, particularly Methodism, "the religion of the heart." The gendering of religious emotion that was prevalent in discussions of Methodist principles and practice permeates Jay's interpretation of the Canaanite woman. Equally definitive is the fact that he was writing for female readers.<sup>369</sup>

In the second paragraph of his preface to the lectures, for instance, Jay confesses the rhetorical difficulty of addressing women "distinctively." He worries that if he engages in too much praise for women, this might seem to be flattery; if he issues too many reproofs, he might

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<sup>369</sup> One need only compare the roughly contemporary sermons of the highly influential Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, to appreciate the gendered nature of Jay's lectures. Spurgeon preached at least seven separate sermons on the Canaanite woman between 1866 and 1911 and none of these focuses on her womanhood. She is a portrait of the human struggle to have faith, in a variety of registers to be sure, but none of them exclusively female.



seem to be indicting the entire sex. He solves this dilemma by appealing to the historical distance between his women readers and the Biblical women characters whom he will discuss. This provides him, and his readers, with a welcome buffer. He suggests that “commenting on absent characters, indelibly portrayed ages back” will provide examples of “female excellencies and faults” that will not directly insinuate anything about his women readers. The “application” of such abstracted, distanced female qualities can then be left to his readers to deduce without causing any direct offense to them.<sup>370</sup> At the same time, just lines later, Jay explains how he had hoped in his five lectures on the Virgin Mary, which he has lost (!), “to steer between the idolatries of the Romish church and the excessive fears of some Protestants, which have betrayed them into a degree of the opposite extreme.”<sup>371</sup> Here, in contrast, far from being concerned about any offense his lectures might cause to Roman Catholics or Protestants, he seems intent upon applying his lectures directly to Romish idolatry and Protestant iconoclasm.

In a similar equivocation, Jay explains that he has written his lectures not just for women, but for others as well. Yet he goes on to discuss only his particular goals for his women readers, “not only to render them amiable, and prudent, and useful; but also ‘partakers of the benefit,’ and ‘heirs of the grace of life.’”<sup>372</sup> However qualified and downplayed by Jay himself, the rhetoric of gender that Jay deploys in his preface and lectures creates a gender effect, reflecting the obvious connection between rhetorical delivery and audience, but also, arguably, broader negotiations of the place of a feminized religious experience and emotion in Christian life.

The relevance of such questions for Jay’s reading of the Canaanite woman should be clear. Matt 15:21-28 is a text traditionally associated with an inexplicable, almost irrational,

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<sup>370</sup>Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, viii.

<sup>371</sup>Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, viii-ix.

<sup>372</sup>Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, x.

measure of faith, submission, and humility in a woman who had no discernible rational grounds for believing in Jesus' goodwill or power, much less his divinity. It is also a text that stages a conversion experience or, at the least, an experience of nascent faith in a foreign (to the Canaanite woman) religion. Both of these come into play in Jay's lecture.

Happily, we know something of his attitudes on these topics. For instance, in his autobiography, Jay recounts how he consciously adjusted his preaching to secure the attention of emotion-driven "rustics:"

Persons of education may be approached through mere intellect, but the poor generally are like women, whose heads are in their hearts. They are like poets, who feel before they think. Application with them is an effect rather than a cause. They attend not to feel, but must be made to feel in order to attend.<sup>373</sup>

Women, like poor people and poets, must be made to feel in order to apply themselves. Jay's remarks are obviously condescending, that is, he uses the category of emotion to create gender and class spiritual hierarchies. He professes to be pragmatically motivated, as a preacher, in the interest of his listeners' attendance to, and application of, the lessons in his sermons. Yet, it is unclear in this passage of his autobiography whether he is advocating for the intrinsic value of emotion in the life of faith for everyone.

Perhaps more helpful is his own confession of faith, spoken at his ordination, in which he describes a range of experiences of faith in the redemptive power of Jesus, the work of the Spirit, and so on, across a spectrum of believers. The poor and illiterate are satisfied of the truth without argument. Others may be incapable of action, but they see, feel and groan beneath "the sad effects of deep-rooted malady." Still others feel the influence of Jesus and simply know. None of these cases, according to Jay, involves a "blind belief.... You do not receive your religion

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<sup>373</sup> William Jay, *The Autobiography of William Jay* (eds. George Redford and John Angell James; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1854; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 142.

without proof.... You judge from internal evidence;—while others who are able may determine from the conviction of the mind, you judge from the conviction of the heart.”<sup>374</sup>

Whether spoken for rhetorical effect or in approbation, this theme preoccupied Jay and this makes sense. Questions of emotion and intellect would have been particularly alive for one schooled in the Methodist tradition, even if his subsequent career was as a Congregationalist preacher. By Jay’s own account, his mentor Cornelius Winter, factotum to Wesley and Whitefield, was critical to his spiritual evolution, and as Phyllis Mack has pointed out,

In their preaching, writing, and conversation, the leaders of early Methodism were concerned with the quality, rather than the content, of their own and their followers’ religious lives; their priorities were psychological, not theological. The questions they asked were both disconcertingly simple and extraordinarily difficult: How are people healed? What is required for a transformation in human nature? Is it better to wait passively for knowledge of Christ or to struggle for it? ... What are the virtues and dangers of being rational? Of becoming emotional? Can one really know anything *without* becoming emotional?<sup>375</sup>

Furthermore, within this discourse, according to Mack, women used the language of sanctification, dependency, self-emptying, fluidity, childhood, self-transcendence and fulfillment more readily and more convincingly than men.<sup>376</sup> This ease with adopting some traditionally feminine and some more generic exemplary attributes became the grounds for Methodist women’s increased visibility and authority in the early movement.

What then was the effect of all this on Jay’s reading of a woman who is both an exemplum of inexplicable faith and intellectual wit? As will become clear, while Jay’s interpretation capitalizes on the currency of religious emotions, and while it extols the Canaanite

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<sup>374</sup> Jay, *The Autobiography*, 73.

<sup>375</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 31.

<sup>376</sup> Mack, *Heart Religion*, 131-32.

woman's faith, it excises any sense of accomplishment, acumen or authority on the part of female believers and arguably, by extension, his women readers.

Jay divides his lecture into five parts, labeling the Canaanite woman consecutively as an Unlikely, Afflicted, Importunate, Successful and finally Instructive Supplicant. Within each part, Jay's method is to remove any sense of the singularity of the Canaanite woman, or at least of her predicament. This is a move he applies to his female readers as well: "And, as in the case before us, you may also have external afflictions, as well as inward griefs.... Such an experience is greatly trying, yet it should not discourage you. It is not singular. Many have trodden the same path, and have known the same heart's bitterness."<sup>377</sup>

Accordingly, the Canaanite woman is linked with many comparable (Scriptural) characters who have similar experiences to hers and exemplify similar attributes, most of them men. Thus, the Canaanite woman is an unlikely supplicant not because she is a woman, but because she is a Gentile, and a descendant of "one of the wretched nations whom God had doomed to destruction."<sup>378</sup> In her "unlikeliness," she is like the centurion, the children in the temple who cried Hosanna, publicans and harlots, persons destitute of the means of grace, sons of the stranger, babes (not the wise and prudent), and the foolish things of the world.<sup>379</sup> Secondly, she is an afflicted supplicant like the prodigal son, Manasseh, and David.<sup>380</sup> And thirdly, she is a successful supplicant—by means of faith—like a little child, like Abraham, the father of the faithful, like a mustard seed, like the nobleman of John 4:49-54. However, Jay switches to more direct exhortation in his discussion of the remaining two of her five attributes

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<sup>377</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 130.

<sup>378</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 120.

<sup>379</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 120-21. Here Jay is alluding to Matt 8:5-10, Matt 11:25 and 1 Cor 1:27.

<sup>380</sup> David's affliction is established through Psalm 119:71, which Jay renders: "It was good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." It is a particularly apt intertext for Matt 15:21-28, given the last line of the Psalm, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep."

(her extraordinary importunity and her status as “instructive” lesson). In these two sections of the lecture, instead of only drawing intertextual parallels to similar biblical characters, male and female, Jay applies her qualities, actions and experiences directly to those of his readers.

It is true that, in the section on the Canaanite woman’s importunity, Jay also indulges in some traditional exegesis. He repeats the conventional apology that the time had not yet come for this “minister of the circumcision” to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles.”<sup>381</sup> And he reproduces elements of anti-Jewish interpretations, for instance in his comments on the disciples’ supposed *pleasure* at Jesus’ rejection of the Canaanite woman, “as it fell in with their Jewish prejudices.”<sup>382</sup> These are familiar readings. But much more striking than these is Jay’s move to map the Canaanite woman’s experience of Jesus’ indifference and rejection onto the life experience of his readers. In the process, the line between the Canaanite woman and his audience blurs.

Just as she is at the mercy of the misguided and impatient disciples, so Jay notes, are *we* subject to mistaken men: “How severely do they treat *our* infirmities. How little can they teach, in *our* doubts and fears, as we are able to bear it. How rarely does kindness adorn their carriage....”<sup>383</sup> Here, he permits himself another Scriptural parallel, David’s plea to Gad at 2 Sam 24:14, “Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man....”<sup>384</sup> But the imposition of the Canaanite woman’s experience onto his readers is sustained, and his gendered depiction of that experience consequently implies a female or, at the very least, feminized readership within the text. Jay’s description of the Canaanite woman’s importunity in the face of Jesus’ rebuffs provides a prime example:

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<sup>381</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 124.

<sup>382</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 124.

<sup>383</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 123.

<sup>384</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 124.

How many, upon hearing this, would have returned in bitter sadness, and have broken forth in such exclamations as these: —“O that I had stayed at home, and never exposed myself to such merciless treatment! Was I not afflicted enough before, in the pitiable condition of my poor child? *I am a woman*, a mother, a widowed mother; and if there be nothing worthy in the sufferer, there is always something sacred in grief. If I am not one of the favored nation, I am one of the human race.”<sup>385</sup>

In this passage, readers are put in the Canaanite woman’s place and speak in a woman’s voice.

Likewise, in the concluding section, where Jay presents the Canaanite woman as “instructive supplicant” (which label signifies not that she is a teacher, but rather an object-lesson), he creates a series of vulnerable, sometimes feminized, portraits of his readers as “sorely exercised” souls in dire need of Jesus’ help: “Perhaps you are discouraged by those who ought to comfort you.... Poor trembling soul, thy prayer is heard, though not yet answered.... View the picture again and again; and if you can see a resemblance of yourself, wait on the Lord.... Are you bereaved? Think of him who says, ‘Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me....’ Go, therefore, to him.... Seek him.... Look to him.... Apply to him.”<sup>386</sup>

Jay’s Canaanite woman has become a model of an emotional, fluid, dependent, childlike feminized Methodist. Nowhere do we see the intellect, wit, or ingenuity that has characterized her within the interpretive tradition. This has been excised entirely. Her faith is not even an instructed or catechized faith, as it is in Calvin (as we shall see in the next chapter) or in a different way, as it was in the *Pseudo-Clementines*. It is not internally inspired or “called forth” by Jesus, another commonplace of the early tradition. Instead, Jay explains that her faith resides in a readiness to believe, to rely on God’s promises, “to receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives the declaration of his father; it is however pressed by difficulty never to ask ‘How

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<sup>385</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 125.

<sup>386</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 129-33.

can these things be?’”<sup>387</sup> There is rich irony, though almost certainly unintentional, in this definition of the Canaanite woman’s faith—which amounts to nothing less than a prohibition to question God—when it is she who changes the mind of Jesus with a question.

In his reading of the Canaanite woman, then, Jay links gender and religious emotion and in the process imposes on his female (or merely feminized) readers a decidedly fragile exemplum in the Canaanite woman, read as a soul consigned to the home, solitude, doubt, fear, and a sense of abandonment and powerlessness. In this, he aligns with the general evolution of Methodist thought wherein the ideal of a “pious domesticity” in women replaced admiration for their holiness and contribution to mission.<sup>388</sup> So, likewise, the female religious emoter may still provide an ideal or standard for male Christians in Jay’s lectures,<sup>389</sup> but her domain is now domestic and her function, private, not institutional. Tarabotti’s Amazon has become a “poor trembling soul.”

The nature and extent of the Canaanite woman’s power continues to be a central question in the final readings in this section on gender-focused interpretations. In this, they hearken back to the original controversy dialogue form of Matt 15:21-28, even while they arbitrate new conflicts, competitions and cultural stakes. They also represent a new form and forum in this history of interpretation: they are all electronic articles, blogs or sermons found on the Worldwide Web. In these readings, the Canaanite woman lives a sort of feral existence. Once

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<sup>387</sup> Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, 127.

<sup>388</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 140: “Before 1810, female domesticity on the whole was not paraded as a model in methodist publications; women were admired rather for their religious experience, progress in holiness, and contribution to the religious and social mission of the church.... Yet by 1850, women came to be admired more for their pious domesticity than for their public contribution to the work of mission.”

<sup>389</sup> Cf. Jay’s preface where he explains his choice of subject matter (female Scripture characters) as follows: “They were occasioned, at the time, by my reflecting on the importance of female character, and on the influence which women must naturally and necessarily have, in every condition, period, and relation in life; so that if good should be done to *them*, good would be done to *many*, in a very wide and varied degree” (Jay, *Female Scripture Characters*, vii).

domesticated by the commentary tradition, she surfaces in familiar guise, but unregulated and unleashed. Her power is often readily acknowledged and just as often it is linked to a new emphasis on Jesus' humanity.

### **3.2.4 John Pilch: Jesus in His Middle-Eastern Context**

For instance, Professor John Pilch of Georgetown University wrote on the Canaanite woman in September of 2000 in what seems to be an academic intervention in popular political discourse. The article, written for an online Catholic newsletter, *Scripture from Scratch*, is entitled "Jesus in His Middle-Eastern Context." In it, Pilch, who takes a "social scientific" approach to the interpretation of the Bible, is intent on defining Jesus and his encounter with the Canaanite woman as a product of their human historical context.

In the introductory remarks, Pilch asserts that it is important to understand Jesus' culture, especially within the context of "contemporary events in the Middle East which have made all of us aware of how very different Middle Eastern culture is."<sup>390</sup> He is referring to the breakout of the Second Intifada in September of 2000 and the Palestinian-Israeli violence that followed the collapse of the Camp David Summit in July of that year. Such an opening suggests that the culture of 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, which Pilch understands uniformly to be an "honor-shame" or agonistic culture is also definitive of the political Middle East at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This essentializing and transhistorical logic is surprising even within a popular public forum, as is the sweeping ahistorical declaration in the opening line of the article: "The core value that drives all

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<sup>390</sup> John Pilch, "Scripture from Scratch: Jesus in his Middle-Eastern Context," n.p. [cited 27 September 2010]. Online: <http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/SFS/an0900.as>



behavior in Mediterranean cultures is honor.”<sup>391</sup> Yet, if there is a parnetic thread in Pilch’s article, it resides in his description of the static distinctions between cultures which he draws here, at the outset, and returns to at the conclusion of his article. How do the Canaanite woman and her power fit into this parnesis?

First, Pilch pursues his portrait of Jesus and his world, describing Jesus as a theatrical “master of the insult” by citing his attacks on the Pharisees in Matthew 6, 15 (vv. 1-10), 23. He concedes that Jesus was said to be meek and humble, but explains that these words signified something different in late Antiquity, viz. Jesus’ pacifism and acceptance of his humble social status. This qualification helps to explain how Jesus could also defend his honor so aggressively through insult. It was a practice integral to his culture. In this way, Pilch normalizes, in effect apologizes for, Jesus’ aggression in the passages listed above and in Matt 15:21-28.

In contrast, Pilch describes a shameless defiant Canaanite woman who does not submit to “the cultural rules” of her time and place, since women and men were not to engage in conversation or exchange of any kind in public, yet she insists on doing so. Meanwhile, Jesus, in his rebuffs, “is behaving quite properly.”<sup>392</sup> Furthermore, as a woman and a Canaanite, she is not Jesus’s equal; “only equals can play in the game of exchanging insults, the game of challenge and riposte.”<sup>393</sup> Yet she persists and beats Jesus at this very game. She is forceful, asserting power in inappropriate ways.

However, when he reaches the turning point in Matt 15:21-28 when Jesus relents, Pilch puts the following words in the mouth of Jesus: “Touché, woman. You can give as good as you get.” In a strange sort of ellipsis, the cultural value of verbal conquest that Pilch has emphasized

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<sup>391</sup> Pilch, “Scripture from Scratch,” n.p.

<sup>392</sup> Pilch, “Scripture from Scratch,” n.p.

<sup>393</sup> Pilch, “Scripture from Scratch,” n.p.

trumps the cultural prohibition of female presence, visibility and agency. The Canaanite woman's gender is bracketed from discussion or, more precisely, an "inappropriate" female power is collapsed into what Pilch has defined as a culturally-sanctioned power, dictated by cultural norms, coopted, even as it originates from without, from an outsider and a woman. In the end, though, this agonistic ethos, giving as good as one gets, does not translate across time so easily as Matthew's "Woman, great is your faith!"

This may be part of the reason that the Canaanite woman is not put forward by Pilch as a model for his Catholic audience, much less for women generally. Instead, the paranesis within his transhistorical exercise in cultural distinctions functions through straightforward caveat. Agonistic Middle Easterners and argumentative women are held out for inspection, not imitation. So, Pilch concludes by noting that the example of Jesus (and by extension, of the Canaanite woman) "is not directly applicable to our lives. We live in a different culture and cannot merely copy his actions...."<sup>394</sup> Pilch urges a recognition of utter foreignness in the biblical exchange, which he establishes through academic "social scientific" interpretation. This serves to create an implied essential difference between his audience and the biblical characters, as well as a safe distance between his audience and the intercultural, cross-gender conflicts in which the biblical characters engage, not to mention the very human needs, denials, and insults underlying the advent of the Second Intifada.

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<sup>394</sup> Pilch, "Scripture from Scratch," n.p.

### 3.2.5 Clay Nelson: messiahs are from mars; syrophoenician women are from venus

In contrast to Pilch's reading, an unapologetic, almost celebratory depiction of the Canaanite woman's power appears in an April 2008 posting, "messiahs are from mars; syrophoenician women are from venus," on the website of St. Matthews in the City. St. Matthews is a progressive Anglican church in the heart of Auckland, New Zealand that, among other broadminded efforts, embraces the bicultural diversity of its congregation and uses the Maori language in its services. In the 2008 website posting, Clay Nelson, Associate Priest for Communications at St. Matthews, defines the Syrophoenician woman (Mark's version of the Canaanite woman) as a "formidable woman who makes herself small on behalf of her daughter. She kneels, begs; gives honour as an inferior. By her actions she is one of the least of those he's been talking about."<sup>395</sup>

Nelson's description appears at first to align with the traditional portrait of the Canaanite woman in the commentary tradition, but it soon becomes clear that he has much more to say. He explains that "her littleness is only a posture, a negotiation, a canny playing of how he [Jesus] sees her but not how she knows herself to be."<sup>396</sup> Indeed, Nelson explains that the Canaanite woman is "a cheeky woman who wants something," "a smart woman," with "wily ways."<sup>397</sup> And her actions in the face of a Jesus who suffers from "culturally conditioned racism and sexism"<sup>398</sup> are the determining force in the exchange:

He doesn't welcome her; she just makes herself at home. He doesn't include her, she makes sure she is included, not with power but by simply sitting herself down at the heavenly banquet. She is declaring the reality of her

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<sup>395</sup> Clay Nelson, "messiahs are from mars, syrophoenician women are from venus: Pentecost 14, 10/09/2006" n.[cited 28 September 2010]. Online: <http://www.stmatthews.org.nz/nav.php?id=641&sid=256>.

<sup>396</sup> Nelson, "messiahs are from mars," n.p.

<sup>397</sup> Nelson, "messiahs are from mars," n.p.

<sup>398</sup> Nelson, "messiahs are from mars," n.p.

presence not unlike women seeking their rightful place in the church today or cheeky gays who point out, “I’m here, I’m queer, get used to it.”<sup>399</sup>

This is not the enthralled human soul reaching toward God, nor the penitent sinner we have encountered in traditional readings. Nor is Jesus the same all-knowing Messiah and Lord. The Canaanite woman’s strength seems almost to eclipse his own. So, Nelson concludes: “Who was exorcised? Yes, the daughter was healed by Jesus, but Jesus was also healed by the Syrophenician woman. His prejudices were confronted; his tunnel vision was expanded.”<sup>400</sup>

As in the case of Pilch, we have here a historically-conditioned Jesus, now suffering from an explicitly limited awareness and understanding. Indeed, Nelson’s Jesus becomes an apprentice to the Canaanite woman: “He adopts her approach when he arrives in Jerusalem. He uses Scripture in a way similar to her use of the proverb to silence the outraged priests and scribes after cleansing the Temple. He doesn’t claim his authority, he lives it.”<sup>401</sup> Finally, the paranesis within Clay’s exegesis could not be more explicit. On one level, it is not so different from early Church exhortations to tenacity in prayer:

I hope those of you who at best have only received the crumbs will not wait for people like me to include or welcome you to the table. Take a chair. You are already there. Those who would deny you do not have the authority to exclude. It’s not their table. Your uninvited presence points out the obvious. God reigns. You are the Gospel. Be cheeky. Live it with authority.<sup>402</sup>

On another level, however, the anathema and the disciplining it articulates are directed very differently. The Canaanite woman is still “other,” but not a sinner. She has instead become the model for women, gays, and lesbians, who have been disenfranchised by the church. These “others” are no longer the target of exhortation or denunciation. The tables have turned. The

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<sup>399</sup> Nelson, “messiahs are from mars,” n.p.

<sup>400</sup> Nelson, “messiahs are from mars,” n.p.

<sup>401</sup> Nelson, “messiahs are from mars,” n.p.

<sup>402</sup> Nelson, “messiahs are from mars,” n.p.

accused are now those with institutional power: the outraged priests and scribes in the Temple that Jesus stands up to in Jerusalem, the “archbishops of his day,” as well as Nelson’s own immediate adversary, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has argued that gays and lesbians must “conform to church teaching and scripture.”<sup>403</sup> The anathematized other has become the exclusivist male with institutional power, a persona at least partially suggested by Jesus’ behavior in Matt 15:21-28.

### **3.2.6 Anon: Encuentros con Jesus**

Nelson’s reading is not idiosyncratic. In the December 2007 blogspot, *Encuentros con Jesus*, there is little trace of the submission of the Church Fathers’ Canaanite woman, nor of the authority of their withholding and powerful Jesus. The woman’s words are described as blunt and forceful (*contundentes palabras*) while the disciples are described as nervous petitioners (*nerviosismo, pidieron*) and Jesus, as diffident and surprisingly negative (*no le contestó, sorprendente, negativa*). This blog’s concise and pointed account of Matt 15:21-28 concludes: *No es escandaloso afirmar que aquella mujer ‘luchó’ con Dios y venció.... una fe que sabía lidiar con Dios y argumentar con el Señor* (“It is not scandalous to affirm that that woman fought with God and won.... She had a faith that knew to struggle with God and argue with the Lord.”).<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Nelson, “messiahs are from mars,” n.p.

<sup>404</sup> “Una Mujer Gentil: Encuentros Con Jesus: December 26, 2007,” n.p. [cited 29 September 2010]. Online: [http://ellosseencontraronconjesus.blogspot.com/2007\\_12\\_26\\_archive.html](http://ellosseencontraronconjesus.blogspot.com/2007_12_26_archive.html).

### 3.2.7 Loren Rosson: The Shameless Hussy of Mk 7:24-30/Mt 15:21-28

In 2005, a strong and confident Canaanite woman surfaces again on Loren Rosson's blog, *The Busybody*, as a "shameless hussy who gave as good as she got and gratified Jesus because of it."<sup>405</sup> Rosson's short account of Matt 15:21-28 (which begins with a summary of Pilch's article in *Scripture from Scratch*) is certainly gender-aware. Indeed, the language that he uses to describe the Canaanite woman and her exchange with Jesus is suggestive: the terms "shameless hussy," "giving" and "getting," and "gratified" are words often understood to have sexual connotations. In this way, his reading can be seen as evoking a sexualized gender dynamic similar to that which Tarabotti identified with such concern in her own treatment of the passage.

In Rosson's blog, this dynamic is treated with insouciance; the Canaanite woman's shameless cleverness amuses and pleases a decidedly blasé Jesus. Rosson's Jesus is alternately indifferent, mildly surprised and "apparently amused." He seems only marginally interested in this strange specimen, this foreign woman, and hardly invested in the exchange at all. This is very different from other readings that see the encounter at Matt 15:21-28 as life-changing for Jesus' ministry, like traditional interpretations that read the passage as prefiguring the Gentile mission, or Nelson's above, which features Jesus adopting the Canaanite woman's techniques when he gets to Jerusalem. Perhaps this is simply a way of moderating the innuendo that colors Rosson's description of the Canaanite woman. Certainly, this is an informal blog and not academic commentary, and blogs run the gamut from serious political critique to playful and provocative opinion pieces. Furthermore, in American culture today where nearly every aspect of

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<sup>405</sup> Loren Rosson, "The Shameless Hussy of Mk 7:24-30/Mt 15:21-28," *The BusyBody*, July 28, 2005, n.p.[cited 29 September 2010]. Online: <http://lorenrosson.blogspot.com/2005/07/shameless-hussy-of-mk-724-30mt-1521-28.html>.

human activity is sexualized, there is obviously more latitude to write and be read thus, in depictions of “the battle of the sexes,” or even small squirmishes like Matt 15:21-28. Thus, where Tarabotti was careful to bracket sexual inferences, this piece is not.

In any case, Jesus is once again undefended, located historically within the ethnic assumptions of his time, and manifesting none of the positive attributes traditionally ascribed to him. For Rosson, this “heathen woman” “amuses” Jesus; that is all: “Never mind any supposed compassion and mercy. He had none here.”<sup>406</sup>

### **3.2.8 Steven Kurtz: Notes on This Week’s Lectionary Text**

This switch to describing a limited and often aloof Jesus, which was so carefully avoided, precluded and explained away within the commentary and homiletic traditions, finds repeated expression on the web. For just one more example, take the “Notes on This Week’s Lectionary Text” for August 2008 on Gulf Shores Steven’s WebBlog, the blog of Steven Kurtz, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Gulf Shores, Alabama. In a mid-week note to his congregation, while preparing for his Sunday sermon posting, Pastor Steven (whose congregation is “Rooted in faith, open to the Spirit, and curious about everything”) asks: “As a species, we have demonstrated that there is no action we will not justify and carry out against people we define as ‘other.’ Does Jesus get sucked into this same trap? What’s going on here?”<sup>407</sup> That this question is rhetorical becomes clearer when the actual Sunday sermon is posted. By Sunday, Kurtz has recuperated Jesus’ actions: he is “offering her a challenge to respond to,” proving that “God’s

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<sup>406</sup> Rosson, “Shameless Hussy,” n.p.

<sup>407</sup> Steven Kurtz, “Gulf Shores Steven’s WebBlog: Notes on This Week’s Lectionary – in Progress,” Aug. 12, 2008” n.p. [cited 02 October 2010]. Online: <http://gulfshoressteven.wordpress.com/2008/08/12/notes-on-this-weeks-lectionary-text-in-progress/>.

mercy is not contingent on anything but asking for it.”<sup>408</sup> Indeed, far from being subject to 1<sup>st</sup> century cultural bias, Kurtz insists that Jesus was “demolishing artificial, human-created boundaries around ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders.’”<sup>409</sup> Still, however contained Kurtz’ initial literal response is by week’s end, the balance of power in Matt 15:21-28 has changed. The specters of a powerful Canaanite woman and an all-too-human and limited Jesus have been raised and the long-standing project of exegetical apologetic has opened out into a new soul-searching register.

### **3.3 THE IMPOVERISHED OTHER: MASTERS, MEN, AND MOTHERS**

#### **3.3.1 H. H. Carlisle: The Cry of the Children**

In April of 1906, *The Christian World Pulpit* published an article entitled “The Cry of the Children,” by Reverend H. H. Carlisle of Maldon. Beyond his duties as a preacher, Carlisle was a member of the Essex Congregational Union and Home Missionary Society (in 1897, he was its Chairman), a coalition of evangelical Congregational ministers who, inspired by foreign missions in the “Heathen World,” were determined to spread the Gospel more locally, in their own county of Essex, by preaching, instructing the rising generation, teaching the poor to read, and distributing religious books.<sup>410</sup>

Carlisle’s article deploys Matt 15:21-28 in a categorically new and highly effective manner. On one level, it mentions the Gospel passage directly only once or twice. On another, it

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<sup>408</sup> Steven Kurtz, “Gulf Shores Steven’s WebBlog: On Being a Canaanite Dog, Aug. 17, 2008” n.p. [cited 02 October 2010]. Online: <http://gulfshoressteven.wordpress.com/2008/08/17/on-being-a-canaanite-dog-aug-17-2008/>.

<sup>409</sup> Kurtz, “On Being a Canaanite Dog,” n.p.

<sup>410</sup> Robert Burls, *A Brief Review of the Plan and Operations of the Essex Congregational Union for Promoting the Knowledge of the Gospel in the County of Essex and Its Vicinity* (Maldon: H. Youngman, 1848).



takes the constitutive images of the story—motherhood, illness, need, marginality, obligation to nation, food, nurturing, belief, and faith—and integrates them into his own advocacy for a pending Liberal welfare reform Bill in the House of Commons in 1906. It is thus more a gestalt reading; it extends the defining concepts in the Gospel passage rather than mapping detailed typological correspondences or doctrinal proofs within it.

The article, a political opinion piece, was delivered as a sermon at Newland Congregational Church, Lincoln on March 11. It urges Carlisle's congregation (and later the larger readership of *The Christian World Pulpit*) to support a piece of legislation that had been discussed in the House of Commons just a week prior, "The Bill for the Provision of Meals for Day-School Children."<sup>411</sup> In so doing, Carlisle presents arguments and challenges that would continue to confront the Liberal Party in its promotion of social welfare reforms between 1906 and 1914. Carlisle clearly attempts to acknowledge the affinity between Christian teachings and the progressive liberal stance, while steering a path between the arguments of classical liberal laissez-faire proponents and Socialist reformers in 1906 London. In his references to Joseph Lancaster,<sup>412</sup> Robert Raikes,<sup>413</sup> the Factory Acts<sup>414</sup> and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

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<sup>411</sup> H. H. Carlisle, M. A., "The Cry of the Children," *The Christian World Pulpit*, Vol. 69 (Apr 25, 1906): 268-270 (269). This was a piece of legislation put forward by, among others, the Socialist Independent Labour Party MP, Frederick William Jowett, based on similar school meals programs that he had implemented at Bradford. Cf. Anna Davin, "Loaves and Fishes: Food in Poor Households in Late Nineteenth-Century London," *History Workshop Journal*, 41 (Spring, 1996): 167-192. Davin cites minutes of the School Board of London in 1884: "An earlier motion that the London School Board should ask Parliament to enable them to provide a meal a day for the children of parents unable to pay their school fees, put forward by George Mitchell and Edward Aveling in 1884, was defeated by thirty votes to six." This was not, then, a novel or unheard of idea in 1906.

<sup>412</sup> English Quaker (1778-1838) who introduced public education and principles of mutual instruction, beginning in South London in 1798. Cf. Joseph Lancaster, *The British System of Education: Being a Complete Epitome of the Improvements and Inventions Practised at the Royal Free Schools, Borough-Road, Southwark*. (London: J. Lancaster, 1810).

<sup>413</sup> Anglican layman (1736-1811) who initiated the Sunday School movement in 1780. Cf. John Carroll Power, *The Rise and Progress of Sunday Schools: A Biography of Robert Raikes and William Fox* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1863).

<sup>414</sup> A series of acts passed by the British parliament, 1802-1895, that sought to control the conditions under which factory workers labored. These ran the gamut from number of hours women and children could be made to work all

to Children,<sup>415</sup> Carlisle locates himself squarely behind “large social reforms... that must always be coming into being wherever thoughts of Christ and the influence of His Spirit extend.”<sup>416</sup> Yet, he is equally concerned to demonstrate that he opposes “the State as Foster Parent” and maintains the value of individual responsibility, good character, and the preservation of the home. Here again, then, are perennial themes in the interpretation of Matt 15:21-28: the roles of entitlement and nation, the value of individual tenacity and strength, and the sentimentalizing of motherhood.

Carlisle begins by establishing the Canaanite woman as symbol for “the rest of the world,” a constituency that deserves God’s bounty just as much as Israel with its particular rights and blessings. This is Carlisle’s first step in transposing the religious-ethnic opposition Gentile Canaanites-Jewish Israelites to the economic class distinction, “Masters-Men.” The “children” on this reading are not the Jews as favored sons and daughters of Yahweh, but the children of the poor in 1906 London. At the same time, their claim to generosity, relief and free lunches, equated with the Canaanite woman’s request for crumbs “will not interfere with Israel’s rights and blessings, there will be enough for all and it will be better for everyone.”<sup>417</sup> That there will be no dire consequences to such an extension of relief is a critical piece of Carlisle’s argument:

All this tends to show that masters and men recognise that they are essential to one another. It is not right that the men should have the masters’ bread, but it is right that men should have their share, and there is sufficient for all. To recognise this, and to aim at working it out is true religion.<sup>418</sup>

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the way to the provision of instruction in reading, writing and math for child laborers. Their focus on child labor is the operative factor in Carlisle’s sermon.

<sup>415</sup> The London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded in 1884 by Anthony Ashley Cooper (Lord Shaftsbury) and the Reverends Edward Rudolf and Benjamin Waugh, the Congregationalist minister to the poor.

<sup>416</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 268.

<sup>417</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 268.

<sup>418</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 268.

“Working it out” is precisely Carlisle’s challenge. In this case, it involves his weighing of classical liberal arguments against the Bill, based on cost and possible future increases in benefits, against Socialist views of “the concern of the State for children.... Socialism says boldly the State is the Over-Parent, the Outer-Parent.”<sup>419</sup> These positions segue into a discussion of the need for “good citizens” and “well-trained minds,” “if the nation is to be strong.”<sup>420</sup> The next generation is at the mercy of “numbers of parents” who have shirked, neglected and cast off their responsibility. On the other hand, other causes come into view. While there may be examples of “individual wrong-doing, drink, lack of thrift, ignorance and bad house management,” there is also the reality of low wages and poor industrial and domestic conditions. These calibrations echo past readings of the Canaanite woman as the daughter of stone-worshippers, a dissolute people. Carlisle suggests that out of such an impoverished inheritance, as in the case of the Canaanite woman, the question becomes one of individual character transcending a sinful way of life and legacy, through the experience of trials and suffering:

I want to say that it is not true that all suffering should be prevented; much is curative, preventive, and inspiration to progress and character forming.... If you minimize the parental effect of slackness and wrong-doing, and make up to the child all he loses by his father’s or mother’s sin, you will tend to blind him to the sinfulness of sin....<sup>421</sup>

Having thus assigned moral parameters for individual and social responsibility, Carlisle is able to argue for limiting necessary government interventions<sup>422</sup> by exhorting the preservation of a “strong home-life.” He accomplishes this through a barrage of domestic advice for Christian

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<sup>419</sup> H. G. Wells, *Socialism and the Family* (London: A. C. Fifield, 1906).

<sup>420</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 269.

<sup>421</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 269.

<sup>422</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 269: “improving wages, sanitation, lighting, providing more sunlight and better houses, and cheapening good food, even old age pensions.”

parents, particularly mothers. In a remarkable shift into the realm of domesticity, Carlisle answers the dire need for government assistance, “crumbs under the table,” with happy memories of “mother’s little treats! The birthday pudding and cakes!” He urges Christian women, “Sisters, there would not be so much worry in your home if you cooked better, and if you studied variety in the preparation for meals.”<sup>423</sup> These enthusiastic prescriptions reinforce the gender identities that undergird the nation-state in his view, through a potent mix of pragmatism and sentimentalism: “I remember that my first suit of clothes was made for me by my mother. Was there ever such a suit?” and “The memory of such home-life never dies.”<sup>424</sup> On the other hand, Anna Davin, in her study of children’s food in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London, has also documented the very real and present need for the behavior Carlisle seeks to impose on Christian women: “Much depended on the skills, energy and resourcefulness of mothers. Some could make a very little seem tasty and almost sufficient, usually in soups and stews, remembered with gusto even in old age.”<sup>425</sup>

The paranesis in Carlisle’s political exegesis of Matt 15:21-28 is broad in scope. It encompasses legislative action, social reform, and domestic obligations. Its gestalt is admirably aligned with the Gospel text’s primary terms: covenant, need, nation, and tenacious maternity. The “others” it uniformly rejects are those who neglect the needs of their fellow human beings, especially children. Whether members of Parliament, wastrel parents or passive mothers, significantly all are members of the Christian community. The indictment of the “other” has become the disciplining of the “self”—that is, the community—within the larger project of welfare reform, social justice, and communal self-transformation.

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<sup>423</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 269.

<sup>424</sup> Carlisle, “Cry of the Children,” 269.

<sup>425</sup> Davin, “Loaves and Fishes,” 170.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

It is in such ways that conflictual readings of the Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus, focused on lessons learned, began to dovetail with the more spiritually oriented readings of the next chapters. Even from within the entrenched hostility of anti-Jewish readings, a "lesson trope" emerged, albeit as a necessary step in the apologetic recuperation of Jesus' behavior or the chauvinistic call to evangelize the Jews and the world. In a similar development, the uses of gender within the readings in this chapter, considered together, demonstrate a dialectic between understanding femaleness as a *figure* of generic and flawed humanity and using femaleness as a particularly apt *experience* of *proximity* to Jesus (in the very physical sense of his having been born of a woman and women having tended to him); gentle and humble *need* of Jesus; and consequent *entitlement* to Jesus' love, protection, and salvific approbation. This second logic may be articulated as a kind of regulatory "edification" of women readers, as in the case of William Jay's writings, or as a righteous claim to embodying the real Gospel, as in the case of Clay Nelson's pro-gay homily. In either case, it transforms the original conflict of the Gospel story into a question of spiritual relationship with Jesus and with other human beings. This soul-searching register has a history too, beginning in the early centuries of the church, in early depictions of the soul's struggles and in ascetical guides and disciplines. These texts, which focus on spiritual self-transformation and communion with God, are the subject of the next chapter.

#### 4.0 TRANSFORMING SELVES: REVERSAL, METANOIA, AND SPIRITUAL ASCENT

A persistent strand of exegetical tradition sees Matt 15:21-28 as a story about spiritual process, most typically, about understanding and optimizing the give-and-take or call-and-response that characterizes human encounters with God in these texts. Questions raised in the Gospel passage of interpreting Jesus' words and responding appropriately to them become questions of individual encounter and relationship with the Divine. We may recall from Chapter 2 that initially it was the desire to regulate biblical exegesis and to construct exegetical sanctions for authoritative ecclesiology, Christology, and theology that begged such questions. This use of exegesis to regulate the experience of the Christian community as a whole is not completely absent from the interpretations of the Canaanite woman here below, yet, such regulation is viewed first as a question of individual spiritual process, explored through the Canaanite woman's inner processes, understanding and learning. Even when they make corporate prescriptions, they are unlike the interpretations in Chapters 2 and 3 that use the concept of election primarily to anathematize "others." In these texts, the Canaanite woman's experience is not only about the generic human question for salvation but also individual reform and evolution.

This interpretive thread understands the Canaanite woman's experience as *μετάνοια*, personal reform or "reflexivity of the self." It is leveraged within texts which are remarkably diverse in genre. Here, I begin with 4<sup>th</sup> century reenactments of the Canaanite woman's

encounter that are conspicuously theatrical, including 1) an anonymous 4<sup>th</sup> century catechetical homily and 2) scenes from Jerome's early hagiographic *Vita Hilarionis*. A focus on individual process also emerges in some of the early spiritual disciplines analyzed in this chapter, where it develops within a specific set of questions about ascetical Christian practices and related late 4<sup>th</sup> century discussions of the limits of human potential in relation to the Divine. Similarly preoccupied readings occur during the medieval period, extending practical questions about spiritual process and ascent into Western monastic settings. All are invested in explaining the source, object and mechanisms of the Canaanite woman's tenacity and wit cum "faith."

#### **4.1 THE SOUL ENCOUNTERS THE DIVINE**

Before moving to images of the Canaanite woman in ascetical guides and monastic disciplines, it will be useful to consider two dramatizations of spiritual encounters with either God or desert ascetics (holy men) that mimic the Canaanite woman's praying, pleading, and prevailing with Jesus. The first, an anonymous homily written in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century for delivery during the Octave of Easter, will also provide a fitting segue between the interpretations of chapter 3, focused on anathema and groups, and this chapter, focused on representations of individual self-transformation. The homily is one of two that bring together corporate and individual experiences of human encounters with God. Along the way, it offers a novel reading of the exclusivity logion at Matt 15:24. Together, these two homilies represent dramatic performances of the capacity of the soul for transformation through the mechanisms of private prayer and public communal conversion.

### 4.1.1 Anon: Two Anomoean Homilies

Like many homilies delivered after Easter, these two focus on psalm passages, yet their considerable effect lies in their combination of these with passages from *Acts*, and in their dramatic performance of both types of Scripture. They present, for instance, psalm verses in first-person direct discourse, crying out to the Lord in psalm-like fashion, while their presentation of verses from *Acts* become first-person reenactments of those passages. Thus, the first homily reenacts Peter's very first sermon in Jerusalem and the conversion of the crowd, understood exclusively as Jews (*Acts* 2, especially verses 22-24). The second homily restages the trial of the apostles before the Sanhedrin (*Acts* 4:1-22).

Thus both homilies combine elaborate individual prayers and pleading to God with dramatizations of the earliest encounters between Jews and followers of Jesus, including a mass conversion of Jews. This combination is suggestive in terms of the immediate function of the homilies. Could they, like Augustine's *Sermon 77* discussed in chapter 2, have been a particularly dramatic form of catechetical homily on the occasion of the baptism of new converts during the Easter season? This possible *Sitz im Leben* is only marginally acknowledged by Jacques Liébaert in the 1956 *Sources Chretiennes* edition.<sup>426</sup> Liébaert acknowledges that the first-person passages depict the moral suffering of the human soul,<sup>427</sup> but then considers them only from the vantage point of style. For instance, he describes their tendency to correlate long

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<sup>426</sup> Cf. Liébaert in Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes Pour l'Octave de Paques*, SC 146, ed. Jacques Liébaert (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 41. Liébaert sees only an "allusion" to baptism in "certain passages" of the homilies, but the very structure of the homilies arguably entail an extended catechesis on the soul turning to God at both the individual and the corporate levels. In this, they are not unlike Augustine's sermon in chapter 2 in which he too turns to questions of how Jews and Gentiles came into "Christ's sheepfold."

<sup>427</sup> Liébaert in Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes*, 30: "La paraphrase du psaume dans les deux homélie est pratiquement une description de la misère morale de l'homme (celle de l'âme païenne ou celle de David après son péché)."



lists of exemplary Biblical characters in terms of the anonymous author's taste for "cumulative symmetries, parallelisms and antitheses" without ever asking, to what end? Likewise, he sees the second half of each homily that describes the earliest interactions of Jews with the followers of Jesus in terms of commonplaces and apologetic. While this is slightly more audience-oriented, the bulk of Liébaert's commentary is theological, focused on dogmatic and Christological questions raised in the text, rather than on questions about the text's social function or its audience.

His approach is not without interest or foundation, for these homilies, preserved initially in Byzantine sermon collections and attributed to Chrysostom, were quickly recognized as the work of an anonymous Anomoean,<sup>428</sup> based on several passages in them that describe Jesus as distinct from God, the Father. Certainly, the author emphasizes Jesus' humanity and the humanity of the Biblical characters he ventriloquizes, offering a dynamic continuum of intense human spiritual experience. For the purposes of this chapter, the question becomes how this intensity is translated into, or inscribed as, exemplary Christian behavior and imitable spiritual evolution.

With this question in mind, it may be more helpful to see the homilies' style and tone not solely in terms of the development of dogma or ideas per se but rather in terms of how particularly they differ from other Anomoean writings which were sometimes criticized for their dialectical disputational style and reliance on logic. Discussing 4<sup>th</sup> century reactions to the *Syntagmation* of Aetius the Syrian (founder of the Anomoeans), for instance, Richard Lim explains:

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<sup>428</sup>Liébaert in Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes*, 9. The Anomoeans were a sect of Arians who believed that Jesus, the Son, and God, the Father, had different natures. The homilies could clearly not have been written by Chrysostom. Between 386-87, he preached a series of sermons first at Antioch and then at Constantinople, "On the Incomprehensibility of God," that directly refuted the claims of Anomoean Arians.

His logical propositions are so attuned to the most minute nuances that the heresiologist Epiphanius of Salamis accused Aetius, "a man accomplished in every dialectical and sophistical art," of promoting *akribologia*, the science of nit-picking.<sup>429</sup>

In contrast, these homilies rely much more on pathos than logos. Perhaps these texts simply represent Anomoeanism in the homiletic register. Nonetheless, they articulate a set of conversion experiences vis à vis God and other religious groups in a visceral and immediate fashion, and were arguably more apt to elicit quite different audience responses, namely empathy, identification and imitation.

The homilies are parallel in structure, beginning with paraphrases of the psalm texts in the first person punctuated by a refrain which repeats a line from the psalm. In the case of the first homily, the verse is from Psalm 2:2, "Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray" and is paraphrased in the refrain as Τὰ ῥήματά μου ἐνώτισαι, κύριε, "Pay heed to my words, Lord." In the case of the second homily, the verse is from Psalm 11:2, "Look, the wicked bend the bow, they have fitted their arrow to the string, to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart," to which the refrain responds, Σῶσόν με, Κύριε, "Save me, Lord." The Canaanite woman makes two cameo appearances in the first homily only. These will be analyzed below. She is not mentioned in the second homily at all. In the first, she figures, predictably, in sections that depict the human soul's cry to God.

The anonymous preacher describes the voice that cries out in the first homily as follows: Τῆς ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἡ φωνή, κἂν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις ὁ ψαλμὸς ἀνεγράφη τῶν ἐν χάριτι τὰ ῥήματα, κἂν ἐν νόμῳ συνετάγη τὸ γράμμα: "The cry of she who comes out of the nations, even if the psalm was written amongst the Jews; words of those who are in a state of Grace, even if the text was

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<sup>429</sup> Richard Lim, "Religious Disputation and Social Disorder in Late Antiquity," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 44:2 (1995), 225. Here, Lim quotes Epiphanius, *Panarion* 76.2.1, 76.3.7.

composed under the Law.”<sup>430</sup> Thus introduced, this Gentile voice crying out of a Jewish psalm almost immediately begins to speak for itself. It describes itself as ignorant of the Creator, the captive of demons, worshipping nature, wood, stone, and stars and altogether irrational: ἀλόγων λοιπὸν δίκην ἀδιάκριτα ἐβίου: “I lived without reason and beyond that in an indiscriminate manner.”<sup>431</sup>

It is at this point, in the very next paragraph, that the Canaanite woman appears. She, along with a litany of parallel exempla, becomes a figure for the transformation of the pagan soul who is speaking in the homily, a soul who, like the Canaanite woman, the Magi, the courtesan, the centurion, the publican, and the thief on the cross, did not reject the Incarnate Jesus:

οὐδὲ ῥαθυμία τὴν χάριν παρέβλεψα, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀγκάλαις σοι φερομένῳ διὰ τῶν Μάγων προσῆλθον. Ἐπὶ στιβάδος σου ἀνακειμένου διὰ τῆς πόρνης ἐδεήθην διὰ τοῦ ἑκατοντάρχου σὲ δεσπότην ὡμολόγησα τῶν ὅλων διὰ τῆς Χαναanaίας ἐγὼ τὸ σὸν προσεκύνησα κράτος διὰ Ματθαίου τοῦ τελώνου εἰς τὴν σὴν προσκύνησιν ἔδραμον διὰ τοῦ ληστοῦ σὲ βασιλέα ὡμολόγησα εἶναι καὶ δι’ ἐμαυτῆς σήμερον κράζω· Τὰ ῥήματά μου ἐνώτισαι, κύριε.<sup>432</sup>

I did not despise Grace through indifference, but through the Magi, I approached you when you were carried in human arms; through the courtesan, I prayed to you when you were at table; through the Canaanite woman, I adored your power; through Matthew, the publican, I ran to throw myself at your feet; through the thief, I confessed your royalty; and through myself, I cry out today. Hear my words, Lord.

The prayerful refrain, τὰ ῥήματά μου ἐνώτισαι, κύριε, now punctuates a continuous history of mostly Gentile converts and begins to look more liturgical than rhetorical, more like call-and-response, possibly in the context of a baptismal rite, than merely a dramatic paraphrase of a psalm. This impression is deepened in the next paragraph, where the voice switches to first-person plural: Ἐλευθέρωσον δουλείας, ἦν δι’ ὀλίγωρον ὑπεμείναμεν γνώμην ἔκβαλε τῆς πλάνης

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<sup>430</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.4, (SC 146, 60, 62).

<sup>431</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.4 (SC 146, 62). It is also relevant to note that ἀλόγων was a label for a variety of heresies in this period.

<sup>432</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.5 (SC 146, 64).

καὶ τὸ πλανηθὲν βάστασον ἐπ’ ὤμων: “Set us free from the slavery in which we have remained because of our feeble opinion; expel error from us and lift falsehood from our shoulders.”<sup>433</sup>

The next several paragraphs go on to model an ideal practice of Christian prayer. They articulate the best reasons for prayer (not for worldly wealth, but for piety) and make claims about a truer kind of prayer which comes not from the lips but is sent forth from the heart (οὐ τῆς διὰ χειλέων ἐξερχομένης, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐκ καρδίας ἐκπεμπομένης).<sup>434</sup> These descriptions of ideal prayer segue into a final paragraph on true faith in which the decidedly Anomoean voice explains that it does not mix up the hypostases (οὐ συναναμίγνυμι τὰς ὑποστάσεις)!<sup>435</sup> Here the text transitions into a more catechetical and dogmatic tone, a move that is repeated at the end of the second part of the homily as well.

The second citation of the Canaanite woman’s experience appears in the second half of the homily which dramatically reproduces Peter’s first sermon in Jerusalem in *Acts* 2, particularly verses 22-24.<sup>436</sup> The anonymous preacher begins to speak in Peter’s voice, addressing the “men of Israel” in the Jerusalem crowd. Thus the anonymous homily ends up constructing two different first-person voices directly addressing two different audiences in two different registers. In the first section, the preacher adopts the voice of a Gentile soul who speaks to/for others like itself, modeling prayer and faith. In the second section, the preacher adopts the voice of Peter who speaks to Jerusalem Jews, exhorting them to heed prophecies of the Messiah

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<sup>433</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes*, 1.6 (SC 146, 64).

<sup>434</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.10 (SC 146, 68).

<sup>435</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.12 (SC 146, 70).

<sup>436</sup> *Acts* 2:22-24: “You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power” (NRSV).

in their own Scriptures and recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the one who was predicted, thereby modeling conversion.

Most interesting in this section is the remarkable respect and affection with which the anonymous preacher, virtual avatar of “Peter,” speaks to his Jewish audience,<sup>437</sup> and the role that the exclusivity logion plays in establishing that tonality. This constitutes a significant shift in the history of interpretation of Matt 15:24. First, “Peter” acknowledges, over the course of a good five paragraphs, the illustrious history and heritage that belong to the “men of Israel:” Ἴσραηλιῖται ἰεὺγενουῶς δένδρου, ὧ ἄνδρες, ὑπάρχετε κλάδοι: “Israelite men, of a noble tree, o men, you are the branches.”<sup>438</sup> Then, the exclusivity logion and the Canaanite woman’s rejection are leveraged as evidence of the justified priority of the Jews, a priority that is never qualified in the way that it is in other early interpretations of 15:24, as when Tertullian argues that the verse is about timing and not priority. In elaborating on how Jesus was accredited particularly to the Jews, the preacher writes:

τῆς γὰρ Χαναναίας δεομένης οὕτως ἔλεγεν ὁ Κύριος ἰ Οὐκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ ἰ καὶ αὐθὶς πάλιν ἐπιτιμῶν αὐτῇ ἔφασκεν ἰ Οὐ καλὸν ἐστὶ λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις. Ἀποδεδειγμένον οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς ἰ ἐξ ὑμῶν γὰρ καὶ ὅπερ ἀνέλαβεν ἐδανείσατο σαρκίον.<sup>439</sup>

For when the Canaanite woman pleaded, the Lord spoke thus: ‘I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,’ and he affirmed it again, rebuking her: ‘It is not good to take the bread from the children and throw it to the dogs.’ Having been accredited, then, by God to you: it is from you that he borrowed the flesh that he assumed....

The preacher goes on in the next several paragraphs to commemorate Jesus’ commitment to his people: Jesus did not preach to non-Jews, nor abandon Israel, nor disdain circumcision. His

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<sup>437</sup> It is very tempting to simultaneously read this Jewish audience, according to an Easter baptism *Sitz im Leben*, as Jewish converts being baptized alongside Gentile converts on the occasion of the Octave of Easter.

<sup>438</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.15 (SC 146, 74).

<sup>439</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.19 (SC 146, 82).

miracles were for the Jews, accomplished in their midst, for their eyes and edification: εἰς τὰς ὄψεις ὑμῶν ὁ χωλὸς ἐπὶ τῷ δώρῳ χορεύει: “For your eyes, the lame dance for the gift they have received.”<sup>440</sup> These assurances are “spoken” directly to Jews, using the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person plural pronoun and heightening their dramatic impact.

The rest of the homily simply continues to preach the gospel story, the passion, the harrowing of hell, and the resurrection appearances. The absolute absence of invective in explicating the lines from *Acts* which have so often elicited condemnation of the Jews (“this man, handed over to you... you crucified and killed”) and the unapologetic reading of the exclusivity logion, not just taken at face value and then qualified, but elaborated upon, indeed celebrated, are striking. These two relatively novel innovations taken together could reflect a *Sitz im Leben* involving not just Gentile but also Jewish converts in this homily delivered during the Octave of Easter, the season of the baptism of neophytes.<sup>441</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Jerome: *Vita Hilarionis*

Between the directly hortatory genre of catechetical homily and the embryonic genre of Latin Christian hagiography one might expect significant divergence. Nonetheless, the anonymous homily above and the next text to be discussed, the *Vita Hilarionis* of Jerome,

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<sup>440</sup> Anon., *Deux Homélie Anoméenes* 1.21 (SC 146, 84).

<sup>441</sup> Regarding the rites of baptism practiced by the Anomoeans, Epiphanius reports that Aetius’ disciples, and later their successor, Eunomius, would baptize people, whether from the orthodox or other sects, “in the name of God the Uncreated, and in the name of the Created Son, and in the name of the Sanctifying Spirit created by the Created Son.” This practice predictably provokes much indignation in Epiphanius, who calls their rites, “jugglery, theater, and farce” (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 54:32-34: ἔτι δὲ εἰς περισσοτέραν μανίαν ἀρθέντες οἱ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ μεμαθητευμένοι καὶ ὁ τούτων διάδοχος, Εὐνόμιος τις ψευδωνύμως καλούμενος, ἔτι καὶ δεῦρο περιῶν τῷ βίῳ μέγα χακόν, τόλμημα ἀναβαπτίζει γὰρ τοὺς ἤδη βαπτισθέντες οὐ μόνον τοὺς ἀπὸ ὀρθοδόξων πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐρχομένους καὶ αἰρέσεων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀπ’ αὐτῶν τῶν Ἀρειανῶν. ἀναβαπτίζει δὲ αὐτοὺς εἰς ὄνομα θεοῦ ἀκτίστου καὶ εἰς ὄνομα υἱοῦ κεκτισμένου καὶ εἰς ὄνομα πνεύματος ἁγιαστικοῦ καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κεκτισμένου υἱοῦ κτισθέντος. ἵνα δὲ τὸ πᾶν κυβείας καὶ θυμέλης καὶ σκηνηῆς τὸ ἐργαστέριον αὐτῶν ὀφθεῖν).

written circa 390, share much in common as early dramatizations of spiritual experience within texts aimed at instilling new ideals of Christian identity and practice. The *Vita Hilarionis* is one of three lives of monks that Jerome wrote between 376 and 392, just twenty-some years after Athanasius wrote his *Vita Antonii*. The *Vita Pauli* claims to depict the origins of Egyptian anchoritism through the story of Paul of Thebes who, according to Jerome, was the first, even before Antony, to retire to the desert to live a life of absolute solitude. The *Vita Malchi*, set in Syria, is an extended portrait of triumphant virginity. The *Vita Hilarionis*, the most complete biography of the three, purports to tell the story of the founding of Palestinian monasticism.

Jerome's *Vitae* are generically fluid, typical of the evolution of Hellenistic forms during the early centuries of the common era which regularly mixed genres of all sorts.<sup>442</sup> In any case, they function paranetically as propaganda for the nascent ideals of Christian asceticism, virginity, and monasticism which were gaining traction and which Jerome embraced in his youth.<sup>443</sup> Indeed, two of the *Vitae* (*Pauli* and *Malchi*) conclude with moral exhortations to their readers. The *Vita Pauli* ends with an extended tongue-lashing of those who choose earthly riches over asceticism<sup>444</sup> and the *Vita Malchi* with a plea to virgins to remain chaste and to all readers to pass on the story of Malchus to future generations.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Leclerc in Jerome, *Trois Vies de Moines: Paul, Malchus, Hilarion*, SC 508, eds. Pierre Leclerc, Edgardo Martin Morales, and Adalbert de Vogüé (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 35.

<sup>443</sup> Leclerc in Jerome, *Trois Vies de Moines*, 25: "Ses *Vitae* s'inscrivent dans un ensemble composé de lettres et de traités, destiné à exhorter correspondants et lecteurs à la pratique de l'ascèse chrétienne et tout particulièrement de la chasteté volontaire."

<sup>444</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Paul.* 17.4 (SC 508, 182): *Parcite, quaeso vos, parcite saltem divitiis quas amatis.... An cadaver divitum nisi in serico putrescere nesciunt?* ("Forbear, I beg you. Or at least refrain from the riches that you love.... Do the cadavers of the rich know how to decay only in silk?")

<sup>445</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Malch.* 11 (SC 508, 210): *Haec ego vobis narraui senex, et castis historiam castitatis expono. Virgines virginitatem custodire exhortor. Vos narrate posteris, ut sciant inter gladios, et inter deserta et bestias, pudicitiam numquam esse captivam, et hominem Christo deditum posse mori, non posse superari.* "This I have recounted to you in my old age; I tell a story of chastity to the chaste. I exhort virgins to guard their virginity. As for you, retell these deeds to future generations so they may know that in the midst of swords and deserts and wild beasts, chastity is never a captive, and the man who gives himself to Christ may die, but he cannot be vanquished."

Thus Jerome encourages imitation of these holy monks who are, in turn, imitators of Christ.<sup>446</sup> Accordingly, in the *Vita Hilarionis* there are multiple instances where gospel passages and Christ's actions within them are reenacted in the life of Hilarion, including accounts of Hilarion's fasting, temptations by the Devil in the desert, miracles, and peripatetic lifestyle.

The passages in *Vita Hilarionis* that recall the figure of the Canaanite woman are found in the opening paragraphs of the section devoted to Hilarion's miracles in Gaza (7.1-14.7). A series of three women supplicants, two mothers and one blind woman, come to Hilarion in the desert. Their demeanor, needs, and exchanges with the saint are strongly evocative of the scene in Matt 15:21-28. These women include a wife from Eleutheropolis, a nearby village,<sup>447</sup> whose husband has rejected her because she is sterile; Aristaenete, a prefect's wife from Helpidius, who, returning home from a visit to Antony, begs Hilarion to heal her children who have become sick with fever; and a blind woman from Facidia (an unstable border town, prone to Sarrasin attacks, according to Jerome). Matt 15:21-28 is mirrored throughout all three exchanges in images of insistent female prayer confronting a resistant, retiring holy man who, reminiscent of Jesus in the gospel passage, wishes only to withdraw from the world. These are begging women who reenact the gestures, relationship, and terms of exchange of Matthew's Canaanite woman passage.

The paragraphs in question are prefaced with Jerome's account of Hilarion's fame throughout the region: *fama tantum notus omnibus, et per totas Palaestinae vulgatus urbes*: "He was well-known by all through his reputation which was spread throughout all the Palestinian

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<sup>446</sup> Leclerc in Jerome, *Trois Vies*, 47: "En effet, le biographe chrétien se trouve investi d'une mission spirituelle. Il a pour charge de conduire le lecteur sur le chemin du Christ, et le héros du récit est un médiateur qualifié entre le Christ et le lecteur."

<sup>447</sup> Cf. Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 32, where she notes the existence of an ascetic center, associated with Epiphanius of Salamis, located near Eleutheropolis.



cities.”<sup>448</sup> Indeed, the attention paid to geography, landscape or location in this little section on women is also reminiscent of the border-consciousness of Matt 15:21-28. Hilarion, though a recluse, is known far and wide, and the women traverse villages, some with unstable borders, and risk breaking through Hilarion’s beatific retreat to seek his aid, the first woman “daring to breach his sanctuary:” *prima irrupere ausa est ad beatum Hilarionem.*<sup>449</sup> Like the Canaanite woman, the sterile woman from Eleutheropolis is self-deprecating and deferential. Like her, she falls to her knees and begs humbly:

*Repente genibus eius advoluta: “Ignosce, inquit, audaciae, ignosce necessitati meae. Quid avertis oculos? Quid rogantem fugis? Noli me mulierem aspicere, sed miseram. Hic sexus genuit Salvatorem. ‘Non habent sani opus medico, sed qui male habent.’”*<sup>450</sup>

Falling to her knees, she said ‘Forgive my audacity and my need. Why do you avert your eyes? Why do you run from she who prays to you? Do not see me as Woman, but as Misery. This sex bore the Savior. *The healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are ill have need.*’

An interesting tension emerges in this short little prayer which dramatically represents anxiety about the dangers of encounters between holy men and women supplicants. The passage depicts, in quite physical terms, through Hilarion’s averted eyes and wish to flee, his fear of women. In response, the woman supplicant must propose several solutions. One answer is to redefine the flesh-and-blood woman as a female personification of an abstract human state (“Do not see me as Woman, but as Misery”). A second possibility is to see all women as sacred in their ability to bear children, just as Jesus’ mother, Mary, bore the Savior, yet was holy. Finally, women should be understood as “the sick,” and therefore especially and rightfully entitled to Hilarion’s help and attention. Like the Canaanite woman, this sterile woman submits willingly to

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<sup>448</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 7.1 (SC 508, 230).

<sup>449</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 7.1 (SC 508, 230).

<sup>450</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 7.1-2 (SC, 230, 232).

being transformed into an abstract personification and a sick sinner, in order to receive help as a would-be mother. Hilarion tells her to have confidence and, the *Vita* reports, a year later he sees her again, this time with a son.

The second mother for whom Hilarion performs a healing miracle has more standing in the community. She has a name, Aristaenete, and is a prefect's wife. Like the Canaanite woman, she has a sick child, or rather three sons, who are feverish, suffering from convulsions, and apparently beyond medical intervention. Like the Canaanite woman, Aristaenete makes quite a scene. She is described as shrieking or howling (*ululans*); she laments, perhaps beating her chest (*plangeret*), as she paces back and forth around the beds of her children. This episode also reproduces the exclusivist tension that characterizes Jesus' refusals of the Canaanite woman in Matthew, through Hilarion's repeated refusal to Aristaenete's pleas that he leave his cell and come into the pagan town of Marnas<sup>451</sup> where the boys lie sick. She, however, redoubles her entreaties, addressing him as *Hilarion, serve Christi* ("servant of Christ"), echoing the rhythms of the Canaanite woman's "Jesus, son of David."

A simple inventory of the verbs in this passage—*prostravit, clamitans, negans, non prius mulier recessit*: "she prostrated herself," "crying out" (Aristaenete), "refusing" (Hilarion), "by no means retreating" (Aristaenete)—further illustrates its parallelism with Matt 15:21-28. In a possible echo of the disciples' intervention on behalf of the Canaanite woman, the many people who are present (presumably the servants and eunuchs that Aristaenete has brought with her) cry for her; indeed, even as he refuses her request, Hilarion cries for her and her sons. In the end, she will not leave until he promises to come at night, after dark, which he later does. The boys are

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<sup>451</sup> Morales notes Jerome's references in his *Epist.* 107.2 to conflicts between Christians and pagan worshippers in the town of Marnas.

healed and fervently kiss the hands of the saint.<sup>452</sup> In the end, the primary function of the saint's life as textual catalyst of imitation and conversion, is reinforced by the passage's conclusion and the report that news of this miracle traveled everywhere and many from Syria and Egypt came running, becoming Christians and taking on the monastic life.<sup>453</sup>

The final episode in Jerome's depictions of encounters between Hilarion and women supplicants appears to take place some years later when a monastic community has apparently grown up around Hilarion; he is now described as surrounded by "brothers": *iam enim multi cum eo monachi erant.*<sup>454</sup> It is a shorter exchange and repeats the basic components of the other two. The blind woman comes to Hilarion; she explains that she has spent all her money on doctors and still cannot see.<sup>455</sup> Like Jesus with the Canaanite woman, Hilarion refuses and rebuffs her, saying she should have given her money to the poor; if she had done so, then Jesus, *verus medicus*, would have healed her. She responds with intensified entreaties for mercy: *Clamante autem illa et misericordiam deprecante*: "As she was crying out, begging for mercy."<sup>456</sup> In the end, he puts saliva on her eyes, in an obvious allusion to Jesus at John 9:6, and her sight is restored.

In the anonymous homily and in the *Vita Hilarionis*, then, the experience of the Canaanite woman is dramatically restaged to new parnetic ends. On the one hand, it is reenacted within a homily which dramatizes individual and group conversion; on the other, it provides a biblical precedent for 4<sup>th</sup> century negotiations of ascetical and family imperatives. In

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<sup>452</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 8.3-8 (SC 508, 234).

<sup>453</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 8.9 (SC 508, 234): *Quod postquam auditum est et longe lateque percrebuit, certatim ad eum de Syria et Aegypto populi confluebant, ita ut multi christiani fierent et se monachos profiterentur.*

<sup>454</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 8.9 (SC 508, 236).

<sup>455</sup> In this particular detail, Jerome's blind woman also resembles the hemorrhaging woman of Matt 9:20-22/Mark 5:25-34/Luke 8:43-48.

<sup>456</sup> Jerome, *Vit. Hil.* 9.3 (SC 508, 236). This is possibly an allusion to Matt 15:22: γυνή Χαναanaία... ἔκραζεν λέγουσα ἔλέησόν με, κύριε, υἱὸς Δαυὶδ... ("A Canaanite woman...was shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David...'", NRSV)

the first instance, the Canaanite woman's extremity, her pleading, her rejection and her tenacity are arguably inscribed onto those in an Easter congregation, possibly converts themselves. In the second, readers and consumers of Jerome's promotion of monastic asceticism are exhorted to new levels of discipline themselves.

It is also suggestive that the avatars of the Canaanite woman in Jerome's text are presented as women with money and prestige (in at least two of the three encounters) and that their family life and children are at risk. This may signal an application of the basic components of the Canaanite woman's story—illness, maternity, faith, prayer—onto the particular struggle of the aristocratic Roman family in the late fourth century as it strained to accommodate older pagan models of family life and the adoption of Christian asceticism by some members. Jerome himself indicated in a letter praising the life of Marcella, to Principia, her good friend, that no highborn lady could openly confess at that time to taking on an ascetic life without being seen as strange and ignominious within aristocratic family culture.<sup>457</sup> Yet there were divisions already, one child living according to pagan traditions like the father, another, as a Christian like the mother. That these tensions and this duality might surface in Jerome's depiction of encounters between spiritually needy women and holy men in his *Vita Hilarionis*, then, makes sense. In the next set of texts, the Canaanite woman's legacy is again felt, this time not so much negotiating the demands of family versus religious life, but rather exploring the role of human agency in relationship to God.

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<sup>457</sup> Jerome, *Epist.* 127.5, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae, Pars III: Epistulae CXXI-CLIV*, CSEL 56 ed. Isidorus Hilberg (repr. New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1961), 149: *Nulla eo tempore nobilium feminarum noverat Romae propositum monachorum nec audebat propter rei novitatem ignominiosum, ut tunc putabatur, et vile in populis nomen adsumere*: "In those days no highborn lady at Rome had made profession of the monastic life, or had ventured— so strange and ignominious and degrading did it then seem— publicly to call herself a nun."

## 4.2 HUMAN FAITH, ASCETICAL STRIVING, AND DIVINE GRACE

In the 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, the image of the Canaanite woman surfaces in several ascetical texts, including Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis* discussed above, the *De protectione Dei* of John Cassian, *Logos 13* of Abba Isaiah, and *Letter 388* of Barsanuphius to a wounded monk. In these texts, the Canaanite woman figures at the level of illustration, intermittently useful within debates about the potential of ascetical striving, the capacity of human faith, and the role of the human soul vis à vis the Divine in human healing and salvation. The Canaanite woman's argument with Jesus and persistent questions about how to explain her tenacity, power and ultimate victory—whether lauded or problematized—figure in discussions of human/divine cooperation and human potential in these texts. This makes them interesting precursors not only of Reformation readings of Matt 15:21-28 that address questions of predestination and free will, but also of some of the more recent internet interpretations of the Canaanite woman's power and Jesus' limitations which were covered in chapter 3.

With the exception of the last text to be analyzed below (*Letter 388* of Barsanuphius), these texts do not interpret Matt 15:21-28 in detail, nor the Canaanite woman in particular. Rather, they use the figure of the Canaanite woman, along with other Biblical characters, to develop their own representations of spiritual or ascetical ideals. They cite her tenacity and power within the context of arguments about asceticism, monasticism, and human and divine cooperation. In this, they reflect developing prescriptive discourses regarding Christian ascetical practices.

Within the context of late 4<sup>th</sup> century developments in Christian asceticism, the Canaanite woman offered a provocative portrait (among many, to be sure): she is a proactive and insistent instigator, a human being whose willful pleading wrings a merciful response out of Jesus and is

thus arguably instrumental in her daughter's healing and, by extension in the tradition, her own redemption. Jesus' final words to her, γενηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις—"may it be for you as you have willed"—directly cite her will as definitive of the outcome of their exchange.

One of the arguments of this chapter is that the question of the relative importance of human and divine action in human salvation has been refracted through an enduring exegetical fixation upon the Canaanite woman's motives, knowledge, and state of soul. The limits of human agency and power have been a sustained subtext in spiritually-oriented interpretations of Matt 15:21-28. This question was also a central concern within the ascetical and monastic movements of the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, where it was linked to questions of heresy, prescribed Christian practices, and church leadership.

How might this question have affected the paranetic function of allusions in these debates to the Canaanite woman or, for that matter, to other representative characters who were understood, through an ascetical lens, as exemplary figures of human striving? How significant might the texts and the Biblical characters they leverage be to a more general endorsement and/or internalization of Christian askesis or spiritual striving on the one hand and resignation to the "Divine Will" on the other? What sort of object-lesson does the Canaanite woman become in this context? What would the breadth of influence of such a lesson have been?

The implications for late Antique Christians of the textual skirmishes represented in the discussions of human potential below are not as oblique as they might at first seem. For the figure of the emaciated, wild hermit monk alone in the desert represents only one point on the continuum of Christian ascetic practice in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. As Peter Brown succinctly concluded in 1988, despite traditional depictions of extreme eastern asceticisms, "the world East

of Antioch was no spiritual ‘Wild West.’”<sup>458</sup> Not only were the numbers of new adherents to desert asceticism very high,<sup>459</sup> but the options for ascetical practice in this period were also broad, encompassing not only the more familiar and extreme choices of anchoritism and cenobitism, but also urban ascetical practices;<sup>460</sup> household asceticism, famously embodied by the Cappadocian siblings, Basil, Gregory, and Macrina; and syneisaktism or “spiritual marriage,” according to which men and women dedicated to celibacy lived together, while maintaining austere daily regimens.<sup>461</sup>

The practices of 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian desert ascetics and urban virgins alike provided a breadth of idealized conduct and identity. Very different sets of ascetical lifestyles emerged. One extreme prescribed complete rupture, removal from normal social relations, perpetual migration and anchoritic isolation. The other end of the spectrum encouraged ascetic variations on the natural family, a transformation often brought about by converted virgin daughters and mothers living in “voluntary isolation amidst their extended natural *familiae*,” slowly affecting family life until it resembled an ascetical community, while retaining the organization and framework of the aristocratic family.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 334.

<sup>459</sup> Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 18. Clark cites the (probably inflated) numbers offered by Rufinus (*Hist. eccles.* 2.3-4 (PL 21, 511)), Palladius (*Historia Lausiaca* 7 (Butler, 25)), and Jerome (*praef.*, Pachomius, *Regula* 7 (PL 23,68)). Rufinus and Palladius place 3,000 in Nitria by the 370s and 5,000 by the 390s. Jerome places 50,000 in the Pachomian monasteries in the Thebaid, further south! Even correcting for hyperbole, Clark concludes, “it is safe to assume that retreat from ‘the world’ was by that time considerable.”

<sup>460</sup> For a better sense of the drama and dynamism of these life choices, cf. the chapter on “Virginity and Ecclesiastical Politics” in David Brakke’s *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 57-59. His account of the competition for the allegiance of female virgins in Alexandria between Athanasius and a constellation of opponents whom he labeled “Arian” makes clear how difficult the lifestyle choices of urban ascetics could make church leadership for an ambitious bishop.

<sup>461</sup> Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 33-35.

<sup>462</sup> Susanna Elm, ‘*Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1994), 374.

Scholarly treatments of these developments in the 4<sup>th</sup> century construct a number of analytical models to describe the intensification of ascetical ideals. Some propose oppositional models whereby ascetic withdrawal is seen as heroic resistance to oppressive social and political forces, to a developing clerical hierarchy within the church, or to civic duties under “late Roman imperial bureaucracy.”<sup>463</sup> In the case of women, the ascetic life is thought to provide escape from marriage and the dangers of childbearing, as well as access to travel, intellectual study, and the friendship of men.<sup>464</sup> Other critics emphasize philosophical and theological developments. These tend to set a variety of “original” Christian ideals against equally various corrupting influences. For instance, Platonic dualism produces a Hellenized Christianity that has forgotten its world-affirming Jewish roots.<sup>465</sup> Or, earlier ascetical practices “deeply grounded in the teachings of Origen,” optimistic about the capacity of human beings to transcend their limitations and progress towards God, are thwarted by church leaders promoting a theology of salvation entirely dependent upon Divine grace, effected uniquely through the Incarnation, taught through the Church, and signaled through baptism.<sup>466</sup>

These explanations all reflect a fundamental concern with the role of the individual Christian within an increasingly institutionalized and imperially-sanctioned Church. The question of which models of Christian living, and which understandings of the Christian soul in relationship to God, were “orthodox” and which were “heretical” became crucial. Texts weighed

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<sup>463</sup> Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 23-24.

<sup>464</sup> E.g. Elizabeth Castelli, “Virginity and Its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2:1 (1986): 61-88; Elizabeth A. Clark, “Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: A Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity,” *Anglican Theological Review* 63 (1981): 240-257 for the intersection of class with such freedom.

<sup>465</sup> Clark points out that this was a commonplace among early Church Fathers (e.g., Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* 6.17, where he attributes erroneous tenets in Valentinus to Pythagoras and Plato), famously maintained by Adolph von Harnack in *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, trans. E.K. Mitchell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 81, 133, 194-95.

<sup>466</sup> Cf. Elm, ‘*Virgins of God*,’ 376-7.



in on the relative virtue of and Scriptural precedents for marriage, the eating of meat, and sexual abstinence. Lines were drawn and “heretical” practices called out.<sup>467</sup> The arguments make clear that the lives and writings of the ascetics were having a broad impact, broad enough to require intervention. Douglas Burton-Christie has called this effect “a desert hermeneutic,” whereby ascetical exempla were appropriated and reenacted by individual Christians.<sup>468</sup> Indeed, by these lights, it almost seems that it was the relative importance of the church, and not the individual Christian, that required support.

We may now see in a new light the significance of Origen’s early reading of Matt 15:21-28 as the story of each soul’s progress towards God and his portrayal of the Canaanite woman in particular as an evolving soul who transcends her own irrational will to become a rational child of God. Origen’s early emphasis on this pedagogical model was grounded in a universalist soteriology, based on the equal-opportunity discipline of individual souls transcending their bodies through free will to become students of the Divine-within-themselves. As the texts in this chapter will demonstrate, the Canaanite woman remained a useful exemplum in the midst of larger debates about the relative roles of God, church, and individual. She appears as a figure of the sinful soul, the transformed convert, the needy supplicant, and the spirit seeking God. In the process, her tenacity and success, and the power implicit in both, increasingly become the occasion of a great deal of exegetical energy invested in explaining their source, object, and end.

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<sup>467</sup> Cf. Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 39-41 for more details of these textual debates. She cites, among others, Tertullian *De monogamia* 15 and *Adversus Marcionem*, 1.29; 4.11; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Ad. I. Tim.* 4.3; John Chrysostom, *Hom. 12 I. Tim.*; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.1.4, 3.3.12, 3.5.40, and Origen, *Comm. I Cor.* 7:7, 7:18-20.

<sup>468</sup> Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.

#### 4.2.1 Plumbing the Canaanite Heart. John Cassian: *Conlationes patrum in scetica eremo*

In Dialogue 5 of Cassian's *Conlationes patrum in scetica eremo*, written circa 425-6, Cassian cites a *vetus traditio*, "an old tradition," whereby human virtues are understood allegorically as *filii Israhelis, id est animae videntis deum*, "children of Israel, that is the soul which sees God." As he develops the allegory, the human heart becomes *terras Chananaeorum*, the lands of Canaan, which belong "naturally" to the human virtues, *filii Israhelis*, "the children of Israel." These Israelite virtues chase away all *insolescentibus vitiis*, "usurpers" or vices, namely, the Canaanites. But the Canaanite vices return and take back the heart with the fall of Adam. From that moment forward, the Israelite virtues may only be reestablished through a potent mix of human diligence and labor on the one hand, and the grace of God on the other (*per dei gratiam diligentia nostra ac labore*).<sup>469</sup> Thus, while the Canaanite woman is alluded to only once, late in Dialogue 13 of the *Conlationes*, the Canaanite heart is a present danger from early on in the dialogues, linked already to the controversial question of the relationship between divine grace and human spiritual striving that is the theme of Dialogue 13.

Cassian's *Conlatio 13*, the *De protectione Dei* of Abba Chaeremon, was itself a response to the considerable distress experienced by the monks under his care at Marseilles as a result of a series of arguments written by Augustine on the relationship between grace and free will, viz. *Ep. 194, De gratia et libero arbitrio liber I, De correptione et gratia liber I*, and *De praedestinatione sanctorum*. These works met with a "vigorous opposition" in Cassian's monks (as well as others to whom Augustine directly addressed his arguments)<sup>470</sup> and required,

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<sup>469</sup> John Cassian, *Conférences I* 5.24, SC 42, ed. Dom E. Pichery (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955), 214-15.

<sup>470</sup> Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (vol. 4; ed. Angelo D. Berardino; Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, Inc.), 391.

apparently, in Cassian's eyes, a measured and qualifying response regarding ascetical striving, divine grace, and predestination.<sup>471</sup>

Cassian tried, in his Dialogue 13, to mitigate some of the stress experienced by his monks and to reconcile the wisdom of the Desert Fathers, as well as his own experiences as a spiritual director, with the doctrinal and theological tenets of an increasingly institutionalized Augustinian orthodoxy. Nor was the *De protectione Dei* the only place where Cassian addressed these issues. In his *De institutis coenobiorum*, Cassian's guide to monastic life written between 420 and 426, he offered a standard doctrinal statement of the necessity of grace. In this, he was probably influenced by Chrysostom.<sup>472</sup> Likewise, in *Conlatio 3, De tribus abrenuntiationibus* of Abba Paphnutius, and in the passage cited above from *Conlatio 5, De octo vitiis principalibus* of Abba Serapion, he also offers more orthodox explanations of the subject. But in the *De Protectione Dei* of Abba Chaeremon, Cassian goes into more depth. In trying to find a *media via*, he provoked heated reproaches from Prosper d'Aquitaine in his *Contra Collatorem*, not to mention the later condemnation of "the error at Marseilles" by the Council of Orange in 529.<sup>473</sup>

The *Conlationes* reproduce teaching dialogues between Cassian, his comrade Germanus, and several of the Egyptian Desert Fathers. While his earlier *De institutis* contained some sections on the inner life, their main focus was on providing a practical guide for the conduct of

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<sup>471</sup> Pichery in John Cassian, *Conférences II*, SC 54, ed. Dom E. Pichery (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958), 149, n. 1: "Augustin contre Pèlage et ses partisans avait pris position si nettement que certains catholiques des Gaules se refusaient à le suivre.... Les esprit (surtout ceux des moines) furent suffisamment troublés par ces discussions pour que Cassien... se crût obligé d'intervenir pour éclairer les moines qui lui étaient confiés."

<sup>472</sup> Cassian, *Inst.* 5.21. Cf. Quasten, *Patrology*, 520-21.

<sup>473</sup> Pichery in Cassian, *Conférences II* (SC 54, 149, n. 1): "En 529 déjà, le Concile d'Orange condamnait l'erreur des 'Marseillais', canonisant ainsi les critiques faites contre la Conférence XIII du vivant même de son auteur, par un fougueux partisan de saint Augustin, Prosper d'Aquitaine, dans son *Contra Collatorem*."

monastic life. The *Conlationes* extend *De institutis*, delving deeper into *invisibilem interioris hominis habitum*, “the invisible dispositions of the interior man.”<sup>474</sup>

*De protectione Dei* is an extraordinary meditation on the relative roles of human effort and divine grace. Germanus and Cassian, unsettled by Chaeremon’s discussion of chastity in the prior dialogue, confront him directly with their worry that, according to his teaching, “human industry” has become irrelevant in the pursuit of virtue and righteousness. Germanus spells out his concern very clearly: *ad destructionem liberi tendit arbitrii*: “This opinion leads to the destruction of (our) freedom.”<sup>475</sup> The young men point to what seem to them to be obvious fruits of human labor. For instance, they note the apparently contradictory ability of pagans to achieve chastity without the grace of God. In response, Chaeremon offers a series of descriptions of God’s “protection” of human effort, vigor, will, and energy.

Of these, the passages that provoked the greatest anxiety in Prosper of Aquitaine and later critics of Cassian’s so-called “semi-Pelagianism” addressed the “beginnings” or origins of human virtue, chastity, or good intentions. The orthodox doctrinal need was for God to be the first and sole cause of human virtue, election, and salvation, and for human beings to be mere responsive recipients. But Cassian’s experiences were either too contradictory or too subtle to maintain this tenet in a consistent manner. He also recognized how inconsistent the treatment of this question was within the Scriptures themselves. Indeed, 13.9 is a veritable compendium of Scriptural contradiction on the topic.

In any case, what his contemporaries and critics saw as theological inconsistency may be equally deemed subtlety and balance. At 13.3, the protection and mercy of God “give strength” (*roborare*: to reinforce, make more effective) to human effort, even as God is proclaimed the

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<sup>474</sup> Cassian, *Conlat.*, *Praefatio*. (SC 42, 75.)

<sup>475</sup> Cassian, *Conlat.* 13.4 (SC 54, 151).

origin of good acts and good thoughts (*non solum actuum, verum etiam cogitationum bonarum ex deo esse principium*).<sup>476</sup> At 13.8, God “observes” (*inspexere*) nascent good will in human beings and inundates them with his light and strength (*inluminare*), inciting them (*incitare*) to pursue their salvation, bestowing growth (*tribuere incrementum*) on “the seed” which God both sows (*plantare*) and watches (*videre*) emerge from the soil through human effort: *incrementum tribuens ei quam vel ipse plantavit vel nostro conatus viderit emersisse*.

This last clause, in particular, epitomizes Cassian’s approach throughout the dialogue. His use of the *vel-vel* construction conveys connective or inclusive disjunction, in contrast to *aut-aut* constructions which convey a more exclusive either-or logic. Cassian emphasizes equally the human side of the equation – discussing human fragility, failed intentions, need – and the ever-present Divine care and protection of human beings, which he likens to a mother in a lovely extended metaphor. Thus, God-as-mother carries the child yet teaches it to walk; lets it run free, yet holds its hand tight; picks it up when it falls, or softens its fall; gives it tasks and work, yet not beyond its abilities.<sup>477</sup> The actions of divine grace and human freedom are mutually loving and affirming, simultaneous in development: *in his omnibus et gratia dei et libertas nostri declaratur*: “In these (texts), both the grace of God and our freedom are declared.”<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Cassian, *Conlat.* 13.3 (SC 54, 150-151).

<sup>477</sup> Cassian, *Conlat.* 13.14 (SC 54, 174). Cassian must have also had in mind *Hosea* 11:14: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me.... Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.”

<sup>478</sup> Cassian, *Conlat.* 13.9 (SC 54, 160). See also the passage traditionally understood to define the “semi-Pelagianism” attributed to Cassian at *Conlat.* 13.11: *Et ita sunt haec quodammodo indiscrete permixta atque confusa, ut quid ex quo pendeat inter multos magna quaestione volvatur.... Multi enim singula haec credentes ac iusto amplius adserentes variis sibi que contrariis sunt erroribus involuti*: “Grace and freedom intermix, that is to say, they are confused in a strange way, so that among many they cause a great debate.... Many attach themselves to one or the other alternative, and going beyond a balanced measure in their affirmations, take on different and contrary errors.”

The Canaanite woman figures into this dense meditation on human capacity at the point where Cassian has moved through a whole cast of Biblical exempla, including Joseph's brothers, David, Job, the centurion, and Abraham, all of whom are recipients of God's action to redeem, test, or provoke their faith and virtue. These stories demonstrate, for Cassian, the unfathomable and diverse ways that God attracts each discrete human being to salvation. Cassian's universalist reading of God's desire that all be saved<sup>479</sup> leads him to explore the multiple ways in which God brings each person to salvation, *secundum capacitatem uniuscuiusque gratiam suae largitatis impertit*: "According to the capacity of each, he bestows the grace of his generosity."<sup>480</sup> So, God provides healing for the particular ailments of all, according to their prayers. Jesus exhorts the paralytic of John 5:6 to have hope; he sounds the desires of the two blind men at Matt 20:32; he reminds Martha of the power of belief at John 11:40; and so on. The Canaanite woman's encounter and Jesus' healing of her daughter comprise one demonstration among many of how God's liberal generosity conforms itself to the varying capacities of human faith.

So it is that the Canaanite woman's argumentative struggle with Jesus has come to illustrate, in Cassian's *De protectione Dei*, the perfect complementarity of divine love and human need. No longer defiant or submissive, the Canaanite woman "cooperates" perfectly with Jesus, as do the other usual suspects, e.g., the centurion of Matt 8:13, the paralytic of Matt 9:2, the royal official of John 4:47, and Bartimaeus, the blind beggar of Mark 10:52.

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<sup>479</sup> Cf. Cassian, *Conlat.* 13.7 (SC 54, 155-157) for Cassian's collection of scriptural passages that articulate God's universalist intentions, e.g., 1 Tim 2:4; Matt 18:14; Ezek 33:11; Matt 23:37; 11:28; Rom 3:23-24; Wis 1:13.

<sup>480</sup> Cassian, *Conlat.* 13.15 (SC 54, 175).

#### 4.2.2 Isaiah of Scetis: *Logoi*

Abba Isaiah of Scetis<sup>481</sup> makes very similar use of the Canaanite woman, as one illustration, among many like her, of the diversity of human needs and the specific and perfectly-calibrated ways in which God answers those needs. The *Logoi* of Abba Isaiah are roughly contemporary to Cassian's dialogues and emerge out of the same "desert hermeneutic." The recension history of these sayings is extremely challenging, but also exciting, revealing a history of fragmentary texts that became intercultural and interlingual as each manuscript tradition borrowed and developed concepts of spiritual experience refracted through the Syriac, Coptic, and Greek languages.<sup>482</sup> The manuscripts are sometimes parallel, sometimes divergent, with no logical or organic organization, yet the stages of tradition appear to develop from an older corpus addressed to monastic colonies in the Egyptian desert into the extant Greek traditions, based on earlier Coptic and Syrian sources and compiled by at least 500.<sup>483</sup>

The Canaanite woman appears in the third section of *Logos* 13. *Logos* 13 is a particularly disjointed set of sayings, yet divisible into three discrete sections. The first section contains a collection of nine, apparently independent, sayings about developing humility and lack of malice towards others. The manuscript then launches into a discussion of the virtues in the second

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<sup>481</sup> Cf. René Draguet, ed., *Les Cinq Recensions de L'Ascéticon Syriaque D'Abba Isaïe: Introduction au problème isaïen* (CSCO 293; Louvain: Louvain Catholic University, 1968), 85-126 for his in-depth discussion of the dating, "personality," and authorship of the Isaian *Logoi* and his conclusion that the most primitive corpus should be attributed, not to Isaiah of Gaza, the 5<sup>th</sup> century monophysite monk, but to Isaiah the Elder, who flourished at Scetis at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>482</sup> In the 1968 CSCO edition of the *Logoi*, René Draguet provides several rich examples of the way in which language influences the nature and tone of spiritual concepts. He notes places in the Sayings where Copticisms are evident in Syriac and Greek recensions: e.g., he suggests that "to eat or bite one's heart" (21.2.3 and 23.10.2) correlates to *μετάνοια* in the Greek manuscripts. Likewise, the earlier Syriac manuscripts refer to "virtue" whereas later recensions influenced by Coptic sources use "good works" or "good things." Cf. Draguet, *Cinq Recensions*, 44-58.

<sup>483</sup> Draguet, *Cinq Recensions* (CSCO 293, 33).

section. The third, more directly paranetic section is focused on the practices of the “old” and “new” Man (αἱ πράξεις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ νέου καὶ τοῦ παλαιοῦ).<sup>484</sup>

The paranesis of the third section begins by announcing that it will reveal the ways of the old and new “man” of Ephesians 4:22-24,<sup>485</sup> so that those who wish to save their souls may choose to imitate one or the other. At the outset, a works orientation dominates; Matthew 25 features prominently throughout the opening paragraphs which conclude with a paraphrase of Matt 25:45: ὁ ἀγαθοποιήσας τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ, ἐμοὶ ἐποίησεν: “Anyone who has done good to those who believe in me, has done good to me.”<sup>486</sup> Up to this point, salvation seems to depend on human behavior, virtue, and free will, but the next section promptly changes register, moving into an introspective mode: Ἐρευνήσωμεν σὺν, ἀγαπητοί: “Beloved, let us examine ourselves.”<sup>487</sup> In the interest of self-examination, Isaiah refines the question he is raising, asking not what we do, but how we follow God’s commandments. The answer he offers, reminiscent of Cassian in *De protectione Dei*, is that we are obligated to obedience, but according to our abilities; the poor according to their poverty, the rich according to their wealth: γὰρ ἡμῖν πᾶσιν ἐπιτελέσαι εἷς ἕκαστος κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ, ὁ πλούσιος κατὰ τὸν πλοῦτον αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ πένης κατὰ τὴν ἀπορίαν αὐτοῦ: “For we all accomplish [his commandments], each according to his power or ability, the rich man according to his wealth and the poor man according to his lack.”<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.28 (CSCO 294, 242).

<sup>485</sup> “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (NRSV).

<sup>486</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.31 (CSCO 294, 244). Cf. Matt 25:45: ἐφ’ ὅσον οὐκ ἐποιήσατε ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε: “just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.”

<sup>487</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.32 (CSCO 294, 244).

<sup>488</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.32 (CSCO 294, 244).



Isaiah then goes on clarify that it is commitment, or choice, above all else, that God seeks in us (προαίρεσιν γὰρ ζητεῖ ὁ θεὸς παρ' ἡμῶν).<sup>489</sup>

Therefore, differentially but equally and universally, God interacts lovingly with each of us: Isaiah's list of exempla is long. God resuscitates the daughter of a chief priest. He has pity on the hemorrhaging woman, even before she knows Christ, yet heals the centurion's servant because he believes. He shows mercy to the Canaanite woman because of her shameless persistence (διὰ τὴν ἀναίδειαν αὐτῆς).<sup>490</sup> He brings Lazarus, his friend, back to life, but also the only son of the poor widow of Luke 7:11-15. He does not marginalize Mary when she anoints his feet at John 12:3-8, nor the sinful woman who anoints his feet with her tears at Luke 7:36-39.<sup>491</sup> He calls Peter and John to follow him, but also Matthew, the tax collector. He washes the feet of his disciples, including Judas. And so on. For, Isaiah repeats again, it is commitment, faith, obedience, and indiscriminate loving-kindness that God seeks. (Here, again, the verb "to seek" is used to describe God's primary relationship to human works: ἀλλὰ προαίρεσιν καὶ πίστιν ζητεῖ εἰς αὐτόν.)<sup>492</sup>

Furthermore, the fruits of human commitment and faith (keeping the commandments and loving all) produce a seal upon the soul in its exodus from the body, Αὕτη γὰρ ἐστὶ σφραγὶς τῆ ψυχῆ τῆ ἐξόδῳ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος....<sup>493</sup> Unlike Rev 7:3 where it is God and the four

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<sup>489</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.32 (CSCO 294, 245).

<sup>490</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.32 (CSCO 294, 245).

<sup>491</sup> Isaiah does not include the unnamed woman who anoints Jesus' head at Mark 14:1-3 and Matt 26:6-7.

<sup>492</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.32 (CSCO 294, 246).

<sup>493</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.32 (CSCO 294, 246): "For this will be a seal on the soul in her exodus from the body...." An allusion to Rev 7:3, this image is also reminiscent of Origen's discussion of the freedom of the will in *De Principiis* 1.11 in which he describes human hearts as like either wax or mud. The receptive, obedient, chastened heart is like wax which the sun (God's instruction) impresses, melts and softens; the proud, resistant, impenitent heart is like mud which the sun/God, again, hardens and cracks. Origen goes on to explore the interaction of God's actions on the human heart and its responses in determining the kind of mark left on the soul. [Origen, *De Principiis* 1.11 (ANF 4:311-312).] Origen's usage certainly emerges out of the more general Hellenistic topos, for instance, within Stoical theories of knowledge and perception, of the mind as like wax upon which impressions are made. For example, in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Stoics* 7.37 Zeno describes a student as being like writing tablets made of hard wax,

angels who must mark the servants of the Lord with a seal upon their foreheads, it is human commitment and faith that imprint a seal upon the human soul against the Day of Judgment. Finally, in the Syriac recensions, Isaiah ends his paranesis with the language of Eph 6:11-17 and a call to fight against the “principalities and powers of this world” and against “the Enemy.” He exhorts the struggling monks to flee and find “a place of refuge” under God’s protection. Thus, they will, in the end, be given their own blessings according to their own works.<sup>494</sup>

Once again, then, the Canaanite woman serves as an illustration of the delicate balance and dangerous stakes at the intersection of human effort and divine love. The challenges and goals of ascetical striving permeate, indeed dominate, Isaiah’s approach to these questions. There is nothing comparable in his *Logos* 13 to Cassian’s apologetic concessions regarding God’s exclusive, or even primary, role in the achievement of human salvation. In Isaiah, God provides protection and is described repeatedly as seeking and responding lovingly to an irreducibly diverse array of human efforts, conferring his love and redemption upon each according to his ability and need.

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which are hard to write on but which retain what is written; at 7:45 Diogenes Laertius explains, “A presentation is an impression in a soul, the name being appropriately transferred from the imprints in wax made by a seal-ring.” In Plato, *Theaetetus* 194E Socrates explains: “The origin of truth and error is as follows:—When the wax in the soul of any one is deep and abundant, and smooth and perfectly tempered, then the impressions which pass through the senses and sink into the heart of the soul, as Homer says in a parable, meaning to indicate the likeness of the soul to wax; these, I say, being pure and clear, and having a sufficient depth of wax, are also lasting, and minds, such as these, easily learn and easily retain, and are not liable to confusion, but have true thoughts, for they have plenty of room, and having clear impressions of things, as we term them, quickly distribute them into their proper places on the block. And such men are called wise.” In Sextus Empiricus’ *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.372 he argues that “presentations” (or perceptions) are *not* like wax impressions because new ones would obscure previous ones and this would preclude the presence of memories. In his Commentary on the Gospel of John (4.2 and 3), Cyril of Alexandria uses the wax image to describe human-divine synergy: “Just as if someone were to entwine two pieces of wax together and melt them with a fire, so that both are made one, so too through participation in the body of Christ and in his precious blood, he is united in us and we too in him. In no other way can that corruptible nature be vivified except by being united bodily to the body of him who is, by his very nature, life: that is, the only begotten.” Isaiah’s text, in contrast, portrays human spiritual striving as imprinting *on itself* a mark of election. Origin, more in line with the Platonic passage, emphasizes willed receptivity or resistance on the part of the human soul to God’s imprinting of knowledge or Christ’s conferring of life.

<sup>494</sup> Isaiah, *Logos* 13.34 (CSCO 294, 247).

### 4.2.3 Barsanuphius of Gaza: Letter to a Wounded Monk

Similar concerns and conclusions are found in the 6<sup>th</sup> century letters of the two “Old Men” of Gaza, Barsanuphius and John the Prophet. Though solitaries, these two together created an expansive tradition of spiritual guidance through the letters that they wrote, advising not only aspiring anchorites and cenobites at the cluster of monasteries concentrated around Gaza, but also laymen, and even their own abbot, Seridon. They were located at Migdal Thavada, just a few miles south of Gaza, where Dorotheus (of Gaza) also came and settled.<sup>495</sup> Indeed, the collection of letters between Dorotheus and Barsanuphius provide a good example of the intensity of influence and the reach that Barsanuphius exercised through the more than 800 letters he wrote to Christians of all types in and around Gaza. Peter Brown selects from Dorotheus’ letters instances of his kissing the closed door of Barsanuphius’ cell, being cured of depression by “a tap on the chest from the Old Man in a dream,” and feeling the weight of his painful thoughts lifted from him, just through the act of writing to Barsanuphius.<sup>496</sup>

The Canaanite woman appears in *Letter 388*, written by Barsanuphius in response to questions from a monk with a “wounded soul” about “how to save himself.” This monk asks many questions within a series of letters addressed to both Barsanuphius and John<sup>497</sup> about how to quiet his willfulness; how to avoid pride of intellect; how to apply the sayings of the Fathers to himself, his “disease,” and his passions; whether illness, temptation, and spiritual tests have a

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<sup>495</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, 233.

<sup>496</sup> Brown, *Body and Society*, 233. Brown cites these details from Dorotheos, *Instructions* 4.56, 5.67, and 1.25 from *Dorothee de Gaza: Oeuvres spirituelles*, SC 92, ed. Lucien Regnault and Jacques de Préville (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963), 117, 128, 91-92.

<sup>497</sup> These include letters 379-389 in the SC collection. The attribution of these letters to the “wounded” monk works, with the possible exception of *Letter 382*, which appears to have been written by a layperson, though it fits in the sequence in terms of content.

purpose; and finally whether the faith of some may save others as in the case, for instance, of the paralytic, the centurion's servant, and the Canaanite woman's daughter.<sup>498</sup>

The reference to Matt 15:21-28, then, comes near the end of the series of letters from the “wounded” monk and represents a kind of insistent dissatisfaction with the answer he has received in the preceding letter. In the prior letter, he had questioned whether someone who has no faith, like the paralytic, can be saved by those who do have faith and Barsanuphius had responded that the paralytic did have faith and it was evident in his allowing his friends to lift him up and lower him through the roof. Barsanuphius then had concluded that nothing would avail in the end if a man had no faith. Therefore, he had warned, do not use the power of the faith of others as a pretext to place your burden on another.

In response, in *Letter 388*, the monk raises the ante. He will not be directed away from his question (perhaps displaying some of the willfulness he had earlier asked how to moderate). He instead uses the examples of the centurion's servant and the Canaanite woman's daughter—neither of whom was in his or her right senses, therefore neither was capable of participating in their own healing—to force his question about the effects of physical or spiritual incapacity and “cooperation” or “synergy” (ἡ συνέργεια) in healing and salvation. Further, he cites Matt 18:18 and John 19:23 to question directly Barsanuphius' prior answer:

Ἐν τίνι οὖν ἐνταῦθα ἡ συνέργεια; Καὶ ὁ Κύριος δὲ λέγει τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις « Ὅ  
ἀν λύσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ», καὶ Ἰησοῦς ἀν ἀφήτε τὰς  
ἀμαρτίας ἀφέωνται.» Οὐκ εἶπεν «Ἐὰν συνεργήσωσι.» Σαφήνισον οὖν μοι  
ταῦτα παρακαλῶ.<sup>499</sup>

Of what does synergy consist in these cases? For the Lord said to the Apostles: ‘Whatever you loose on the earth will be loosed in heaven’ and

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<sup>498</sup> Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, *Correspondence Aux Cénobites* 379-388, SC 450, eds. François Neyt, Paula de Angelis-Noah, and Lucien Regnault (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2000), 412-440.

<sup>499</sup> Barsanuphius, *Correspondence* 388 (SC 450, 438).

‘Whomever you forgive their sins, they are forgiven.’ He did not say, ‘if they cooperate.’ Please explain these things to me.

Barsanuphius begins with a warning that it is crucial to understand the exact mechanics of human cooperation in God’s healing salvation. Affliction or distress will come to those who do not know about them: θλιψίς ἐστι τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσι τὰ πράγματα πῶς ἐστιν. He then concedes that the centurion’s servant and the Canaanite woman’s daughter were unable to participate in their own healing and explains that at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus healed gratuitously, without the cooperation of those he healed, in order that people would believe in his coming. Through this practice, Barsanuphius argues, Jesus also fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4, Οὗτος τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβε καὶ τὰς νόσους ἡμῶν ἐβάσταξεν.<sup>500</sup> Furthermore, Barsanuphius presents the free grace implied by Isaiah 53:4 (and John 1:29, “Behold the lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world,” which he also works in) as universally given (Μάθε τί λέγει «Ὁλου τοῦ κόσμου....»<sup>501</sup>). Jesus’ gratuitous healing is available to all. It is only those who actively reject Jesus who are denied healing.

With this segue, Barsanuphius returns to the monk’s question about the faithful saving the unfaithful. Citing Paul’s teachings about unbelieving husbands and wives at 1 Cor 7:15, Barsanuphius ignores verse 14 which indicates that an unbelieving partner can be made holy by a believing partner and instead focuses entirely on verse 15 which declares that any unbelieving partner who wishes to separate himself is rightly separated, and not redeemed. Based on this rather selective Scriptural basis, Barsanuphius then reinserts human cooperation back into the mechanics of the Apostles’ healing powers (which the monk had earlier cited, correctly!, as not mentioning any cooperation on the part of those healed). Via 1 Cor 7:15, Barsanuphius suggests

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<sup>500</sup> Barsanuphius, *Correspondence* 388 (SC 450, 440): “This man took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.”

<sup>501</sup> Barsanuphius, *Correspondence* 388 (SC 450, 440): “Notice that he (John) says, ‘the entire world.’”

that the cooperation of those who were healed by the Apostles was in fact necessary to, and therefore implicit in, the success of the Apostles' healings. He seals this logic of mutuality-in-healing by citing James' exhortation at 5:16: Πολλὰ ισχύει δέησις δικαίου ἐνεργουμένη, "The prayer of the righteous has power, accomplishing much"<sup>502</sup> which, in its entirety, creates a portrait not of powerful individuals healing others, but of communal, mutual support, prayer, and healing. The entire verse from *James* reads, "Therefore confess your sins to each other, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (*NRSV*). Here again, then, as in the thought of Cassian and Isaiah, Barsanuphius maintains a careful synergy between divine and human action in human healing and salvation, balancing it somewhat more precariously than was evident in Cassian and Isaiah between the ideals of Isaiah 53:4 and James 5:16.

The desert texts considered here, then, represent early explorations of the relative importance of human and divine action in salvation, a question that becomes something of a fixation in the readings from the medieval period to be discussed below, as well as in Protestant interpretations of the Canaanite woman covered in Chapter 5. While the ascetic Christian soul is perceived in the desert texts as an active participant in its ascent toward God, it is never portrayed as striving alone. Human spiritual effort is not understood as distinct from divine grace and aid. Indeed, divine aid is not only ever-present, but takes diverse forms, acting upon and transforming the human soul, creating a kind of ontological continuum. Origen describes guardian angels of the Lord sent to guide and support all human beings in their spiritual struggles, ascent and transformation.<sup>503</sup> Evagrius, in his *Chapters on Prayer*, describes the tears

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<sup>502</sup> Barsanuphius, *Correspondence* 388 (*SC* 450, 440).

<sup>503</sup> In his *Homily 35* on Luke 12:57-59, Origen cites *The Shepherd of Hermas*, other texts, and Matt 18:10 to establish the existence of guardian angels and their attachment to particular human beings: *Hominibus duos adesse*

of the praying ascetic as a grace given by God;<sup>504</sup> he describes angels walking with and enlightening ascetics, urging them on to prayer, “joining in the fight on our behalf.”<sup>505</sup> Pseudo-Macarius’ writings describe human communion with God as a series of mediations, celestial and ecclesiastical.<sup>506</sup> Likewise, the texts in this section describe continual negotiation, mutuality, and exchange between God and human souls within human spiritual progress and ultimately salvation.

Elizabeth Clark has argued that the tensions and anxieties inherent within discussions of human-divine cooperation reflect a sustained set of preoccupations, albeit within changing theological and cultural contexts, beginning with Origen’s original intentions in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to argue against Valentinian and Gnostic doctrines of election and hatred of the world. These were then refracted through 4<sup>th</sup> century debates that linked the doctrine of God and Trinitarian definition to questions of ascetical practices and finally resurfaced again in the 5<sup>th</sup> century arguments about grace and free will between Pelagius and Augustine.<sup>507</sup> If and how Matt 15:21-

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*angelos: malam, qui ad perversa exhortatur, et bonum qui ad optima quaeque persuadet. Scribitur alibi, quod assistant homini, sive in bonam, sive in malam partem duplices angeli. De bonis etiam Salvator meminit, dicens, “Angeli eorum semper vident faciem Patris mei qui in coelis est”* (Origen, *In Lucam Homilia 35* (PG 13, 1889)): “Two angels are present to men: a wicked angel who exhorts him to wrongdoing, and a good angel who urges him to do everything good. Elsewhere, too, it is written that two angels attend a man, whether for good or evil. The Savior, too, mentions the good angels, saying, ‘Their [the humble ones’] angels always see the face of my Father, who is in heaven.’” And again in *In Numeros Homilia 20* on Numbers 25:1-10, he writes, *Adest unicuique nostrum, etiam minimis qui sunt in Ecclesia Dei, angelus bonus, angelus Domini qui regat, qui moneat, qui gubernat, qui pro actibus nostris corrigendis, et mirationibus exposcendis, quotidie videat faciem Patris qui in coelis est: sicut Dominus disgnat in Evangeliiis* (PG 12, 733): “There is present to each one of us, even to the ‘least’ who are in the Church of God, a good angel, an angel of the Lord, who guides, warns and governs, who for the sake of correcting our actions and imploring mercy, daily ‘sees the face of the Father who is in heaven,’ as the Lord indicates in the Gospels.”

<sup>504</sup> Evagrius Ponticus, *Chapters on Prayer 7-8, The Praktikos Chapters on Prayer*, Cistercian Studies Series, 4, ed. John Eudes Bamberger (Spencer, Mass: Cistercian Publishers, 1970), 56. Cf. also Nilus, *De Oratione 7-8* (PG 79:1169): ἵνα μὴ πλέον παροργίσης τὸν δεδοκότα τὴν χάριν.

<sup>505</sup> Evagrius, *Praktikos* 80-81 in Bamberger, *Praktikos Chapters on Prayer*, 68-69. Also, PG 79:1185: ὅτι περ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀγωνίζονται τοσοῦτον.

<sup>506</sup> Pseudo-Macarius wrote on “the God-Man relationship as a scale of mediations—the ‘celestial’ and ‘ecclesiastical’ hierarchies—a Christian version of the Neoplatonic world system.”

<sup>507</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3-10.

28 figured into discussions of human agency and God's grace within medieval monasticism is the focus of the next section.

### 4.3 MEDIEVAL MONASTICS AND MYSTICS: HUMAN SINNER, HOLY COMMUNITY, AND SPIRITUAL ASCENT

#### 4.3.1 Anon: *Rule of the Master* within Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum*

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the monastic Benedict of Aniane<sup>508</sup> (a.k.a. "the second Benedict") included the anonymous *Rule of the Master* within his *Codex Regularum*, as he worked to compile as many different monastic rules as he could find into one document. Benedict's probable source of the anonymous *Rule of the Master* was an earlier 6<sup>th</sup> century manuscript that itself contained, along with the *Rule of the Master*, a collection of monastic rules, including a rule composed out of extracts from Basil, Cassian, Pachomius, Jerome, and Novatian and the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Ordo Monasterii* and *Regula Tertia* attributed to Augustine.<sup>509</sup>

Benedict reproduced this mix of eastern and western rules in his *Codex Regularum*, and in his later *Concordia Regularum*. For instance, in the former, he included the small *Regula IV Patrum* which was comprised of discourses on monastic life attributed to the desert Fathers,

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<sup>508</sup> Benedict was the aristocratic son of a Visigoth family. He fought in Charlemagne's Italian campaign, circa 773, and was advisor at the Frankish court to Louis the Pious. However, he retired from this active political life about 780 and entered into a life of rigorous ascetical discipline, founding a small monastery on his family estate, near the river Aniane in Languedoc. Initially, he based monastic life there on eastern ascetical principles, like those that appear in the *Codex Regularum*. Later, he became a leader in the reform of Benedictine monasticism in France and Italy.

<sup>509</sup> Marilyn Dunn, "Mastering Benedict: Monastic Rules and Their Authors in the Early Medieval West," *The English Historical Review* 105:416 (July 1990): 567-594 (571). This is the Par. lat. 12634 manuscript.



Abbas Serapion, Macarius, and two others. In some manuscripts, the *Rule of the Master* was associated even more closely with these older eastern rules, included within the shared *Explicit, Regula Patrum*. Indeed, in *Regula* manuscripts dating up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, compilations of rules, some on the order of *florilegia*, abound.<sup>510</sup> Much of traditional scholarship on the compilation and dissemination of monastic rules in the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in France and Italy is devoted to establishing priority, influence, and dates for the various rules, not to mention determining through linguistic and other literary analyses the degree to which discrete rules are in themselves *regula mixta*. In an era of such “combined” *regulae*, this approach is vexed, to say the least.

For the purposes of this chapter, the *Rule of the Master*, written in the early decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, probably in Northern Italy, yet linked in the manuscript to eastern desert disciplines,<sup>511</sup> provides a good segue between the early desert ascetics considered in the section above and the Western monastics to whom we now turn. Furthermore, its reproduction in the 9<sup>th</sup> century *Codex Regularum* mirrors another historical transition in Christian “religious life,” very aptly embodied in the series of conversions that the texts’ compiler, Benedict himself, underwent. Benedict’s spiritual development and his changing spiritual convictions culminated in his definitive role in monastic reform, both at the councils of Aachen/Aix-la-Chapelle (816-818) and in his subsequent oversight, at the behest of Louis the Pious, of all the monasteries in Aquitaine and Frankland. His spiritual journey epitomizes the concurrent move away from the austerities and rigor of the eastern desert ascetical guides within his monastic culture, a change

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<sup>510</sup> Anon., *La Règle du Maître I*, SC 105, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 125-145.

<sup>511</sup> Dunn, “Mastering Benedict,” 585. Dunn concludes: “Internal evidence, therefore, suggests that in RM we are dealing with a rule possibly of French origin, but more probably composed in northern Italy, perhaps in an area with strong connections with France. The conclusions of those who have examined the two earliest MSS of RM support the thesis of Italian origin.”

that is also already evident in the tone and emphases of the *Rule of the Master* and its use of Matt 15:21-28.

Benedict of Aniane was instrumental in the adoption of the Rule of St. Benedict above all others, and thereby the reform, codification, and standardization of Benedictine monasticism in France and Italy,<sup>512</sup> and so his inclusion of the earlier, more “eastern” texts in his *Codex* and *Concordia* is interesting. This may in part be due to the fact that Benedict’s evolution came in stages.<sup>513</sup> First came the move from aristocratic courtier to churlish monk who repudiated the leniency of the rule of St. Benedict while practicing rigorous fasting, weeping, and praying and refusing to bathe. Benedict also upbraided other monks for their weaknesses. Next came his establishment of his own monastic settlement on his father’s estate at Aniane, again practicing an austere eastern asceticism with a few hand-picked brothers. But the settlement grew in numbers, reputation for piety, and abundant donations. Benedict began to erect more elaborate and ornate buildings while at the same time relaxing the ascetical demands of life at his settlement. He embraced the Rule of St. Benedict and began to study it and discuss it with other monastics, traveling from monastery to monastery to learn and record nuances in its practice. Finally, Benedict took on the role of reformer and counselor to the king, an advocate at councils for unanimous adoption of the Benedictine rule (*una regula-una consuetudo*), and head of a whole chain of monastic communities “in Gothia, but also in other parts of the Carolingian world.”<sup>514</sup>

Given this evolution in spiritual ideals and practices, embodied in the development of one man, but also the greater monastic community in which he became a leader, the collection of eastern and western rules that he transmitted to the Frankish world in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century takes

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<sup>512</sup> Allen Cabaniss, *Benedict of Aniane: The Emperor’s Monk, Ardo’s Life* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2008), 33-35.

<sup>513</sup> Cf. Cabaniss, *Benedict*, 30-33, for a more detailed overview of the “conversions” described here.

<sup>514</sup> Cabaniss, *Benedict*, 33.

on the function of a kind of intercultural nexus. In this context, it is interesting that the use of Matt 15:21-28 in the *Rule of the Master* in Benedict's manuscript is less a litmus for the role of human potential or effort, as in the desert texts discussed above, and more an occasion to explore the sinful soul and the communal and divine mechanics of its redemption.

The *Rule of the Master* is formally eclectic, including divine offices and liturgy, pedagogical question-and-answer sections, *sententiae*, and direct discourse passages. Within the sheer abundance of the rule (three times the length of St. Benedict's rule, covering every aspect of monastic life together), amid guidance on many theological, spiritual and material questions,<sup>515</sup> the single allusion to Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman appears in section 14, part of a series of questions and answers about disciplinary sanctions, excommunication, penance and confession. The questions in these sections are voiced by disciples (*interrogatio discipulorum*); the answers come from "the Lord," through "the Master" (*Respondit Dominus per magistrum*).

This section begins by defining carefully exactly what constitutes grounds for excommunication. The discussion is based on Matt 18:15-17<sup>516</sup> and advises permitting multiple opportunities for any sinning monk to reform through private and small-group interventions. It then goes on to script, word for word, the abbot's public denunciation, reprimand and excommunication of any monk who continues unrepentant. Within this public indictment, the accused is compared to Judas, thieves, adulterers, and liars, for whom the fires of Gehenna

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<sup>515</sup> Sections and topics in this lengthy rule include expositions on the Word of God, the narrow way, the sinful nature of man, the need for monastic hierarchy, the role of the abbot, obedience, silence, and humility, the divine offices, and liturgy, not to mention the intricate details of material life, sleep, waking, gardens, the sick, hospitality, clothing, and more.

<sup>516</sup> "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (NRSV)

await.<sup>517</sup> Once the denunciation and excommunication are complete, the monk is banished from the oratory, cannot share the common table at meals, is not spoken to, and works alone. He is given little if anything to eat. If the error or sin is slight, lesser punishments are possible but, in any case, any brother taking pity on one who has been excommunicated will suffer the same consequences. If the excommunicated monk does not show contrition after three days, the abbot may beat him to the point of drawing blood and/or may expel him from the monastery entirely.<sup>518</sup>

The allusion to Matt 15:21-28 appears immediately following this inventory of sinful offenses and punishments. It is part of the delineation of how the excommunicated may do penance and gain access back into the community of the faithful. In a now familiar topos, the exclusivity logion appears as one of a litany of scriptures that lift up “lost sheep” and/or the “sick” as those for whom Jesus especially came. Here, though, these passages appear within a dramatic staging of public confession and penance. The repentant excommunicated monk prostrates himself before the entire community in the oratory at the foot of the altar, crying out, in tears,

*Peccavi et peccatum meum ego agnosco. Erravi, emendare polliceor, iam non peccabo de cetero. Rogate pro me, sanctae congregationes, a quibus per meam negligentiam et diaboli suasionem separari mervi. Rogate pro me, mei quondam praepositi. Ignosce mihi, pastor bone et pie abbas...*<sup>519</sup>

I have sinned and I recognize my sin. I have gone astray, and I promise to make amends, I will not sin anymore. Pray for me, holy assemblies, from whom, through my negligence and the devil’s persuasions, I deserve to be separated. Pray for me, you, my priors. Forgive me, oh good shepherd and devout abbot...

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<sup>517</sup> Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 13:9-40 (SC 105, 36-40).

<sup>518</sup> Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 13:41-75 (SC 105, 40-48).

<sup>519</sup> Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 14:3-7 (SC 105, 48, 50).

The sinner then goes on to compare himself to the one lost sheep of Luke 15.4-5 whom the good shepherd carries home on his shoulders; to the sick and the sinners of Matt 9:12-13 whom Jesus came to heal and call; and finally to the lost sheep of Israel of the exclusivity logion. Occupying not the outsider position of the Canaanite woman, but the bad-faith position of those who rejected Jesus from within his own community, the penitent begs the abbot and priors to imitate Jesus, to minister to his illness and take him back. In this instance, the abbot stands in for Jesus and Matt 15:21-28 takes a step back in time, to give the lost sheep of Israel, now understood as sinning Christian monks, a second chance:

*...dicente ipso Domino: "Non veni, nisi propter oves perditas Israël," et "non est opus sanis medicus, sed his qui male habent." Imitare pium magistrum apostolorum, cuius vices per doctrinam agis in monasterio, quia ipse post prophetas et apostolos posuit et vos pastores et disciplinae doctores... Quod peccavi agnosco, quod emendem, credo, quia per tuam monitionem invenio.<sup>520</sup>*

... the Lord himself said: 'I came only for the lost sheep of Israel,' and 'It is not the healthy who have need of a physician, but the sick.' Imitate the good master of the apostles, whose place you have taken in the monastery according to doctrine, since like the prophets and the apostles, he instituted you also as shepherds and doctors... I have sinned, I recognize this, which I will amend, I believe, because I find the means through your instructions.

Two shifts, then, are striking in this use of the exclusivity logion; both suggest different understandings of the sinful soul and its community. First, the lost sheep of Israel do not represent a group outside the Christian community here, but rather those within the Church who require correction. This is a far cry from the very cleanly-drawn lines of Tertullian's group boundary-making between Jews (the original entitled lost sheep), "orthodox" Christians, Gnostics, and Marcionites. Tertullian was excoriating Christians whom he deemed heretical, not disciplining them from within the fold. Neither is it consistent with Origen's vision of the lost

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<sup>520</sup>Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 14:11-19 (SC 105, 50).

sheep as elite, intelligent, clear-visioned, penetrating souls to whom Christ was sent. It comes closest perhaps to the “lesson trope” in the readings of Matt 15:24 described in chapter 3 (e.g. Epiphanius Latinus and Hugh Martin) that interpret Jesus’ pronouncement as a direct commentary on the “bad” Jews and their rejection of his intentions for them, but now as a plea to help and instruct them, as the excommunicated. In any case, the sense of sinfulness, error and betrayal of Jesus is not externalized here. It is an internal problem requiring group intervention.

Secondly, in relation to the desert ascetical guides discussed above, there is a conspicuous contrast between the ascetic as spiritual athlete battling demons and, in utter isolation, ceaselessly praying himself into a state of grace with God and the shamed and penitent monk who, in a public ritual of contrition and complete surrender to monastic hierarchy and discipline, commits himself to absolute institutional obedience.

Looking at such a text, it is easier to understand why the French intellectual historian Michel Foucault theorized that the mechanisms for instilling exemplary Christian conduct and identity in the West—what he referred to as “Christian technologies of the Self”—were based on rituals of confession, self-renunciation and compliance more so than their classical counterparts.

Displaying an interest in penitential practices that preceded the 12<sup>th</sup> century institution of auricular confession, Foucault saw in the collective rite of public confession and contrition a means of “governing the living,” one that was categorically different than the examination of conscience and “care of the self” of the Platonists, Epicureans, and Stoics that he had studied. In *The Care of the Self*, he quoted, among others, Apuleius to epitomize the classical notion of the

care of the self: “to perfect one’s own soul with the help of reason.”<sup>521</sup> Confessional technologies of the self within Christianity, on the other hand, he described as:

unconditional obedience, uninterrupted examination and exhaustive confession...this expression does not have as its end the establishing of sovereign mastery of oneself by oneself; what is expected, on the contrary, is humility and mortification, detachment with respect to oneself and the establishing of a relationship with oneself which tends towards the destruction of the form of the self.<sup>522</sup>

This is a quite a sweeping distinction, however helpful it may have been to Foucault in describing the tone and assumptions of individual passages in texts like the *Didascalia* and Cassian’s *Conlationes*. Just within the small sampling of texts in this chapter a more nuanced ethos is apparent. For instance, obedience was of the first order within the monastic settlements of Migdal Thavada; indeed, it permeated the entirety of monastic life there, but this was most powerfully true because it was modeled by the abbot Seridon himself, who humbled himself in continual obedience to two old monks, Barsanuphius and John.<sup>523</sup> For another example, in his introduction to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, Adalbert Vogüé maps the stages of monastic development based on organizational evolution, specifically the codifying of hierarchical structures and the authoritative roles, duties, and qualities of abbots, priors, etc. Yet, Vogüé contends, the hierarchical stipulations in the *Rule of St. Benedict* result in a “much greater number of brethren invested with a personal responsibility.”<sup>524</sup> When one considers the array of work obligations taken on by monks and nuns within their monastic communities, as reflected in

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<sup>521</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality*, transl. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1988), 48.

<sup>522</sup> Michel Foucault, from “Du gouvernement des vivants,” *Résumé des cours 1970-1982* (Julliard, Paris, 1989), 123-9; repr., Jeremy R. Carrette, ed., *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, Inc., 1999), 157.

<sup>523</sup> Neyt and Angelis-Noah in Barsanuphius, *Correspondance* (SC 450, 44-45).

<sup>524</sup> Dunn, “Mastering Benedict,” 575.

these rules, it becomes more interesting to consider questions of power and agency not just in terms of hierarchy but in terms of labor and service:

Caesarius of Arles' *Rule for Nuns*, completed in 534, lists an abbess, prioress, *formaria*, *primiceria*, keeper of the wine-cellar, doorkeeper, keeper of the wool which the nuns were to spin, and mistress of the communal wardrobe. Both *Rule of St. Benedict* and *Rule of the Master* appoint cellarers, guardians of monastic property (tools, clothing etc.), weekly kitchen-servers, weekly readers for the refectory and door keepers.<sup>525</sup>

With these historical details and the *Rule of the Master* in mind, Foucault's sweeping reading of the disciplined monk is usefully tempered by the use of Matt 15:21-28 in our text. The sinful soul that we find linked to Matt 15:21-28 in the *Rule of the Master* is not an isolated alien, at the borders of her own homeland, submitting to harsh treatment, confessing unworthiness, and enduring subjugation like the Canaanite woman. Instead, he is a transgressing member of a favored group, that is, a communal self, subject to the authority of the abbot, submitting anew to the mutual obligations of community life, and understood to be in real and desperate need of regulation and mediation in his struggle against his own worst actions.

The use of Matt 15:21-28 to dramatize the sinful soul's need for mediation continues to be evident in several 12<sup>th</sup> century sermons to which we turn next. With this shift, the gospel passage sometimes ceases to be about the direct negotiation between the human soul and God that preoccupies many earlier readings of the Canaanite woman and instead elicits teachings about a variety of intermediate mechanisms of correction, regulation, and intercession.

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<sup>525</sup> Dunn, "Mastering Benedict," 575.



#### 4.3.2 Bernard of Clairvaux: *Sermons 22 and 66*

In the case of the critical figure of Bernard of Clairvaux and his use of Matt 15:21-28 in two of his 86 sermons on the *Song of Songs*, however, both of these emphases remain in play. Of the two that refer to the Canaanite woman passage, *Sermon 22* addresses the direct relationship of the soul to Jesus while *Sermon 66* is fiercely invested in the Church's expulsion of its own wayward souls.<sup>526</sup>

Bernard's *Sermones Super Cantica Canticorum* were written between 1135 and his death in 1153. Together they form an extended exegesis of the first few verses of the *Song of Songs*. Bernard's allegorical interpretation famously redefines the eroticism of the Old Testament poem as spiritual longing and ecstasy. The Bride becomes the human soul thirsting for God (Sermon 7:2) or sometimes the Church betrothed and devoted to Christ (Sermon 21), and the Bridegroom represents Jesus or sometimes God. This allegorical reading aligns seamlessly with interpretations of Matt 15:21-28 as the direct and dramatic encounter and struggle between the human soul and God. This is certainly the case in *Sermon 22* and its use of the Canaanite woman. At the same time, *Sermons 65* and *66* are more topical. Written in response to a letter from Éverwin of Steinfeld who asked Bernard to refute the heresy of the Cathars at Cologne,<sup>527</sup> these

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<sup>526</sup> N.B. Bernard does quote Matt 15:27 in *Sermon 67* on the love of the Church for Jesus, symbolized in the Bride's song of love for her husband. At 67:5, Bernard thanks God that he has received even the smallest notion of his goodness and mercy and compares himself and those within the church to the dogs eating crumbs under the rich man's table. But this citation is neither developed nor particularly original, and so will not be discussed here. It signals a conventional expression of *humilitas* and not much more.

<sup>527</sup> Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 20. Also cf. Verdeyen and Fassetta in Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons Sur le Cantique I* SC 414, eds. Paul Verdeyen and Raffaele Fassetta (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2006), 28-29 where Évervin's letter, including citation of Psalm 68:30, are quoted: "I pray you, holy Father, that your vigilance be awakened against these evil men who are so diverse; direct your pen against the 'beasts of reeds.'"

sermons are intent upon denouncing, condemning and eliminating the Cathars, perceived sinners, from the Christian community.

The first use of Matt 15:21-28 in the *Sermones Super Cantica Canticorum* occurs in *Sermon 22*, a text awash in the universal love of God for all creatures. Indeed, Bernard repeatedly refers to the manifold ways in which God brings countless diverse souls to salvation.<sup>528</sup> This sermon comes on the heels of *Sermon 21*, which moves through a discussion of the difficulty of imitation of Christ to a disclaimer about the limits of human effort and an acknowledgement that the mercy of Christ is the force behind any and all spiritual progress:

*Me, inquit, o Sponse, corripe, me exerce, me tenta, me trahe post te...  
Curremus, curremus, sed in odore unguentorum tuorum, non in nostrorum  
fiducia meritorum; nec in magnitudine virium nostrarum currere nos  
confidimus, sed in multitudine miserationum tuarum.*<sup>529</sup>

Oh husband, she says, correct me, train me, prove me, lead me in your footsteps... Let's run, let's run, but in the aroma of your perfumes, not trusting in our merits; We do not put our confidence in the greatness of our power, but in the abundance of your mercies.

Here, the human soul, perhaps speaking for all human souls in its switch to first personal plural, concedes its absolute need for Jesus' guidance and testing. Jesus' mediatory power is essential; indeed, he is described just a few lines later as a giant and mighty, *gigas et potens*. *Sermon 22* continues this theme, delineating the various mechanisms of divine help and mercy through the image of Christ's "perfumes," which are described as pungent rivers of wisdom, justice, sanctification, and redemption. This quadruple unction brings light to the blind, frees the

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<sup>528</sup> Cf. Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermones Super Cantica Canticorum* 22:1, Sancti Bernardi Opera, vol. 1, eds. J. Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957), 130, where, citing Psalms 18:7 and 144:9, Bernard writes: '*non sit qui se abscondat a calore eius.*' *Sed licet 'suavis Dominus universis....'* ("No one escapes his warmth. But, the Lord is gentle to all...") Here again is the theme of God's perfectly-tailored response to the diverse needs of human individuals, a theme also apparent eight paragraphs later, at 22:9, reproduced below.

<sup>529</sup> Bernard, *Sermones I* 21:11, 128.

captive, provides a way of life to the lost and wandering, and reconciles the guilty. Thus, Jesus draws all to himself. Who would not run to one who delivers from error and does not count sins?

It is at this point that the Canaanite woman appears in a long list of those sinners whom Jesus does not reject:

*Currimus post te, Domine Iesu, audientes quod non spernas pauperem, peccatorem non horreas. Non horruisti latronem confitentem, non lacrimantem peccatricem, non Chananaeam supplicantem, non deprehensam in adulterio, non sedentem in teloneo, non supplicantem publicanum, non negantem discipulum, non persecutorem discipulorum, non ipsos crucifixoos tuos.*<sup>530</sup>

We run after you, Lord Jesus, having heard that you do not despise the poor, nor recoil from the sinner. You did not shun the confessing thief, nor the crying sinful woman, nor the pleading Canaanite woman, nor the woman surprised in adultery, nor the man seated at the tax booth, nor the begging publican, nor the disciple who denied you, nor those persecuting the disciples, nor even those who crucified you.

And so, too, these diverse examples bespeak the diverse paths by which human souls find their way to salvation through Jesus' "perfumes" or saving graces:

*Alios vehementius studiis flagrare sapientiae, alios magis ad paenitentiam spe indulgentiae animari, alios amplius ad virtutum exercitium vitae et conversationis eius provocari exemplo, alios ad pietatem passionis memoria plus accendi.*<sup>531</sup>

Some are very much on fire for the study of wisdom; others are more moved to penitence in the hope of a reviving pardon; still others are provoked to the exercise of virtues through the example of the life and teachings of Jesus; others are led more to piety through the memory of his passion.

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<sup>530</sup> Bernard, *Sermones I* 22:8, 134.

<sup>531</sup> Bernard, *Sermones I* 22:9, 135.

Thus, *Sermon 22* unequivocally moves from the human limitations of *Sermon 21* to the all-encompassing, all-redeeming power and love of Jesus that free human beings from the prison of ignorance, bring in the lost, and reconcile the alienated sinner.<sup>532</sup>

The contrast between Bernard's use of the Canaanite woman as an example of just how bad a sinner Jesus's love can encompass—that is, the breadth of his redeeming power—and his use of her in *Sermon 66* to argue that the power of maternal love justifies the practice of infant baptism, demonstrates once again the remarkable range of meanings assigned to this gospel character, even within the work of one author and one manuscript. Bernard wrote *Sermons 65* and *66* after the trial and burning of Cathar leaders at Cologne in 1143. These sermons constitute intense attacks on the Cathars' dualism, stringent asceticism, denial of the Church's sacraments of baptism and marriage, and critique of the priesthood and Church hierarchy.<sup>533</sup> Éverwin, who wrote to Bernard asking that he denounce the Cathar movement publicly, had witnessed the trial in Cologne and described how “two of their leaders...a bishop and his assistant, resisted all arguments for orthodoxy and were eventually seized by the crowd and burnt out of hand, bearing ‘the agony of the fire not only with patience but even with joy.’”<sup>534</sup>

In *Sermon 65*, under the guise of explicating Cant 2:15, “Catch us the little foxes,” Bernard impresses upon his congregation the great danger of maverick beliefs *within* the

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<sup>532</sup> Bernard, *Sermones I* 22:8, 134.

<sup>533</sup> Francis E. Peters, *The Monotheists: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conflict and Competition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 175. Peters describes the Cathars as follows: “The Cathars were a two-tier community constituted by the ordinary believers and a much smaller group of the Elect who could embrace the full rigors of this dualist-inspired asceticism....” He also offers a summary of Cathar doctrines and practices, “written in 1250 for the benefit of the Inquisition by Rainier Sacchoni, a former Italian Cathar turned Catholic and Dominican: ‘All Cathars believe that the devil made the world and everything in it, and that all the sacraments of the Church...do not help us to salvation.... All Cathars believe that conjugal relations are always mortal sin.... Again, all Cathars deny the resurrection of the flesh. They hold that it is a mortal sin to eat meat, eggs, or cheese, even in cases of urgent necessity, because they are the fruits of coition.... Secular powers sin mortally if they punish heretics or evil-doers.... They all deny purgatory.’”

<sup>534</sup> Malcolm D. Lambert, *The Cathars*, 20, quoting Éverwin's account (*PL* 182: 676-680).

Church, distinguishing between “open” heretics and less obvious “foxes” within the Church: “flatterers, detractors, and seducers of the spirit.”<sup>535</sup> The justification and instructions for the Church’s exposure and censure of its own is spelled out in detail:

*Propterea vox illa ad vos, utpote sodales sponsi: ‘Capite nobis vulpes parvulas.’ Ergo facite quod iubemini: capite nobis hanc tam versipellem vulpeculam, quam ecce iam diu frustra insequimur. Docete et suggerite, qualiter fraus deprehendatur. Hoc enim est cepisse vulpem, quia longe plus nocet falsus catholicus quam verus haereticus.*<sup>536</sup>

Therefore this voice is addressed to you, as companions of the Bridegroom: ‘Catch us the little foxes.’ Do as you are bidden, then; catch this deceptive little fox for me, this little fox which we have long pursued in vain. Teach and suggest how his trickery may be found out. Then the fox will be caught, for a dishonest Catholic does far more harm than an honest heretic.

There is no equivocation, no opening for these “lost sheep” to repent and be brought back into the fold. The ultimate end of this mediation is not reconciliation, but expulsion. From the very first lines of the sermon, Bernard pronounces an awful fate for these “false Catholics,” the Cathars: they will languish alone in the outer darkness, standing condemned, cast out, their lives a simulation of victory, but bearing no fruit.<sup>537</sup>

*Sermon 66* continues in the same vein, developing the “foxes” imagery of Cant 2:15 in order to contrast it both with the Cathars’ “hypocritical” claim to be God’s “lost sheep” and his own description of them as “wolves” in his accusations of sexual immorality. This sermon goes into much more detail refuting specific positions that the Cathars had taken, especially their stance against marriage and the fact that men and women lived side by side in their separatist communities. This last was a practice that Bernard believed could only lead to sexual depravity:

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<sup>535</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 65:1, 172: *adulatores, detractores, ac seductorii quidam spiritus.*

<sup>536</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 65:4, 175.

<sup>537</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 65:1, 172.

*Tolle de Ecclesia honorabile connubium et thorum immaculatum: nonne repleas eam concubinariis, incestuosis, seminifluis, mollibus, masculorum concubitoribus, et omni denique genere immundorum?*<sup>538</sup>

Take from the Church the institution of honorable marriage and the chaste marriage bed: will you not fill her up with concubinage, incest, masturbation, effeminacy, homosexuality, and in the end, every sort of filthiness?

The Canaanite woman becomes useful further on in the sermon in Bernard's defense of infant baptism, which the Cathars found ridiculous. As he eases into his intertextual proof-texting, Bernard begins to use the language of Matt 15:21-28, calling the Cathars "dogs:" *Videte detractores, videte canes! Irrident nos quod baptizamus infantes* ("Look at these detractors, look at these dogs! They ridicule us for baptizing infants").<sup>539</sup> Here, too, as in *Sermon 22*, Bernard argues the inexhaustible nature of Jesus' "redemptive grace." This time, however, it is not the Canaanite woman (the mother) who is mistakenly understood to be beyond the redemptive action of God and the Church, but rather, according to Bernard, her daughter (the undeveloped infant) who is incorrectly seen as unable to consent to being baptized and unaware of the meaning of the rite. This reading is reminiscent of the wounded monk's letter to Barsanuphius and his concerns about the insensibility of the Canaanite woman's daughter and her inability to cooperate in her own salvation. Bernard responds in palpable indignation: *Neque enim parva, sed plane copiosa apud eum redemptio!*<sup>540</sup> He then brings home his point with the biblical precedent of the Canaanite woman's intervention on behalf of her daughter:

*Nemo mihi dicat, quia non habet fidem, cui mater impertit suam, involvens illi in sacramento, quousque idoneus fiat proprio, non tantum sensu, sed assensu, evolutam puramque percipere. Numquid breve pallium est, ut non possit ambos cooperire? Magna est Ecclesiae fides. Numquid minor fide Chananaeae*

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<sup>538</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 66:3, 179-180.

<sup>539</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 66:9, 183.

<sup>540</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 66:9, 184: "Nor is redemption a small thing, in him, but rather completely abundant."

*mulieris, quam constat et filiae sufficere potuisse et sibi? Ideo audivit: 'O mulier, magna est fides tua! Fiat tibi sicut petisti.'*<sup>541</sup>

Let no one tell me that a child has no faith, to him his mother imparts her own, wrapping him in the sacrament (as a cloak), until that time that it becomes his own, not so much through experience, yet by assent. Could it be such a small and trivial cloak that could not cover both of them? The faith of the Church is great. Is it less than that of the Canaanite woman, which was constant enough to cover herself and her child? For that reason, she heard: 'Woman, great is your faith. Be it done for you as you requested.'

The power of maternal love cooperates with the redemptive grace of God to save the child. Yet, in the end, Bernard contemplates no intervention or mediation on behalf of the Cathars by the Church or themselves; the extraordinary power of Jesus to intervene on behalf of sinners does not extend to the Cathars in his sermon. He concludes, instead: *Probatum est: mori magis eligunt, quam converti. Horum finis interitus, horum novissima incendium manet.*<sup>542</sup>

### **4.3.3 Gueric D'Igny: Fourth Sermon on the Assumption of the Blessed Mary**

The focus on the need for mediation takes on a kinder, gentler tenor in the fourth sermon of Gueric D'Igny on the Assumption of the Blessed Mary, in which Mary becomes a critical intermediary who delivers "the Food of Life," Jesus, to humanity. In 1138, Gueric D'Igny became the second abbot of the monastery at Igny, after spending 15-20 years as a monk under the direction of Bernard at Clairvaux. Like Benedict of Aniane some 200 years earlier, Gueric also found himself in the midst of disputes about monastic disciplines. His teacher, Odon, had been abbot at Saint-Martin in Tournai between 1094 and 1105, a period during which Odon's attempt to adopt, along with a small cohort of brothers, the Rule of Augustine and a strictly

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<sup>541</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 66:10, 184.

<sup>542</sup> Bernard, *Sermones* 2 66:12, 186: "It is proven: they choose rather to die than to convert. The end of these ones is destruction; fire awaits them at the end."

hermetic lifestyle met with vigorous opposition, first from the nobles of Tournai and later from the local bishop himself. Guerric seems to have learned from this conflict. While he served as canon at Tournai, he persisted in leading an ascetical and hermetic life in a small house close to the church, only coming out to teach at the cathedral school and then retiring once again. But he did not assemble around himself any group of like-minded companions.<sup>543</sup>

When he was chosen to be abbot of Igny, Guerric, citing Luke 11.5<sup>544</sup> and Isaiah 3.7,<sup>545</sup> argued his own inadequacy to the task in a Rogation Day Sermon:

*Je ne suis pas médecin et il n'y a pas de pain chez moi; aussi je vous disais dès le début: Ne m'établissez pas comme chef. Nul en effet ne doit être à la tête s'il ne peut être utile. Or, comment pourrait être utile quelqu'un qui n'est pas médecin et n'a pas la doctrine suffisante pour nourrir? Je vous le disais, mais hélas! Vous ne m'avez pas écouté et vous m'avez établi comme chef.*<sup>546</sup>

I am not a doctor and there is no bread in me; I have been telling you this from the beginning: do not establish me as your leader. For, how could anyone be useful who is not a doctor and does not have bread in him, that is to say, who knows nothing of the art of healing and does not have sufficient doctrine to nourish? I told you this, but alas! You did not listen to me and you established me as your leader.

Certainly, because of his advanced age and the physical toll that his ascetical lifestyle had taken on him, Guerric did little more than preach during his time as abbot. Still, this self-portrait of an utterly deficient intermediary, the very antithesis of Jesus as *verus medicus* and *panis vitae*, is striking. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that in the climax of a sermon on Mary's mediatory power, Guerric returns to the image of table, bread, and crumbs and cites Matt 15:21-28.

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<sup>543</sup> Morson and Costello in Guerric d'Igny, *Sermons I*, SC 166, ed. John Morson and Hilary Costello (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 11-12.

<sup>544</sup> "And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread....'' (NRSV)

<sup>545</sup> "But in that day he will cry out, 'I have no remedy. I have no food or clothing in my house; do not make me the leader of the people.'"

<sup>546</sup> Guerric, *Rog.* 1:3-11 cited in Morson and Costello in Guerric, *Sermons*, 18.



Guerric's fourth sermon on Mary's assumption is part of the extant collection of 54 sermons that he wrote for his Cistercian community of monks. Each sermon aligns with a church season or feast and is linked closely to the liturgical or worship setting. Though notably literary, filled with alliteration, word play and inversions, Guerric's sermons were most likely oral deliveries to his small monastic community, even if edited later for posterity.<sup>547</sup> Their dramatic flair is much remarked upon<sup>548</sup> and the fourth sermon on Mary's assumption is no exception.

In this homily, Guerric develops a detailed correspondence between Mary and Jesus. Like Jesus, Mary submitted completely to God's will; Mary's flesh is Jesus' flesh; both are virgins; both ascended to heaven. Mary, like Jesus, provides *alimonia vitae*, the food of life, her son in the incarnated flesh, at the communion table in the bread and wine, and at the eschatological table. This extended correlation culminates at the conclusion of the sermon with Guerric's reference to Matt 15:21-28:

*O mater misericordiae, saturare gloria Filii tui, et dimitte reliquias tuas parvulis tuis. Tu iam ad mensam, nos sub mensa catelli. 'Sicut oculi ancillae in manibus dominae suae,' ita familia haec famelica de te praestolatur alimoniam vitae. Per te fructum vitae communicavimus in mensa praesentium sacramentorum; per te eundem fructum vitae communicemus in mensa perennium gaudiorum, 'Iesum benedictum fructum ventris tui,' cui honor et gloria per omnia saecula saeculorum.*<sup>549</sup>

O Mother of Mercy, fill yourself with the glory of your son, and leave the leftover bits for your small children. You are already at the table, and we are the little dogs under the table. Just as 'the eyes of the servant are fixed on the hands of the mistress,' so your famished family waits for the food of life from you. Through you, we have received the fruit of life at the present table of sacraments; through you, may we participate at the table of eternal joy in this same fruit of life, 'Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb,' to whom be the honor and glory through all the ages of the ages.

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<sup>547</sup> Morson and Costello in Guerric, *Sermons*, 20-25.

<sup>548</sup> Morson and Costello in Guerric, *Sermons*, 25. Morson and Costello cite, for instance, *Palm.* 3:3-4 where Guerric presents a suffering Jesus complaining to his father (God), then provides the consoling promises given in response.

<sup>549</sup> Guerric, *De Eodem Sermo Quartus* 5:161 (SC 202, 471).

This humble prayer at the end of a sermon that delineates in devoted detail the mediatory power of the Virgin Mary places Guerric and his fellow monks in the position of the Canaanite woman, as little dogs under the table of Jesus and his mother, begging for scraps of the bread of life, that is, a portion of Jesus himself. It is now Mary, and not Jesus, who will have mercy and make sure to feed her “famished family.” Preached by an abbot who fashioned himself as empty-handed and inadequate to the task of nourishing the monks under his care, the communal intervention and correction so palpable in the *Rule of the Master* are here, in Guerric, firmly placed back into the hands of the divine family.

It is hard to know how much Guerric’s emphases on Mary’s intercessory power and the begging impotence of a famished human family are a function of his own professed sense of inadequacy, that is, how idiosyncratic they may be. Thus, it is difficult to determine their precise relationship to the monastic ethos of communally imposed disciplinary intervention visible in the *Rule of the Master*. It is tempting to see Guerric’s focus on Mary as, at least in part, belonging to the same balancing act evident in the earlier Eastern texts between divine or holy redeeming action and human struggle. On this reading, Guerric would lean more towards human reliance on divine aid and grace.

It is also tempting to read Guerric in this way because similar categories of human weakness and divine aid underlie several other 12<sup>th</sup> century sermons on the Canaanite woman which focus on monkish sin and communal discipline, on the one hand, and reassurances of divine grace and intercession, on the other.

#### 4.3.4 Julien of Vézelay: *Sermon 17*

Sermon 17 of Julien of Vézelay, for example, on the prayer of the Canaanite woman, provides a good example of the first variety. Julien (d. 1165) was a Benedictine monk and teacher at the abbey of Vézelay who in his old age was ordered by his abbot to compile his sermons. These sermons, less liturgical homilies and more didactic exhortations, were delivered to young and old alike, but from within a largely pedagogical setting by a teacher who spent his career instructing young cloistered boys at the abbey school. Telltale signs in his sermons of the pedagogue include exegeses based on such classroom standards as verbal declensions, extended parallelism, conceptual games, and allusions to Cicero, Seneca, and Ovid.<sup>550</sup>

In this spirit, *Sermon 17* is a kind of classic extended spiritual allegory and an exhortation to imitate the Canaanite woman. Within the allegory, Tyre and Sidon represent lack of faith and hardness of heart; Christ enters into those territories of the heart with the Father and the Holy Spirit to save that which he created, a chosen soul, the Canaanite woman, who has left the region of her sins and of worldly people. The Canaanite woman models an exemplary intense maternal love for her daughter, who stands for her own soul, understood as the tormented human soul which is preyed upon by the Devil and, by extension, of the many souls of young monks who need the prayer, guidance and support of older monks. Like the Canaanite woman who is tested by Jesus, the older monks are also tested through their own human frailties, especially lust and disdain. Unlike the Canaanite woman, they are enraged when others accuse them; dog-like, they vomit up and then consume again their heavy sins.

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<sup>550</sup> Damien Vorreux in Julien de Vézelay, *Sermons*, SC 193, ed. Damien Vorreux (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972), 15.

It is noteworthy that, in Julien's exegesis, the Christian self is split in two.<sup>551</sup> The Canaanite woman's daughter represents its effeminate sin-riddled soul:

*Filia mea. Non filius est, sed filia, habens in corpore masculino animam femineam, quem carnalis voluptas effeminat, mollit, enervat, et eviratum totum frangit in feminam.*<sup>552</sup>

*My daughter.* It is not a boy, but a girl; holding inside a masculine body the soul of a woman; which fleshly pleasure feminizes, softens, weakens, emasculates, and renders weak like a woman.

The Canaanite woman has become this sin-riddled soul's caretaker, for want of a better word. Even though she is a mother, this role is masculinized through allegorical exegesis by Julien, so that ultimately she is described as an exemplary monk who, certain of divine power—*divinae potentiae non ignara*<sup>553</sup>—consigns the health of his soul to God. Guerric's exhortation to identify with and imitate the Canaanite woman is explicit:

*Tu quoque, si magnae fidei fueris, si vivae, de qua iustus vivit, et non mortuae qua careat anima caritatis, non filiae tantum, id est animae tuae, salutem impetrabis omnimodam, sed et montibus imperabis excidium.*<sup>554</sup>

You also, if your faith is great, if it is a living faith by which the just live, and not a dead faith which lacks a loving soul, then not only will you obtain the complete healing of your daughter, that is, your soul, but you will have the power to 'move mountains.'

Here, the monkish soul is required only to love his own soul and to have faith in God's power to heal it.

This prescription for the conquest of a divided soul comes at the conclusion of a sermon that is, however, of a significantly different tenor for the majority of its exposition. Its gestalt is

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<sup>551</sup> Cf. Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "'Caro salutis cardo': Shaping the Person in Early Christian Thought," *History of Religions*, 30:1 (Aug. 1990), 47 for his description of a dynamic, struggling, embodied Christian Self as early as the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries, in urgent need of "closing the gap within itself."

<sup>552</sup> Julien of Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:167-170 (SC 193, 364).

<sup>553</sup> Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:288 (SC 193, 372): "not ignorant of the divine power."

<sup>554</sup> Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:289-293 (SC 193, 372-374).

one of urgency; its theme, flight from sin. Long passages describe the worldly people allegorically represented by the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, those who burn with love for this age (*qui saeculi amore flammantur*), artisans of fire and wood, merchants, grammarians, those who hoard money, those who love to eat, soldiers, poets who seek glory, even sycophants within monastic orders who court their abbots and priors through obsequious flattery.<sup>555</sup> It is from these that the Canaanite woman fled when she left her homeland to meet Jesus. And it is from these that the monks whom Julien addresses must also flee.

Yet, the theme of internal threat is not dropped. It returns in Julien's discussion of older monks caring for younger monks, giving birth to them with a maternal affection until Christ is formed in them, just as the Canaanite woman gave birth to her daughter, not least through her prayers for Jesus' healing of her.

*Indue hunc affectum, quisquis uni vel pluribus praees animabus, si eas materno affectu parturis donec formetur Christus in illis.*<sup>556</sup>

Take this love as a model, you who have charge of one soul or of many, if you wish to give birth to them with a truly maternal affection until Christ is formed in them.

However, here Julien is concerned specifically with the perverse demon of fornication afflicting the younger monks at his abbey, a demon which can only be expelled through the fasting, tears, and prayers of the elders. This is the impure noonday demon who envelops the flesh of the young with a living flame, fueling the furnace of their shameful imaginations. It is only to be outdone by the more loathsome demon of the evening which affects the older monks

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<sup>555</sup> Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:98-131 (SC 193, 358-362). It is probable that Julien's urgency regarding worldly people was affected by the many momentous events taking place at the abbey of Vézelay during his tenure. Damien Vorreaux draws attention particularly to its location at the center of significant political and religious events, e.g. the 1146 preaching on the Second Crusade and the cult of Mary Magdalene which drew so many to the abbey, not to mention, the build-up to Thomas Becket's 1166 excommunication of the King of England, just after Vézelay's death (SC 193, 11-15).

<sup>556</sup> Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:151-153 (SC 193, 362).

themselves, as it did Ovid's Silenus whose lust could not be quenched and the elders of Daniel 13 who desired Suzanna.<sup>557</sup> Not even imminent death restrains those thus possessed, the likes of whom Julien professes to have himself known. It is only at this point in his sermon, when the vulnerability and sin of all have been exposed, that he turns to the example of the Canaanite woman and exhorts imitation, specifically of her reliance on God (Jesus) to save her own soul.

Thus, the maternal love and care of one's own soul and of those younger souls under one's care are imposed, but qualified in Julien's sermon. For there are two parts to every Christian soul: a weak and demon-possessed effeminate daughter and a faithful, repentant, patient, masculine mother. It is from within this view of the soul that Julien emphasizes the Canaanite woman's reliance on, and tenacity in, prayer for divine intervention and healing and urges his brothers in the monastery also to pray fervently and thus to attain the help of not only Jesus but of all the saints.<sup>558</sup>

#### 4.3.5 Guigues Le Chartreux: *Scala Claustralium*

The role of prayer is even more crucial to Guigues Le Chartreux, Cistercian monk and ninth prior of Grande Chartreuse (d. 1188), in his *Scala Claustralium* (*A Ladder for Monks*). Indeed, prayer comprises one of the four steps that Guigues places on the spiritual ladder of ascent toward union with God. Prayer is the third stage in spiritual ascent, preceded by reading (or study) and meditation, and followed by mystical contemplation. Guigues' *Ladder for Monks* is also called the *Epistola de Vita Contemplativa* in some manuscripts because of its prologue

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<sup>557</sup> Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:200-203 (SC 193, 366).

<sup>558</sup> Vézelay, *Sermo* 17:239-240 (SC 193, 370): *Tu quoque fac similiter, et de sanctorum adiutorio....*

addressed to “Brother Gervais,” who appears to have been a spiritual father or guide for Guigues and to whom he looks for approval and correction:

*Quaedam ergo quae de spiritali exercitio claustralium excogitaveram tibi transmittere proposui, ut tu qui talia experiendo melius quam ego tractando didicisti mearum iudex sis cogitationum et corrector.*<sup>559</sup>

I therefore have contrived to put before you thoughts which had come to me on the spiritual life of monks, so that you who have learned this life so much better through experience than I have through treatise-writing might be judge and corrector of my thinking.

Note how Guigues draws, in the opening lines of the manuscript, the conventional distinction between the relative value of spiritual experience granted through the grace of God and intellectual pursuit of spiritual understanding achieved through intense human endeavor.

The Canaanite woman appears in the *Scala Claustralium* in *Letter 6*, which is entitled *Officium orationis (The Duty of Prayer)*. This reading of the Canaanite woman, then, occurs in a spiritual guidebook built out of Western mystical topoi and traditions. Guigues’ practical definitions of the stages of spiritual progress build on those which preceded his own, especially Bernard of Clairvaux’s careful distinctions between *consideratio* and *contemplatio* in his *De consideratione* and Hugh of St. Victor’s three modes of vision, *cogitatio*, *meditatio*, and *contemplatio*. Yet, Guigues’ definitions delineate each stage with his own logic, applications, and examples:<sup>560</sup> The reading of Scripture is study that seeks to know more; meditation is intellectual and investigates hidden truths; prayer turns the heart to God in supplication; and contemplation takes pleasure and savors the joys of eternal sweetness.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Guigues II Le Chartreux, *Lettre Sur La Vie Contemplative (L’Echelle des Moines)* 1.6-10, SC 163, eds. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2001), 82.

<sup>560</sup> Colledge and Walsh in Guigues, *Lettre* (SC 163, 34-35).

<sup>561</sup> Guigues, *Lettre* 3:32-40 (SC 163, 84): *Est autem lectio sedula scripturarum cum animi intentione inspectio. Meditatio est studiosa mentis actio, occultae veritatis notitiam ductu propriae rationis investigans. Oratio est devota cordis in Deum intentio pro malis removendis/vel bonis adipiscendis. Contemplatio est mentis in Deum suspensae quaedam supra se elevatio, aeternae dulcedinis gaudia degustans.*

The symbolic motif of the title's spiritual ladder was very old, even by the time Guigues was writing. Jesus' prophecy at John 1:51 may be seen as a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish iteration of the image of the spiritual ladder. The 3<sup>rd</sup> century martyr Perpetua's ladder is a veritable gauntlet of passionate suffering, studded with swords, knives and spears and a terrifying dragon hiding beneath it.<sup>562</sup> In *Adversus Celsus* 6:20-21, Origen combined several traditions, including the early Jewish image of Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:12-13, Paul's language of "unseen things" in 2 Corinthians, and Jesus' promise at John 14:3 that "we" will go where he is going. Thus, he constructed a seminal connection between divine teaching, spiritual knowledge, unseen worlds and the image of the spiritual ladder. Circa 600, John Climacus, that is "John of the Ladder" (a.k.a. John Scholasticus or John Sinaita), Syrian abbot of the monastery at Mt. Sinai, wrote his *Scala Paradisi*, or *Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Addressed to anchorites and cenobites, John offered thirty steps to attaining the highest degrees of religious perfection.

This topos from Eastern asceticism, then, lies behind Guigues' text and was not idiosyncratic, for the image of the spiritual ladder also gained new and abundant currency in many medieval monastic and mystical texts. In Guigues' own time, the list of writers who used the image is long, including Richard of Saint-Victor and Richard Rolle, to name just two.<sup>563</sup> Equally conventional is Guigues' language of spiritual sustenance and the stages of spiritual

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<sup>562</sup> *The Passion of S. Perpetua* 1:4 in J. Armitage Robinson, ed. *Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891; repr. Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), 67: εἶδον κλίμακα χαλκῆν θαυμαστοῦ μήκους ἧς τὸ μήκος ἄχρις οὐρανοῦ. στενὴ δὲ ἦν ὡς μηδένα δι' αὐτῆς δύνασθαι εἰ μὴ μοναχὸν ἓνα ἀναβῆναι. ἐξ ἑκατέρων δὲ τῶν τῆς κλίμακος μερῶν πᾶν εἶδος ἦν ἐμπεπηγμένον ἐκεῖ ξιφῶν, δοράτων, ἀγκίστρων, μαχαίρων, ὀβελίσκων. ἵνα πᾶς ὁ ἀναβαίνων ἀμελῶς καὶ μὴ ἀναβλέπων τοῖς ἀκοντίοις τὰς σάρκας σπαραχθεῖν. ἦν δὲ ὑπ' αὐτῆ τῆ κλίμακι δράκων ὑπερμεγέθης, ὃς δὴ τοὺς ἀναβαίνοντας ἐνήδρευεν, ἐκθαμβῶν ὅπως μὴ τολμῶσιν ἀναβαίνειν: "I saw a bronze ladder, wondrously large, reaching up to heaven; and it was narrow, so that no more than one might go up at one time. And in the sides of the ladder were placed all kinds of iron things: swords, spears, hooks, and knives; so that if anyone going up did not take heed or did not look up, he would be torn and his flesh would cling to the iron. And right at the foot of the ladder, a serpent was lying, extremely large, which lay in wait for those that would go up, and frightened them so that they might not go up."

<sup>563</sup> Colledge and Walsh in Guigues, *Lettre* (SC 163, 33).



progress as progressively mastication, digestion, and nourishment, for example, in his chapter on the first duty of reading the scriptures:

*Hoc ergo sibi plenius explicare desiderans, incipit hanc uvam masticare et frangere, eamque quasi in torculari ponit, dum excitat rationem ad inquirendum quid sit et quomodo haberi possit haec adeo pretiosa munditia.*<sup>564</sup>

Desiring to explain better all that to herself, the soul begins to chew and grind up this grape; she puts it in a wine-press until it excites Reason to inquire what this purity, so precious, might be and how to take possession of it.

Also present in the *Scala Claustralium* are the commonplaces of spiritual yearning as a burning flame or fire within the soul, and intimations of the Divine experienced as the delicate odor of perfume.

But perhaps most interesting for the purposes of this chapter is Guigues' development of the distinction between ineffable spiritual experiences of the Divine that proceed from God's grace and imperfect or partial intellectual understandings of the Divine that result from human effort, a contrast already present in Guigues' prologue in the distinction he draws between himself and his teacher. This theme also opens the discussion in *Letter 6* on prayer that includes the Canaanite woman. The topic is introduced at the end of *Letter 5*, on meditation, in a discussion of the partial understanding of "the true Good" achieved by pagan philosophers through their exercise of Reason:

*Non merverunt percipere quod poterant videre. 'Evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis' et 'eorum sapientia devorata est,' quam eis contulerat humanae studium disciplinae, non Spiritus sapientiae qui solus dat sapientiam veram, sapidam scilicet scientiam quae animam cui inest inaestimabili sapore jocundat et reficit; et de illa dictum est: 'Sapientia non intrabit in malevolam animam.' Haec autem a solo Deo est.*<sup>565</sup>

They did not deserve to receive what they had the capacity to see. 'They disappeared into their own thoughts' and 'all their wisdom was devoured'

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<sup>564</sup> Guigues, *Lettre 4*:61-65 (SC 163, 86).

<sup>565</sup> Guigues, *Lettre 5*:118-125 (SC 163, 92).

because it was collected from the human disciplines and not the Spirit of Wisdom which alone gives true wisdom, that is to say, the savory knowledge, that knowledge that restores and nourishes the soul within which it finds itself with an inestimable flavor. Of this knowledge it is written: 'Wisdom does not enter into the evil soul.' True wisdom is from God alone.

With this caveat firmly established regarding the practice of meditation, Guigues goes on in *Letter 6* to define prayer as the best refuge for the humbled soul that is incapable, on its own, of understanding or experiencing God:

*Videns ergo anima quod ad desideratam cognitionis et experientiae dulcedinem per se non possit attingere, et quanto magis ad cor altum accredit tanto magis exaltatur Deus, humiliat se, confugit ad orationem....*<sup>566</sup>

The soul sees that it is unable on its own to attain the longed-for sweetness of knowledge and experience—the more it elevates itself, the more God is elevated. It therefore humbles itself and seeks refuge in prayer....

Study and meditation have brought only a surface acquaintance with God; the soul must now speak directly to God. *Letter 6* thus switches immediately into direct discourse, voicing the soul's heartfelt plea to know God intimately in plaintive repetitions and in the language of the Psalms: *Quaerebam vultum tuum, Domine, vultum tuum, Domine, quaerebam.*<sup>567</sup> It cites its previous efforts which have not satisfied its desire, reading Scripture and meditating, acknowledging God's breaking of the bread of Holy Scripture for it, giving the soul a fraction of God, but just a portion, *Dum panem sacrae scripturae mihi frangis, in fractione panis mihi cognitus es.*<sup>568</sup> These are Eucharistic images; they recall Jesus breaking the bread at the last supper and perhaps even the promises implicit in Luke 24:13-33, where the risen Jesus opens up the full meaning of the Scriptures to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and then reveals himself as the risen Lord while breaking bread later that night. In the same spirit, the prayer of

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<sup>566</sup> Guigues, *Lettre 6*:135-138 (SC 163, 94).

<sup>567</sup> Guigues, *Lettre 6*:142-143 (SC 163, 94): "I sought your face, Lord, your face, Lord, I sought."

<sup>568</sup> Guigues, *Lettre 6*:145-146 (SC 163, 94): "While you broke the bread of Holy Scripture for me, I knew you through this fraction of bread."

the soul in Guigues' *Letter 6* goes on to ask for a more intense communion as well, using the images of table, dogs and crumbs from Matthew 15:21-28. This passage is also the conclusion to Guigues' short letter on prayer. Thus, the letter on prayer begins with the insufficiency of the human soul to comprehend and experience God, moves through its humble prayer for aid, and ends with the ritual memorializing of Jesus' death and resurrection, negotiating the terms of Divine redemptive power :

*Nec hoc peto, Domine, propter merita mea, sed pro tua misericordia. Fateor enim quia indigna peccatrix sum; sed 'et catelli edunt de micis quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum.' Da mihi ergo, Domine, arrham hereditatis future, saltem guttam coelestis pluviae qua refrigerem sitim meam, quia amore ardeo.*<sup>569</sup>

It remains only to note that Guigues returns repeatedly to the question of human incapacity in achieving any degree of spiritual ascent without God's power, emphasizing it particularly in the penultimate chapter 14, *Illatio ex praedictis*, a chapter that summarizes all that has gone before. After noting the interdependence of all stages of spiritual development—study, meditation, prayer, and contemplation—he reminds his reader that God's capacity to save is without limit:

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<sup>569</sup> Guigues, *Lettre 6*:149-155 (SC 163, 94). Compare Guigues' prayer (left) with Thomas Cranmer's 1548 addition to the Anglican Communion Liturgy, the Prayer of Humble Access (right). (Discussion of the latter to follow in Ch. 5.)  
 "I do not ask for this, Lord, because of my own merit,  
 but through your mercy. I confess that I am an unworthy  
 sinner; but 'even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall  
 from their masters' table.'

Grant to me, therefore, Lord, a pledge of the future inheritance, at least a drop of the celestial rain to cool my thirst, for I burn with love."

"We do not presume to come to this thy Table,  
 O Merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,  
 but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not  
 worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy  
 Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is  
 is always to have mercy:

Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the Flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his Blood, in these holy Mysteries, that we may continually dwell in him, and he in us, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by this Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood. Amen."

*Deus enim cujus potentiae non est terminus, et cujus misericordia super Omnia opera ejus, quandoque de lapidibus suscitatur filios Abrahae, dum duros et nolentes acquiescere cogit ut velint...*<sup>570</sup>

God whose power is indeed without end and whose mercy extends to all his works, can at any time awaken stones into sons of Abraham, forcing hard hearts and rebellious wills to desire.

The extension of the bread and table imagery of Matt 15:21-28 constitutes a kind of subgenre of interpretations and reenactments of the passage. And even within one community the textual record might choose one image from Matt 15:21-28 to develop an ecclesiological concern—for instance, the *Rule of the Master's* use of the lost sheep topos to develop its treatment of excommunication and reconciliation—and the image of the table crumbs to develop more ritualistic or liturgical practices.

Thus, the *Rule of the Master* also describes in intricate detail a week-long ritual in which, after every meal, the kitchen workers, *cum reverentia*, gather together all fallen crumbs, first from the abbots' table and then from the other tables. Each time one of the workers gathers up crumbs and lifts them up, all of the workers say together, *Deo gratias*.<sup>571</sup> Over the course of the week, the kitchen workers store up the crumbs in a jar and at the end of the week, they are baked into a cake and presented to the abbot as part of a public plea for communal prayer on the workers' behalf: *Iubete, domini, et orate pro nobis, quia ministerio humilitatis explevimus septimanam*.<sup>572</sup> Immediately, everyone kneels down and prays for the workers, after which the abbot blesses, breaks, and shares the bread with all.<sup>573</sup> While this weekly practice is linked to eucharistic rituals, the images of crumbs from the masters' tables (not only the abbot's table, but

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<sup>570</sup> Guigues, *Lettre* 14:354-357 (SC 163, 94).

<sup>571</sup> This is noted in Dunn, "Mastering Benedict," 582; cf. Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 23:33-9 and 25 (SC 106, 118).

<sup>572</sup> Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 25:4 (SC 106, 132): "Please, lords, pray for us, because we have fulfilled our week of humble service."

<sup>573</sup> Anon., *La Règle du Maître* 25:5-11 (SC 106, 132-134).

the others' as well, since the workers refer to their fellow monks as *domini*) and the references to kneeling and humble workers asking for intercessory prayer on their behalf all evoke Matt 15:21-28 as well.

#### 4.3.6 Richard Rolle: *Melos Amoris*

A very different use of the imagery of spiritual “crumbs” appears in chapter 46 of the *Melos Amoris*, the mystical treatise of the 14<sup>th</sup> century English hermit, Richard Rolle of Hampole. Spiritual crumbs here become an image that helps to construct a truculent indictment of religious authorities of his day, as well as a transition to the controversial chapters 47 and 48 that follow it, in which he takes on monastic and scholastic detractors. Before moving to the passage itself, some general aspects of Rolle’s treatise are of interest in the current context.

First, the broad and popular influence that Rolle exerted through his writings is noteworthy. While his earlier works, *Incendium Amoris* and *Contra amatores mundi*, for instance, were written in Latin, he was already beginning the shift to the vernacular, working on his English psalter at the same time as the *Incendium*, and eventually abandoning Latin entirely.<sup>574</sup> Rolle was by the 15<sup>th</sup> century the most widely-read English writer,<sup>575</sup> and the combination of his example, as a pious recluse unaffiliated with any monastic order or community, that is, of autonomous withdrawal into a contemplative life on the one hand and his

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<sup>574</sup> Hope Emily Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole and Materials For His Biography*, The Modern Language Association of America, Monograph Series 3 (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1927), 186: “The only Latin work which gives evidence of being written late is the *Emendatio*, which bears a close relation to the three English epistles (also all late). A special reason exists for this work being written in Latin, for we now know that it was addressed to a doctor of theology.”

<sup>575</sup> Laquita M. Higgs, “Richard Rolle and His Concern for ‘Even Christians,’” *Mystics Quarterly* 14:4 (Dec 1988): 177-185 (183): “Margaret Deanesly consulted over 7,000 wills for the prevalence of books in the vernacular, and she found that, among the English books bequeathed, Rolle’s were the most frequently listed.” [Margaret Deanesly, “Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” *Modern Language Review*, 15 (1920): 349-358 (352).

exhortations to his readers to develop their own interior, independent religious lives on the other, won him enemies within the religious establishment, but also a substantial loyal readership.

Very helpful in considering the interests of that loyal readership is Nicholas Watson's study of Rolle's particular brand of *auctoritas*, for Watson refuses to disassociate Rolle's affective teaching from his social critiques. In this, Watson allows us to consider that these two kinds of authority may not have been carefully segregated concepts for avid medieval readers as they appear to be in scholarship today:

The fact that it was this troublesome hermit, and not the apophatically pure *Cloud* author, or the profound anchoress Julian, who had the widest dissemination in the later Middle Ages, tells us something about what constitutes modern views of 'good' mysticism in comparison with what medieval audiences sought.<sup>576</sup>

Certainly, Rolle's aggressive defensiveness about his mode of solitary life and his related attacks on the immorality of churchmen and the empty learning of the Scholastics are not absent from the mystical *Melos Amoris*.

His allusion to the crumbs of Matt 15:21-28 comes within the abrupt transition at the end of chapter 46 to the defensive mode of chapters 47 and 48. Up to this point, within this "song of love," Rolle has painted a portrait of spiritual pilgrimage, interweaving his own autobiography into the picture and describing the call to mystical life, the purification of the contemplative soul, the complementary roles of the hermit's self-cleansing and Divine action in the purified soul, spiritual combat, and so on. Along the way, Rolle has called his readers, more than once, to the contemplative life, and by chapters 44-46 he is extolling the mystical experience of the Sublime Song itself, beginning with the harps and "new song" of Rev 14:2-3.

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<sup>576</sup> Bernard McGinn, review of Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* in *The Catholic Historical Review* 80:1 (1994): 141-142 (141). Rolle's critique of the institutional church has been explained away, apologetically, most directly by J. F. Arnould in his 1957 edition of the *Melos*, pathologized as a psychological maladaptation to society or social life.

Throughout chapters 44-46, Rolle evokes images of the elect walking in purity towards the peace of paradise,<sup>577</sup> personae that are by this point familiar, since Rolle develops a rich language for the identities of contemplatives in his texts—*virī contemplatīvi, moderni amantes, digni, Dei dilectores, amatores eternitatis, electionis*—as well as for the simple people who are spiritually gifted, *mites* and *minores*.<sup>578</sup> These “singers” and “musicians” are filled with happiness and harmony; they are blessed.

The turn comes about midpoint in chapter 46, when Rolle warns that “the lovers of this world”—*mundum amantes*—will never know such happiness. Their fate will be great misery, instead, and a descent into hell. Rolle quotes here directly from the Vulgate version of Psalm 105:38 and the confession of the many sins and ingritudes of the Israelites, bringing Canaanite errancy into the equation: *effuderunt sanguinem innocentem, sanguinem filiorum suorum et filiarum suarum quas sacrificaverunt sculptilibus Chanaan*.<sup>579</sup> He then moves to the disdainful and proud work of the authors of his time, who boast of the religious state that they have adopted and of the excellence of their own merits. Further, they have contempt for solitaries and recluses. They sit in palaces, at the tables of potentates, leaving religious hermits to beg at the door: *Ubi alli in aulis honorifice assistunt et ad mensam magnatum presidere ponuntur, illi ad ostium mendici morantur...*<sup>580</sup> And from these grand tables, these great Lords send their “crumbs” to the beggars, thinking them unworthy of themselves: *Et hiis de micis mittunt multi magnates et reputant ut reprobos*.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Richard Rolle, *Le Chant D'Amour: Melos Amoris* 44, SC 168, ed. François Vandenbroucke (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 112: *Et vocem quam audivi sicut citharedorum citharizantium in citharis suis*.

<sup>578</sup> François Vandenbroucke in Rolle, *Chant D'Amour*, 59.

<sup>579</sup> “And they shed innocent blood: the blood of their sons and of their daughters which they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan” (*Vulg., Psalm 105:38*).

<sup>580</sup> Richard Rolle, *Chant D'Amour* 46 (SC 169, 132-134).

<sup>581</sup> Richard Rolle, *Chant D'Amour* 46 (SC 169, 134).

Here, Rolle has fashioned himself and his collective persona—the *solitarii*—as the Canaanite woman, but now forced into the role of begging not at Jesus’ table, but at the table of hypocritical, self-important religious authorities, who do not even recognize the value of the unpretentious, yet life-bestowing gifts of Jesus, symbolized by the crumbs they throw away in grand and disingenuous gestures of false beneficence.<sup>582</sup> Rolle is quite clear about whom he is speaking and their roles within the church, naming them as “so-called disciples of Jesus Christ.” “How,” he asks, “and in what manner can they brag that they are sent by God, without imitating their humble Master....”<sup>583</sup> From this transition, Rolle goes on in the next chapters to argue the superiority of solitude, the contemplative life, and the spiritual and empirical experience of intense love for God over earthly rationalist knowledges.

#### 4.3.7 Gregory of Palamas: 43<sup>rd</sup> Homily

Another, very different, 14<sup>th</sup> century interpretation of Matt 15:21-28 will be useful, not least because of the contrast it provides to the images and uses of the Canaanite woman as an exemplum of obedience, submission, and repentance in the Western monastic texts above.

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<sup>582</sup> Rolle is no doubt also evoking the images and terms of Luke 16:20-30, the story of Lazarus at the gate of Dives longing to be filled with the crumbs of the rich man, but this does not render Matt 15:21-28 a less likely scriptural source for his passage. The Latin of both passages in the Vulgate contain terminology similar to Rolle’s. Luke: *cupiens saturari de micis quae cadebant de mensa divitis*; Matthew: *catelli edunt de micis quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum*; and Rolle: *ad mensam magnatum presidere ponuntur, illi ad ostium mendici morantur et hiis de micis mittunt*. In all cases, the table is one of wealthy privilege, of rich men, lords, or magnates. Both Lazarus and Rolle’s beggars are kept out, Lazarus at the gate (*ad ianuam*) and Rolle’s solitaries at the door. On the other hand, as noted above, an image of Canaanite errancy directly precedes the passage. Furthermore, in the tradition, as illustrated in Ambrose’s sermon on Lazarus and Dives in chapter 2, Luke 16:20-30 and Matt 15:21-28 are linked. In the case of Ambrose, he deploys both Lazarus and the Canaanite woman as exemplars of voluntary suffering and self-sacrifice as witnesses to true faith. Given that the passages were often seen as mutually edifying, Rolle is arguably following suit.

<sup>583</sup> Richard Rolle, *Chant D’Amour* 46 (SC 169, 134): *Odium et invidiam tantam non inveni nec habui inter omnes mortales sicut sustinui ab hiis qui se dicebant discipulos Iesu Christi. Sed quomodo et quocumque modo se a Deo missos iactitant, Magstrum humilium non imitantes....*



Delivered in a homily by Gregory Palamas, Athonite monk, Archbishop of Thessalonica, and Eastern Orthodox theologian (1296-1359), this reading reflects the preoccupations of its hounded and controversial author, as well as the theological and practical debates in which he engaged. These are germane to the focus of this chapter on the relative importance of human and divine action in human salvation.

Much like Rolle's independent eremitic monasticism, Gregory Palamas' contemplative practice, Hesychasm, and its ascetico-theological underpinnings were catalysts for a type of culture war with the rationalist thinking of his day, in this case, the scholastic humanism of Gregory's most vocal opponent, the Greek Italian philosopher, Barlaam of Calabria. The similarity of the opposition faced by both Rolle and Palamas should be instructive; it should complicate traditional diametric distinctions between Eastern and Western practices, if not orthodoxies. At the same time, the presuppositions of hesychastic practice are integral to Eastern Orthodox theology:

Human salvation for the Orthodox Church rests in man's restoration to Grace by union with the *Theanthropos*, or God-Man Christ, and the healing of the wound of sin.... Hesychasm, then, which is centered on the enlightenment or deification (θέωσις, or *theosis*, in Greek) of man, perfectly encapsulates the soteriological principles and full scope of the spiritual life of the Eastern church.<sup>584</sup>

This basic orientation to the capacity of human beings for union with God, this understanding of a "new state of created being in Christ,"<sup>585</sup> is the foundation of Gregory's trust in direct, personal experience and hence knowledge of the Divine energies through his

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<sup>584</sup> Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, *Orthodox and Roman Catholic Relations from the Fourth Crusade to the Hesychastic Controversy* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2001), 205.

<sup>585</sup> Meyendorff in Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff, transl. Nicholas Gendle (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 12. Meyendorff summarizes some of Gregory's assertions in *The Triads* as follows: "The anthropological presupposition is that man is capable of transcending his own nature, that, being created according to the image of God, he possesses an organ of vision that is neither the senses, nor the intellect...." [14]. A Christological dimension is also integral to Gregory's optimistic anthropology, for it is through the Incarnation that this knowledge becomes possible, through a fundamental shift in human access to God's light in Christ.

hesychastic practices. Consequently, Gregory and Barlaam traded a series of denunciatory treatises; Gregory wrote nine in all between 1338 and 1341. These, formally entitled “For the Defense of Those Who Practice Sacred Quietude,” were more widely known as *The Triads*, based on their appearance in three groups of three books.<sup>586</sup>

The initial point of contention between Gregory and Balaam was focused on Gregory’s belief in the possibility of apodictic, and not only dialectical, knowledge of God. Whereas Barlaam insisted on the impenetrable mystery of God, unknowable by human beings, Gregory taught a path to enlightenment, understood as visions of the uncreated light of God’s energies, if not essence, through incessant prayer, focus of the mind on the heart, and very specific breathing techniques. Two general councils, held at Constantinople in June and July of 1341, upheld the Hesychasts’ position, but five additional church councils ensued in which the orthodoxy of Hesychasm was repeatedly weighed. Indeed, between 1344 and 1347, Gregory even ended up in prison as a result of a 1344 council ruling, due to shifting imperial political alliances. In the end, in 1351, at a Council at Blachernae Palace, Palamas’ teachings were vindicated.

From within this heady world of public theological conflict and private spiritual striving, Gregory composed sophisticated ascetico-theological treatises, but he also preached homilies, 63 of which remain extant. The bulk of these were delivered in Thessalonica, during his tenure as archbishop there between 1347 and 1359. These include his 43<sup>rd</sup> homily on Matthew’s story of

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<sup>586</sup> Meyendorff in Palamas, *Triads*, 1.

the Canaanite woman,<sup>587</sup> which he introduced as a story about human degradation and “praiseworthy humility.”<sup>588</sup>

Gregory begins by denouncing the proud, and specifically the Pharisees and Scribes as proud and hypocritical teachers of Israel. He then describes the Canaanite woman in pointed contrast to them:

ὡς κρίνον ἱερὸν ἐκ κοιλάδων ἀνέδραμε, τὴν  
τοῦ θεοῦ Πνεύματος εὐωδίαν ἀπὸ τοῦ οἰκείου  
στόματος διὰ τῶν λόγων ἐκπνέουσα.... τίς  
ἀμφιγνοήσει θεῖῳ Πνεύματι κινεῖσθαι τὴν  
γλῶτταν τῆς Χανααναίας...<sup>589</sup>

She sprang up from the valleys like a sacred lily, exhaling with her words the fragrance of the divine Spirit from her mouth.... Who can doubt that the Canaanite woman’s tongue was moved by the divine Spirit?

Not only does the Canaanite woman become the epitome of humility and receptivity in Gregory’s reading, but as “a sweet-sounding vessel” of Jesus’ renown, she becomes both a supplicant and a preacher at once (ἰκέτις ἅμα καὶ κήρυξ γίνεται). A few lines later, she is further described as a teacher from whom all should learn:

Μάθωμεν ἀπὸ τῆς διδασκάλου ταύτης πῶς  
δεῖ προσκαρτερεῖν ταῖς προσευχαῖς, μεθ’ ὅσης  
τῆς ὑπομονῆς, μεθ’ ὅσης τῆς ταπεινώσεως, μεθ’  
οἷας τῆς κατανύξεως.<sup>590</sup>

Let us learn from this teacher how we must persist in our prayers, with how

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<sup>587</sup> Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, ed. and transl. Christopher Veniamin (Dalton, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009), xxv.

<sup>588</sup> Gregory Palamas, *Homiliae xliii-lxiii* 43.1, Theol., Homilet., in ed. P.K. Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, vol. 11 [*Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας* 79. Thessalonica: Πατερικαὶ Ἐκδόσεις Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς, 1986].

<sup>589</sup> Palamas, *Homilia* 43.2 in Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*. Translation from Veniamin, Palamas, *Homilies*, 340.

<sup>590</sup> Palamas, *Homilia* 43.4 in Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*. Translation from Veniamin, Palamas, *Homilies*, 341.

much patience, with how much humility,  
and with how much deep emotion.

Furthermore, Gregory describes Jesus' motives in the same way that Ephrem the Syrian and Chrysostom before him had done. He sees Jesus' silence and testing of the woman as strategic, aimed at producing a more dramatic demonstration of her faith and virtue.

Thus, the portrait of the Canaanite woman as sick sinner in urgent need of remediation and discipline or, at least, definitive healing and salvation is muted, if not completely absent. The sick and sinning woman, mirrored in Jerome's supplicating women at the feet of Hilarion, the sinning monk of the *Rule of the Master*, the list of redeemed sinners in Bernard's anti-Cathar sermons, and the divided soul of Julien de Vézelay's struggling monks, has become, in Gregory, a vessel of the Holy Spirit, a teacher and preacher who, in acknowledging her need of Jesus' help, speaks words that are "truly wise, full of understanding, and tempered with humility:" τοῦτο σοφὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ ρῆμα τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ συνετὸν ἄγαν καὶ τῇ ταπεινώσει συγκεκραμένον.<sup>591</sup> Here is a human soul who, while outcast and imperfect, is still capable, through unceasing and undaunted prayer, of inspiration by the Divine and participation in God's "indescribable love for humanity and His goodness:" τὴν ἀνείκαστον αὐτοῦ φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ ἀγαθότητα. The Canaanite woman has become an exemplary hesychast. Only at this point in Gregory's homily does the shift occur into a more directly paranetic register. Gregory exhorts his listeners:

Κραυγᾶσωμεν ὡς ἡ Χαναναία πρὸς τὸν  
Χριστὸν καὶ προσέλθωμεν καὶ προσπέσωμεν  
καὶ παραμείνωμεν ἐν ταπεινώσει δεόμενοι καὶ  
τῆς παρ' αὐτοῦ διδομένης τοῖς ταπεινοφρονοῦσα

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<sup>591</sup> Palamas, *Homilia* 43.4 in Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*; Translation from Veniamin, Palamas, *Homilies*, 341.

χάριτος ἐπιτύχωμεν, καὶ πρὸς ὕψος ἀναδράμωμεν θεῖον.<sup>592</sup>

Let us cry out to Christ like the Canaanite woman, fall down before him and persevere in humble prayer, and we shall obtain the grace which is given to the humbleminded, and speedily ascend to divine heights.

The rest of the sermon is an extended meditation on the misery and grief experienced in life, brought on by the viper of physical desire, the savage lion of anger and the pit of destruction that is the love of money. Gregory's parting shots detail humanity's shameful misuse of reason, with which human beings were honored, but which they have turned into the servant of vices. In the final lines, he reminds his listeners that returning again to humility and prayer they may be glorified by the Son of God.<sup>593</sup>

Thus, even in this sermon taught by one confident about the promises of human-divine synergism and the potential for the glorification and enlightenment of human beings who struggle to participate in the uncreated energies of God's goodness, even here the vicious and sinful nature of human agency stands as counter-weight. Even a Canaanite woman who is a sacred lily, a teacher and preacher to all, is outcast, defiled, and in need of blessing and inspiration. She is both "base" and "a temple of the undivided Divinity... who communes worthily with the divine ray of His Body which is within us..."<sup>594</sup> Through undaunted prayer, the "fragrance of the divine Spirit is within her mouth."<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Palamas, *Homilia* 43.7 in Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα* Translation from Veniamin, Palamas, *Homilies*, 342.

<sup>593</sup> Palamas, *Homilia* 43.10-12 in Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*; transl. Veniamin, *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*, 344-5.

<sup>594</sup> Palamas, *Triads* I, 3.38, ed. J. Meyendorff, *Gregory Palamas: The Triads* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 193.

<sup>595</sup> Palamas, *Homilia* 43.2 in Chrestou, *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ἅπαντα τὰ ἔργα*. Translation from Veniamin, Palamas, *Homilies*, 340.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

The possibility of transformation, for good or ill, is at the heart of the readings of the Canaanite woman in this chapter. In the stories rehearsed here of her conversion, repentance, faith, tenacity, humiliation, correction, discipline, and healing, the spiritual plasticity of the Christian soul is calculated and judged over and over, in search of some reassurance that human sinfulness can be conquered and redemption either won or conferred. With Gregory of Palamas, monastic striving towards a transfigured body and a purified mind reaches a kind of apex. But the hesychast tradition of mental prayer and direct access to the Divine reaches back to practitioners of the earliest monasticism, appearing in the writings of Evagrius of Ponticus, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Macarius, and John Climacus, as well as in the medieval sectarianism of the Messalians and the Cathars.<sup>596</sup> The counteraction of communal intervention, discipline, and correction is also evident in the texts in this chapter. Obscurantism and notions of “mystery” in the service of power and hierarchy offset claims to direct knowledge of, and access to, God. Direct individual access to God and Scriptures, without the mediation or intervention of the Church, continues to be an issue in the Protestant readings of the next chapter.

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<sup>596</sup> Meyendorff, *Palamas: Triads*, 2-4.

## 5.0 “NOT THE GIFT BUT THE GIVER:” PROTESTANT READERS FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The capacity of the human soul to further its own spiritual healing and transformation, as inferred from the story of the Canaanite woman, is a central concern of the readings considered in Chapter 4. The relative potentials of askesis, divine grace, free will, and human-divine synergy are reflected in their interpretations of the source and development of the Canaanite woman’s “faith.” Similarly, in this chapter several readings weigh the relative roles of individual Christian, institutionalized church and sacraments, and God in the process of justification. These are themes which had resurfaced repeatedly in the serial rivalries behind earlier readings: Origen vs. Methodius, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome; Cassian (and Pelagius) vs. Augustine; Rolle and his *liber experientiae* vs. monastic rule; Palamas vs. Barlaam. In like manner, the question of the potential of the autonomous individual Christian soul informed the spiritual renewal movements of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. This issue of autonomy is fundamental to the anti-authoritarianism, populist preaching, and vernacular Bibles of the Waldensians, the anti-ecclesiasticism and anti-Trinitarianism of the Cathars/Albigensians, and the independence and anti-monasticism of the Beguines. Their solutions certainly provoked violent and repressive responses from the Catholic church, manifest, for example, in the 1208 Albigensian Crusade and the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council’s institution of mandatory confession and prohibition of new orders.

## 5.1 LUTHER AND CALVIN

The Reformation readings of the Canaanite woman which appear in the 16<sup>th</sup> century work of Martin Luther and John Calvin are heirs to these persistent preoccupations as well; they demonstrate the quintessential protestant truth that it is not the “gift” of faith or spiritual knowledge or acumen that matter, but the “giver,” the God who saves human beings through his son, Jesus. Indeed, Luther’s 95 theses on the power and efficacy of indulgences, *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*, were directly preceded in 1517 by his 97 Theses disputing many of the premises and claims of scholastic theology, *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*. In this document, Luther reevaluates traditional medieval arguments about religious justification, salvation, and the human will and intellect. He denounces the scholastics, Aristotle, upon whom they depend, William of Ockham, Gabriel Biel, and Duns Scotus, as well as “the philosophers.” Specifically, he criticizes their application of syllogistic logic to theological truths beyond their understanding and their optimism about human beings in a state of nature, prior to the free infusion of divine grace. Theses 5-7, 18, 30, 40-41, and 47 will suffice to illustrate his argument.

5. *Falsitas est quod appetitus liber potest in utrunque oppositorum, immo nec liber sed captivus est. Contra communen.*
6. *Falsitas est quod voluntas possit se conformare dictamini recto naturaliter. Contra Sco. Gab.*
7. *Sed necessario elicit actum difforem et malum sine gratia dei...*
18. *Diligere deum super omnia naturaliter. Est terminus fictus, sicut Chimera. Contra com. fer...*
30. *Ex parte autem hominis nihil nisi indispositio, immo rebellion gratiae gratiam praecedit.*
40. *Non efficitur iusti iusta operando, sed iusti facti operamur iusta. Contra philosophos.*
41. *Tota fere Aristotelis Ethica pessima est gratiae inimica. Contra Scholast.*



47. *Nulla forma syllogistica tenet in terminis divinis. Contra Card.*<sup>597</sup>

5. It is false to state that man's inclination is free to choose between either of two opposites. Indeed, the inclination is not free, but captive. This is said in opposition to common opinion.
6. It is false to state that the will can by nature conform to correct precept. This is said in opposition to Scotus and Gabriel.
7. As a matter of fact, without the grace of God the will produces an act that is perverse and evil.
18. To love God above all things by nature is a fictitious term, a chimera, as it were. This is contrary to common teaching.
30. On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except indisposition and even rebellion against grace.
40. We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This, in opposition to the philosophers.
41. Virtually the entire Ethics of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. This, in opposition to the scholastics.
47. No syllogistic form is valid when applied to divine terms. This in opposition to the Cardinal.<sup>598</sup>

Luther denies the potential of human moral and intellectual effort in a way which is more typical, in the context of the readings in Chapter 4, of church-aligned suppressors of autonomous spiritual movements than of reformers. He rejects the ambition to become like God through askesis or study, as well as the notion that there is some inherent divine spark within human beings that can be instructed, nurtured, and developed into a state of purification. He sees the optimism of Ockham, Biel, and Scotus as being no different than that of the Pelagians and places himself, instead, firmly in the tradition of Augustine.<sup>599</sup>

Luther's argument, however, was not church-aligned, or rather, it was not status-quo-aligned; it aimed not to suppress and preserve, but to reform. His attack on the ideals of spiritual

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<sup>597</sup> Martin Luther, *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*, WA 1, 224-26. "The Cardinal" (*contra Card.*) in thesis 47 refers to Peter of Ailly (1350-1420) who was a nominalist theologian.

<sup>598</sup> This translation is taken from *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (eds. Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell; transl. Harold J. Grimm; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

<sup>599</sup> Luther's very first thesis defends Augustine's depiction of heretics. Later, in thesis 28, Luther quotes Scripture passages that the Ockhamists had cited to argue for the role of human initiative in salvation (Zech. 1:3, Jas. 4:8, Matt. 7:7, Jer. 29:13, Luke 11:9) and concludes: *nihil aliud quam quod pelagiani dixerunt asseritur*, "this is no different from asserting what the Pelagians have said" (WA 1, 225).

ascent and purification was also aimed at the perceived role that church sacraments played in the purification and justification of the individual Christian. Steven Ozment has described the connection as follows:

The same principle underlay descriptions of human nature and the efficacy of the sacraments. Medieval theologians commonly assumed that an inextinguishable spark of goodness existed in man's reason and will, a natural point at which every person, even if he did not consciously choose to be such, was conformed to God... Sacramental grace was described as a *gratia gratum faciens*, a grace that transformed man, purifying the soul and subjecting it to God... The conviction that God and man must be like each other if they were ever to be at one with each other became the theological cornerstone of the oppressive religious culture of the later Middle Ages.<sup>600</sup>

Whereas the earlier ascetics who interpreted the Canaanite woman's unceasing prayer and faith had used her direct exchange with Jesus as a model for their own individual spiritual development in direct relationship to God, Luther was engaged in reforming the church's role in that process, providing more direct access to Scripture, full administration of the sacraments to the laity, and denying the Church's claim to control God's grace. His two sermons on Matt. 15:21-28, then, have a different emphasis. They do not dwell on the Canaanite woman's humility or submissiveness, understood as spiritual acumen or progress, but rather they explore the workings of God's grace, through her direct and continual prayer, her undeterred faith in Jesus, and Jesus' mercy in spite of her sinfulness. His focus is on trust and belief in God, rather than the human capacity for spiritual transformation or advancement.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 242-43.

<sup>601</sup> In spite of Luther's critiques of the overall optimism of William of Ockham and Duns Scotus in his 97 theses, Ozment attributes Luther's view that "God and man related to one another by will and by words" rather than through some sort of metaphysical union at least partially to his early exposure to Ockhamist theology and related Scotist *covenantal theology*: "Ockham rejected the view that a saving relationship with God depended in any final sense on qualities within an individual or on metaphysical connections between God, grace, and the soul... For Scotus and Ockham, salvation depended upon the trustworthiness of God's word, not on the character of the church, the sacraments, or the souls of believers" (Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 244). Ockham's nominalism underlies this reading

### 5.1.1 Martin Luther: Predigt am Sonntag Reminiscere and Auss den andern Sontag nun der fasten Euangelion

Luther preached two sermons on Matt 15:21-28, the first on February 21, 1524 and the second in 1525. The 1524 sermon, *Predigt am Sonntag Reminiscere*, was delivered during the season of Lent. While Luther acknowledges the liturgical context of pre-Easter preparation, confession, and prayer, he clarifies in the very first paragraph that Matt 15:21-28 is about the daily internal struggles of Christian faith and not about an annual externally dictated “popish piety:”

*Aber es ist eine schlechte und rechte päpstliche Frömmigkeit, die sich ein ganz Jahr lasst sparen bis auf diese Zeit. Und wird mit elendem Fasten und unwilligem Beichten, da man doch feinen Befehl von hat, verrichtet.*<sup>602</sup>

But this is a poor popish piety which lets a whole year go by until this time and is performed with miserable fasting and unwilling confession because people still follow a fancy command.<sup>603</sup>

Instead, Luther explains that this important and difficult gospel lesson is no less than the story of the struggle of faith itself and the fear unto death before God: *es ist eine hohe und schwere Lehre von dem rechten Kampf und Todesangst im Glauben vor Gott.*<sup>604</sup> The Devil, who tormented the Canaanite woman’s daughter, also afflicts every faithful soul—the Canaanite

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of Luther’s developing tenet of justification by faith: “terms or verbal conventions” link the mind to reality and therefore “divine promises” and not human righteousness link the soul to God.

<sup>602</sup> Martin Luther, *Um Sonntage Reminiscere* 1, Johannes Georg Walch, *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*, 23 vols. (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Berlag, 1883), 13a:254. This is just one of the versions of this sermon, which appears in the standard Weimar edition in a mix of Latin and German and in the *Sämmtliche Schriften* in German. I chose the German version because it appears to be closer to the version preached, in the *Sämmtliche Schriften* vernacular, incorporating more direct discourse, less revised for posterity.

<sup>603</sup> Translations of Luther’s sermons are my own.

<sup>604</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 1, SS, 13a:254.

woman, Luther, his congregation—stirring up doubts and fears that God has abandoned and forsaken them:

*Solches ist eine harte und böse Anfechtung, wenn der Teufel also im Herzen zuschnüret, und spricht: Was willst du lange beten, du bist doch mein; hebe dafür an und fluche Gott, es gilt eben gleich viel; du wirst doch nicht selig. Solch Teufelsgedanken können ein ungeübt Herz hindern.*<sup>605</sup>

Such is the hard and vicious challenge when the devil also binds up the heart, and says: What do you want to pray for so long? You're still mine. Rise up instead and curse God, it does not really matter. You will not be saved. Such devilish thoughts can hold back an untrained heart.

The Canaanite woman becomes an exemplum of undaunted trust, faith, and undeterred prayer. The congregation is repeatedly exhorted to imitate her. Jesus' three rebuffs are restaged; in each case, Luther recreates for the congregation the confusion that must have gone through the Canaanite woman's mind before she overcame her doubts. Long sections of internal monologue representing the struggle of (her) faith punctuate and extend the elliptical gospel dialogue. For instance, in response to Christ's silence, Luther suggests:

*Denn sie sollte je gedacht haben: Wo ist nun der Mann, der mir von jedermann so gerühmt ist, wie er barmherzig sei, erhöre bald und helfe gern? Aber wie ich sehe und erfarhe, so hört er, wenn er will, und nicht, wenn wir es bedürfen.*<sup>606</sup>

Then she must have thought: Where now is the man who has been so praised by all the world to me, how he is merciful and gladly and directly hears prayers and helps? But I see and experience how he hears when he wishes and not when we need it.

Luther does not limit this stream-of-consciousness technique to the Canaanite woman's state of mind, but also uses it to represent the fears and struggles of his congregation and himself. He repeatedly notes how much worse his and the congregation's responses would be in similar

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<sup>605</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 6, SS, 13a:256.

<sup>606</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 9, SS, 13a:257.

circumstances. His detailed depictions of internal doubt create a sense of immediate spiritual vulnerability and peril:

*Denn es ist kein Scherz, wenn das Gewissen da steht und spricht: Ah, du bist der keiner, die beten sollen, du gehörst zu Christo nicht; lasse Paulum, Petrum beten, dich hört unser Herr Gott nicht; du hast keinen Glauben, bist vielleicht nicht erwählet, bist nicht werth noch genügsam zu solchem hohen Werk, das du vor Gott treten.*<sup>607</sup>

For it is no joke, when one's conscience appears and says, Ah, you are not one who should pray, you do not belong to Christ; let Paul and Peter pray, our Lord God does not hear you; you have no faith, maybe you are not chosen, you are not worthy for such important work as to step forward before God.

Thus, Luther stands in the dramatizing tradition of Chrysostom, depicting the Canaanite woman, himself, and his congregation through internal monologue and direct discourse with Jesus. Equally dramatic is Luther's elaboration of the Canaanite woman's witty retort, her pithy one-liner, into several lines of argument, ending in his amazed appreciation of how she has "entrapped" Jesus with his own words:

*Fängt also den Herrn Christum mit seinen eigenen Worten. Ja, das noch mehr ist, mit dem Hunderecht gewinnt sie das Kindesrecht. Denn wo will er hin, der Liebe Jesus? Er hat sich selbst gefangen und muss jetzt fort.*<sup>608</sup>

She entraps the Lord Christ with his own words. Yes, and even more, she wins the rights of a child with the rights of a dog. Then where will he go, the beloved Jesus? He has entrapped himself and must now comply.

However much Luther admires and takes courage from the Canaanite woman's insistence in arguing with Jesus, he ultimately emphasizes her reliance not on reason or "debate," but on faith alone: *Aber das Weiblein lässt sich nicht ansechten, disputirt nicht bei sich selbst*; "But the little woman does not let herself speculate; she does not dispute with herself."<sup>609</sup> Two paragraphs later, Luther repeats this point, putting into the mouth of the Canaanite woman an explicit

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<sup>607</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 4, SS, 13a:256.

<sup>608</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 16, SS, 13a:259.

<sup>609</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 5, SS, 13a:256.

acknowledgment of her own sinfulness, a primary reliance on Jesus' mercy, and a rejection of scholastic debate:

*Denn ob ich gleich ein Sünder bin, so Weiss ich doch, dass darum mein Herr Christus nicht ein Sünder ist, sondern er bleibt gerecht und gnädig. Darum will ich getrost zu ihm rufen und schreien, und mich sonst an nichts kehren; denn ich habe jetzt nicht Weile zu disputiren, ob ich erwählet sei oder nicht.*<sup>610</sup>

For though I am such a sinner, I still know that my Lord Christ is not a sinner, but rather he is ever just and merciful. Therefore will I confidently call out and cry to him and turn to nothing else; for I do not have time to dispute whether I am saved or not.

Over the course of the sermon, Luther repeatedly stresses her explicit unworthiness and status as non-elect; she is not from Abraham's seed (*Abrahams Samen*).<sup>611</sup> He appears to find great comfort in the gospel story's confirmation of God's gracious justification of human beings in spite of their sinfulness, and, by extension, its consonance with his own doctrine of *simul justus et peccator*. Accordingly, he notes several times that her story is meant not only as a lesson but as a consolation:

*Sonderlich aber tröstet uns diese Historia wider die gemeine Anfechtung, der wir unser Lebenlang nicht mögen gar abkommen, das der Glaube und das Vertrauen dahinfällt, wenn wir an unsere Unwürdigkeit und sündig Leben gedenken. Denn so Christus mehr aus unsere Würdigkeit und Verdienst, denn aus seine Barmherzigkeit und unsere Noth sehen wollte, würde er diese Fräulein nicht geholfen haben.*<sup>612</sup>

But this story especially comforts us with the common challenge with which we have to struggle our whole lives long, that faith and trust fail when we think of our unworthiness and sinful life. For if Christ had wanted to look at our worthiness and merit more than at his mercy and our need, he would not have helped this woman.

Therefore, even though Luther includes a two-line version of the traditional anti-Jewish lesson-trope, asserting that the Canaanite woman's trials and persistent faith are a lesson for the Jews,

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<sup>610</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 7, SS, 13a:256-57.

<sup>611</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 3, SS, 13a:255.

<sup>612</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 26, SS, 13a:262-63.

that they might learn from a heathen how to believe in Jesus,<sup>613</sup> the sermon in its entirety presents Matt 15:21-28 as a lesson in faith and trust for everyone.

Luther concludes his sermon with a long meditation on the reasons why God delays in answering prayer. He compares the trials of the Canaanite woman to those of Joseph, who suffered faithfully over the course of thirteen years of unanswered prayer and was finally reunited with father and family. He exhorts his congregation to hold fast to faith in God's promises even during periods when prayers seem ineffective. He even points to the continuing power of the Pope and the Turks as examples of inscrutable divine delays:

*Also verzieht er jertz und auch, lässt den Papit und Türken wider uns toben. Wir schreien und tun jämmerlich, er aber hört nicht, und stellt sich, als kenne er unser nicht, last uns so jämmerlich zurichten, als hatten wir keinen Gott.<sup>614</sup>*

So he also excuses at present the Pope and the Turks, he lets them rage against us. We cry and do wretchedly, but he does not hear and acts as if he does not know us, he leaves us so miserably wounded, as if we had no God.

Yet, Luther insists, if only they keep faith, God will say yes to their prayers in the end.

Luther's second sermon on the Canaanite woman, *Auss den andern Sonntag nun der fasten Euangelion*, a sermon on fasting, was delivered just one year later, and it reproduces much the same reading as the first. Matt 15:21-28 remains the story of faith's struggle in the face of trials and doubts. The same internal monologues and streams of consciousness appear, sometimes elaborated in detail and drama but not altered in any significant way. As in the former sermon, the Canaanite woman overcomes Jesus with his own words.

What is noteworthy is Luther's expanded reading of Jesus' rebuffs. Earlier, in the 1524 sermon, he acknowledges, indeed dramatically stages, the painful experience of feeling God's

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<sup>613</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 19, SS, 13a:260.

<sup>614</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 24, SS, 13a:261.

absence and indifference. While he insists that God's *promises* are never absent and that his congregation should never stop trusting in them, a feeling of abandonment plagues the sermon (*als hatten wir keinen Gott*<sup>615</sup>). In 1525, on the other hand, Luther recuperates the never-failing presence of God as "a most deeply hid promise" and "the promise of help deeply hidden under the denial."<sup>616</sup> He qualifies Jesus' refusals as follows:

*Denn er spricht nicht: Ich will sie nicht hören, sondern schweiget still, sagt weder ja noch nein. Also spricht er auch nicht, Sie sei nicht vom hause Israel, sondern, Er sei alleine zum hause Israel gesand. Lessts also hangen und schweben zwischen nein und ja. Also spricht er nicht: du bist ein hund, man soll dir nicht vom brod der kinder geben, sondern, Es sei nicht sein, usw. Lessts also hangen und schweben zwisschen nein und ja.... Ja eitel ja ist drinnen, aber gar tief und heimlich und scheint eitel nein.*<sup>617</sup>

For he does not say: I will not hear you, but rather he keeps quiet, saying neither yes nor no. He also does not say, you are not from the house of Israel, but rather that he is sent only to the house of Israel. He leaves it hanging, suspended between no and yes. He also does not say: you are a dog, one should not give the bread of the children to you, but rather it is not fitting, etc. So, he leaves this also hanging, suspended between no and yes.... Yes, an absolute yes is in it, but very deep and hidden, and it seems to be an absolute no.

There is an abbreviated version of this idea in the first sermon, but it is amplified considerably in the second. The conclusion in both cases is: *Ja unter und uber dem Nein mit festem glauben auss Gotts wort fassen und halten*: "Hold fast to the yes under and over the no through firm faith in the word of God."<sup>618</sup>

Luther's reading of the Canaanite woman is direct and personal; it seeks to provoke an immediate identification in the congregation with her sinfulness, need, and faith. It deemphasizes human spiritual strength and exhorts faithful reliance on God's power to save through grace.

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<sup>615</sup> Luther, *Sonntage Reminiscere* 24, SS, 13a:261.

<sup>616</sup> Martin Luther, *Auss den andern Sontag nun der fasten*, WA 17, 203.

<sup>617</sup> Luther, *Andern Sontag*, WA 17, 203.

<sup>618</sup> Luther, *Andern Sontag*, WA 17, 203.



### 5.1.2 John Calvin: *Commentarius in Harmoniam Evangelicam*

In contrast, Calvin's incisive reading of the passage in his *Commentarius in Harmoniam Evangelicam*, and his depiction of her condition and her motivations, is largely intellectual, as though he has pinned the Canaanite woman, like a moth, to the wall for study. This is to be expected, perhaps, since Luther is preaching encouragement to his congregation and Calvin is engaged in formal exegesis and systematic theology. Still, much of the content of his interpretation matches Luther's. He focuses on the story as an early signal of the Gentile mission and a lesson to the Jews, "whose ungodliness was so stupid" (*quorum tam stupida fuit impietas*).<sup>619</sup> He emphasizes the Canaanite woman's sinfulness and acknowledges that it stands as a symbol for everyone's sin. Moreover, in Calvin's commentary the assignment of sin to the Canaanite woman and her status as caveat for Christians bears the unmistakable imprint of the tenet of total depravity:

*Caeterum hic iaceat necesse est carnis superbia, ubi audimus, nos origine esse canes.... Sed fecit Adae perfidia et defectio, ut Dominus merito cum canibus in sterquilinum proiciat, qui primi parentis culpa facti sunt degeneres.*<sup>620</sup>

The pride of the flesh must needs be humbled to the ground when we hear that by origin we are dogs.... The perfidy and defection of Adam brought it to pass that the Lord deservedly cast on to the dung-heap along with the dogs those who by the fault of the first parent became degenerate."<sup>621</sup>

Calvin's interpretation of the Canaanite woman was published in 1555 in Latin and translated into French in 1558, just 30-odd years after Luther's sermons, and questions about the mechanisms and preconditions of salvation continue to dominate, even if they are less

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<sup>619</sup> John Calvin, *Comm. in Harmoniam Evangelicam*, Mt. 15:21-28 (*CorRef.*, 73 [1891], 455.

<sup>620</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 459.

<sup>621</sup> This and following translations of Calvin's reading of Matt 15:21-28 are from *Calvin's Commentaries II: A Harmony of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke*, (eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; transl. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), 166-171.

personalized and immediate. Luther peoples his sermon with Peter, Paul, the Jews, his congregation, the Pope, the Turks, Jesus, the Canaanite woman, and himself. In contrast, Calvin's reading is punctuated by philological, historical, biblical, and doctrinal precepts. For instance, he arbitrates the meaning of Matthew's use of "Canaanite" and Mark's use of "Syrophoenician" to identify the woman; the different meanings of the expression "Son of David" for the Jews and for the Church; the nature of faith and prayer; and so on.

Yet Calvin also struggles with the role of God and the role of the Canaanite woman in this miracle story, specifically, with what sort of grace is at work, for whom, and by what means. From the start, he is careful to establish the Canaanite woman's precise standing in relation to others as well as the source of her faith: *...cui nihil commune erat cum filiis Abrahae, et ad quam foedus minime in speciem pertinebat, nulla voce aut signo invitata ulro accurrerit*:<sup>622</sup> The Canaanite woman, for Calvin, "had nothing in common with the children of Abraham," "no part or lot in the covenant," and "no sign or word inviting her." Yet she runs to Jesus. Later, he asks if what she embodies is in fact faith, since it appears to proceed only from her own understanding or experience, as involuntary, perhaps, as breathing: *Quis ergo mulierem hanc fide praeditam esse dicet, quae tacente Christo fiduciam ex sensu proprio spirat?*: "Who can say, then, that this woman was endowed with faith, who, when Christ was silent, breathes out her trust from her own feelings?"<sup>623</sup>

These are highly problematic propositions for Calvin. Her persistence is a conundrum:

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<sup>622</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 456.

<sup>623</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 457. Torrance and Torrance translate *sensus* as "feeling." However, this word also carries connotations of perception, thought, and understanding, and not just emotion. The proposition of independent thought or intellectual understanding was as problematic as undirected emotion. Would a woman be more likely to "feel" her way to the truth for Calvin? Or to "think" her way?

*Videtur tamen hoc fidei et invocationis naturae esse contrarium, qualiter eam Paulus describit ad Rom. 10, 14, quod scilicet nemo rite precari queat nisi praeunte verbo Dei.*<sup>624</sup>

Yet this seems to be contra to the nature of faith and prayer as Paul describes it in Rom. 10:14, that no one can pray aright unless the Word of God has led the way.

In response, Calvin builds on the exegetical topos of internal revelation:

*Notandum est, quamvis tunc supprimeret oris verba, intus tamen loquutum esse mulieries animo, itaque acrum hunc instinctum externae praedicationis vice fuisse.*<sup>625</sup>

We must note that although he [Jesus] suppressed his words, he spoke inwardly to the woman's mind and so this secret instinct stood in place of the external preaching.

Calvin carefully locates the Canaanite woman's faith at the intersection of "the hearing of faith" (*ex auditu fidei*), "the teaching which she had once learnt, that Christ came as the Redeemer" (*resonat doctrina illa quam semel didicit, quod Christus advenerit redemptor*), and "the testimonies of Scripture," the last of which offsets doubts raised by unanswered prayers for all believers.<sup>626</sup> This matrix of catalysts or mediators of faith enables Calvin's leap to a Canaanite woman who is aware not of her daughter's need for an exorcism but of her own need for redemption; indeed, she even appears to have some notion of Christ as redeemer, and therefore of atonement theology. At the same time, Calvin makes clear that Jesus, not the woman or "external preaching," is the engine, or agent, of her responding faith.

In spite of this promising line of argument, however, the suggestion that Jesus would praise a faith unschooled in "the doctrine of the Law" (*non educatam in legis doctrina*) continues to be a concern in Calvin's treatment of the passage; for Calvin, doctrine, faith and prayer were

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<sup>624</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 457.

<sup>625</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 457.

<sup>626</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 457.

inextricably connected. So, he concedes that the Canaanite woman is born of *a people*—a “heathen nation, not taught in the doctrine of the Law,” but came “of her own accord to Christ to supplicate His help.”<sup>627</sup> Calvin then spends considerable time explaining precisely how it was that her exemplary faith was neither “implicit” nor “rashly invested,” but must necessarily have been the fruit of “a tiny seed of doctrine” and specifically of the Law and the prophets. It is worth quoting his argument on these points fully:

*Quanquam a grege Domini extranea erat haec mulier, gustum tamen aliquem pietatis imbiberat: nam sine aliqua promissionum notitia Christum non vocasset filium Davidis...celebris tamen vigebat promissae redemptionis fama... quum de Messia erat sermo, tritum apud eos erat nomen filii Davidis, et quidem in ore omnium volitabat haec confessio. Sed quum apud ipsos obsolevisset vera fides...ut promissionum odor ad vicinas gentes pervenerit. Quanquam ergo mulier haec a nullo magistro familiariter edocta erat, fidem tamen de Christo non temere sibi fabricavit, sed concepit ex lege et prophetis. Quare non minus insulse quam impie canis ille Servetus, ut fidem promissionibus nudaret, abusus est hoc exemplo. Secundum hunc sensum non nego, quia possit interdum aliqua esse fides implicita, cui scilicet non constat diserta distinctaque sanae doctrinae cognitio, modo hec teneamus, fidem semper ex Dei verbo nasci...*<sup>628</sup>

Although this woman was outside the Lord’s flock, she had received a certain taste of godliness, for without some knowledge of the promises she could not have called Christ the Son of David...there was a vigorous and widespread awareness of the promised redemption... it was quite common to call the Messiah the Son of David and indeed this confession was universal [among the Jews]... but when true faith fell into disuse [among the Jews]... the odour of the promises spread into Gentile lands. Therefore, although this woman had not received direct teaching from any master, yet she did not rashly invest for herself a faith about Christ, but conceived one from the Law and the prophets. Therefore, that dog Servetus was absurd as well as ungodly in misusing this example to strip faith of the promises... I do not deny that there may sometimes be a certain implicit faith, that is, one that does not consist in an express and distinct knowledge of sound doctrine. But we must hold that faith is always born of God’s Word....

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<sup>627</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 456: “*ex profana gente natam... ultro venisse ad Christum, ut suppliciter opem ab ipso petere.*”

<sup>628</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 456-57.

The reference to Michael Servetus and Calvin's use of the canine epithet in denouncing him provides a clue to the intensity of Calvin's insistence on the Canaanite woman's knowledge of the Law and the prophets. These lines, indeed the full passage quoted above, are part and parcel of a sustained 20-year argument between Calvin and Servetus that featured heated, often vindictive disputes, primarily about the doctrine of the Trinity but also about the nature and workings of justification. As a result, Calvin strategically and systematically instigated the trial and execution of Servetus as a heretic by the Geneva City Council in October, 1553.<sup>629</sup>

Michael Servetus was a Spanish theologian and physician who studied first at the University of Barcelona in 1526, then the University of Toulouse in 1527, and finally at the University of Paris in 1533 at the same time that Calvin was a student there. His learning encompassed mathematics, law, geography, and medicine. He also mastered Hebrew, Greek, and Latin and thus was able to interpret Biblical texts with a firm grasp of their original languages. He is thought to be the first to have discovered the mechanics of pulmonary circulation. He was well-read in the classics. At an earlier trial in Paris at which he defended his teachings on astrology, he argued his case, citing Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen. He was acquitted by the Inquisition, but barred from teaching the subject further by the faculty at the University of

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<sup>629</sup> For example, in 1550, in the French translation of his tract, *De Scandalis*, Calvin revealed Servetus' alias and whereabouts publicly, in effect informing the Inquisition where they could find him, though no arrest followed. In 1553, he blocked the distribution of *Christianismi restitutio* in Geneva, Frankfurt, and Lyon. He conspired to have his friend Guillaume de Trie write de Trie's cousin, Antoine Arneys, in Lyon, apprising him of Servetus' heresies and including the first pages of *Christianismi restitutio* (which de Trie could only have obtained from Calvin), so that the Catholic authorities in France would also learn of him. When the Inquisitor of Lyon could find no damning evidence on Servetus, Calvin—through de Trie—sent him the copy of his own *Institutio religionis christianae* with Servetus' "blasphemous" annotations written in the margins. And so on, all the way to Calvin's central role in the trial in Geneva and Servetus' execution. Marion Hillar and Claire Allen have summarized the evidence for Calvin's sustained plot against Servetus; cf. M. Hillar and Claire S. Allen, *Michael Servetus: Intellectual Giant, Humanist, and Martyr* (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 134-143. It is clear that Calvin saw Servetus as a political liability in his efforts to establish and preserve the Reformed movement in the face of Catholic opposition.

Paris.<sup>630</sup> Throughout his career, Servetus tried repeatedly to connect with humanist and Protestant leaders and to participate in the Protestant reformation. He wrote to Erasmus, whom his own mentor, Jose de Quintanas, had admired, but received no reply. He went to Basel, where, as Oecolampadius' houseguest, he argued with his host for months, but they never found common ground. Even living under a pseudonym in Vienne, France, he wrote to Calvin between 1546-47, trying to wrestle through their differences and find support.

The issues that separated Servetus from his Protestant (and Catholic) contemporaries, however, were far from trivial in the eyes of his opponents. They found three particularly insupportable. First, Servetus rejected Trinitarianism, for which he found no basis in the scriptures. In his first inflammatory pamphlet, *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, he argued that Jesus was the Son of God by grace and not nature.<sup>631</sup> At the same time, in another early pamphlet, *De Fide et Iustitia Regni Christi*, Servetus developed a mystical exposition of the nature of Christ's flesh through which he attempted to serve as a mediator in the quarrel between reformers about Eucharistic doctrine.<sup>632</sup> His efforts were derided and ignored. Melancthon, for instance, wrote that Servetus suffered from "confused imaginings:" "On justification he is plainly demented."<sup>633</sup> In *De Scandalis*, Calvin referred to Servetus' understanding of the deification of Christ's flesh as destroying entirely the reality of his human nature, so that "When he boldly calls Christ God,

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<sup>630</sup> John F. Fulton, *Michael Servetus: Humanist and Martyr* (New York: Herbert Reichner, 1953), 30.

<sup>631</sup> In his sequel, *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo*, he modified this categorical conclusion, explaining that Jesus shared in the nature of the glory of God and that, while the incarnate Jesus and the pre-existent Word were one, the pre-existent Word had no substance until Jesus came. Cf. Hillar and Allen, *Michael Servetus*, 30-31.

<sup>632</sup> Hillar and Allen, *Servetus*, 31.

<sup>633</sup> Melancthon, *Opera*, Letter to Ioachimo Camerario of February 9, 1533; 2:630. Cited in Hillar and Allen, *Servetus*, 35.

some vague shadowy specter is invented for us, inasmuch as Christ was merely a Platonic ‘idea’ from the beginning.”<sup>634</sup>

Secondly, Servetus rejected infant baptism as meaningless, since babies cannot consciously affirm their own faith. For Servetus baptism initiated the conscious believer into enhanced awareness, new being-in-Christ, and spiritual knowledge, as well as a personal covenant with Christ. For such transformations, intellectual and spiritual maturity is required.<sup>635</sup> If baptism represents initiation into such a state for Servetus, then infant baptism logically becomes nonsensical. At stake, however, were fundamental Protestant tenets that undergirded the doctrine of divine election: “This ritual [infant baptism] represented a symbol of justification by faith, for what occurs in this act depends not upon human religious inclination or achievement but upon divine will or what God does.”<sup>636</sup> Yet—and here is the critical difference for his doctrine of justification and his reading of the Canaanite woman as well—Servetus did not see human effort and divine will as mutually exclusive, or opposed, forces. For him, the illuminated spirit of the believer was a mirror in which the glory of the Lord, the face of Christ, is both

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<sup>634</sup> Calvin, *De Scandalis*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Eduard Reuss, *CorReform* 8:49 (Brunswick, NJ: C. A. Schwetschke and Son, 1870; reprint, Johnston Reprint Corp., 1964): *Et tamen Deum plenis buccis Christum vocando, umbratile nescio quod spectrum nobis comminiscitur: utpote qui ab initio platonica duntaxat idea fuerit*. All translations of passages from *De Scandalis* are from Calvin, *Concerning Scandals*, John W. Fraser, transl. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 66-67.

<sup>635</sup> Cf. Servetus, *Christianismi restit.* (Reprint of: Vienne: B. Arnollat, 1553; Frankfurt: Minerva, 1966), 570-576 for Servetus’ discussion of baptism, which includes a list of 25 theses and concludes with the following pronouncement: *Paedobaptismum esse dico detestandam abominationem, spiritus sancti extinctionem, ecclesiae Dei desolationem, totius professionis Christianae confusionem, innovationis, per Christum factae, abolitionem, ac totius eius regni conculcationem.*: “I call infant baptism a detestable abomination, an extinction of the Holy Spirit, a desolation of the Church of God, a confusing of the whole Christian profession, an abolishing of the renewal made by Christ, and a trampling of his whole kingdom” [Servetus, *Christianismi restit.*, 576].

<sup>636</sup> Jerome Friedman, *Michael Servetus: a case study in total heresy*, vol 163 of *Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance, Collection spéciale: CER* (Geneva, Librairie Droz, S.A., 1978), 83.

reflected and represented: *Nos ergo revelata facie gloriam domini, id est, faciem Christi, illuminato spiritus speculo in nobis speculamur & repraesentamus.*<sup>637</sup>

Finally, Servetus' understanding of justification, developed in *De Fide et Iustitia Regni Christi*, was an ongoing point of conflict between Servetus and Calvin (and others). It is this issue that forms the basis for Calvin's outburst against Servetus in his reading of Matt 15:21-28. It is worth examining the arguments on both sides, if briefly, since they are germane to the focus in the readings of Matt 15:21-28, in this chapter as well as those in chapter 4, on the relative roles of individual Christian, institutionalized church, and God in the process of justification.

In 1532, just after completing his tracts on the Trinity, Servetus produced *De Fide et Iustitia Regni Christi, On the Righteousness of the Kingdom of Christ*. This text embodies Servetus' vision of a simpler Christianity, deeply formed out of the Scriptures and there is an ingenuous, almost giddy quality to its confident reliance on Biblical texts. The opening pages are a study of Pauline passages on justification through grace in Christ, by means of which Servetus builds a portrait of freely justified, spirit-imbued believers, incorporating his own understandings of the Biblical language of "Christ" and "Spirit" into his vision of spiritual transformation:

*Et spiritu transformamur ad ean dem imaginem i ad similitudinem gloriae domini. Per illuminationem enim transformatur spiritus noster, simili modo sicut facies Moysi, & sicut facies Christi transformata est. Et transformamur a gloria in gloriam, a gloria faciei ad gloriam spiritus, a gloria velata ad gloriam revelatam, a gloria temporali ad gloriam perpetuam.*<sup>638</sup>

And by the Spirit we are transformed into the same image, that is, into the likeness of the glory of the Lord. For our spirit is transformed through its brightness in like manner as the face of Moses, and as the face of Christ, was transformed. And we are transformed from glory to glory, from the glory of the

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<sup>637</sup> Michael Servetus, *De fide et iustitia regni Christi*, Bk. II (transl. Christopher Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 45. Translated from *Christianismi restit.*, Reprint of: Vienne: B. Arnollat, 1553; Frankfurt: Minerva, 1966.

<sup>638</sup> Servetus, *De Fide*, Bk. II, Hoffman and Hillar, 46.



face to the glory of the Spirit, from glory veiled to glory unveiled, from glory temporal to glory perpetual.

This transformation is freely-given to all who believe in Christ:

*In fide Christi, & non in fide repromissionum datur remissio peccatorum, ut clara sunt verba Petri. Acto 10.... Utinam in hoc sensu regnum Christi evangelizarent nostri evangelistae, nam si evangelii, & si dei Christi, rectitudinem tenuissent, no protulissent nobis tot de repromissionibus commenticias nugas.*

Forgiveness of sins is given on condition of faith in Christ, not of faith in the promises, as the words of Peter make clear.... Oh that our preachers had preached Christ's kingdom in this sense, for if they had held to the correct meaning of the Gospel, and of Christ's divinity, they would not have fabricated so much nonsense about the promises.<sup>639</sup>

Unlike "our preachers," Servetus sees the deep and spontaneous faith of believers in Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Law and the prophets. Echoes of earlier Eastern aspirations to divinization are strong in the passages surrounding these cited here, in which faith and love are presented as fully transforming believers into reflections of Christ. The grace that justifies is from God alone; it is not the product of human effort per se. Yet, still, divine grace does not preclude human effort; instead it enables it to expand and succeed where it could not have succeeded before. In the knowledge of Christ, human beings become θεοδιδάκτοι, "students of God."

It should now be plain that Calvin's insistence on the Canaanite woman's inspired familiarity with "a tiny seed of doctrine" is, at least partly, a response to Servetus' prioritizing of faith and love over the Law, the prophets, and "the promises," so ardently argued in *De Fide et Iustitia Regni Christi*. Further support for this explanation of Calvin's reading of the Canaanite woman may also be found in an early letter from Servetus to Calvin, which he entitled

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<sup>639</sup> Servetus is citing Acts 10:43: "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (NRSV).

“Justification and Promises.” Indeed, the dispute between Calvin and Servetus on this particular issue may have begun with this letter, written c. 1546.<sup>640</sup>

In the letter, Servetus appears to be responding to an argument Calvin has made about the impossibility of justification without some knowledge of the Law and “the promises,” an argument Calvin reproduced in 1555 in his reading of the Canaanite woman in *Harmoniam Evangelicam*. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Servetus’ letter written 10 years earlier, begins with a reference to the Canaanite woman, as well as the story of the centurion (Matt 8:5-13) so often associated with her. Servetus addresses Calvin:

*Sine promissione neminem posse iustificari, pertinaciter defendis, et fidem Christi veram callide dissimulas. Ex solo aspectu Christi, miracula facientis, poterat mulier Chananaea, vel Caesarianus aliquis illi credens iustificari, etiamsi de promissionibus nihil unquam audiuisset. Nam Christus factis quoque declarabat, et iustificabat, etiamsi effent Scythae, nullam promissionem habentes.*<sup>641</sup>

You steadfastly maintain that no one can be justified without a promise of salvation and you cleverly misrepresent genuine faith in Christ. From the mere sight of Christ as he performed miracles, the woman from Canaan or the person from Caesarea were able by believing in him to be justified although they had never heard anything about promises of salvation.<sup>642</sup>

Servetus then compiles a long list of Biblical stories in which many Gentiles (non-elect) were saved without knowledge of the Law and the prophets. Those in the ship with Jonah and at Ninevah believed; Cornelius believed there was justice in God even before he heard Peter; King

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<sup>640</sup> This, the Tenth Letter from Servetus to Calvin, was published, along with 29 others, in *Christianismi Restitutio* in 1553. However, it was arguably written during the brief period of their correspondence between 1546-47 and sent to Calvin. In his 1554 *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*, Calvin spoke of the 30 letters reproduced in *Christianismi Restitutio* as though they had never been sent to him (*ex triginta epistolis, quas velut ad me scriptas in publicum edidit*: “out of those 30 letters which he published as if they were actually written to me;” Calvin, *Opera* 8:462). However, Marian Hillar notes that Calvin later used Servetus’ letters against him in the trial in Geneva, and not just those that were published in *Christianismi Restitutio*, but also a “cayer” (notebook) of 14 letters (*Thirty Letters to Calvin, Preacher to the Genevans & Sixty Signs of the Kingdom of the Antichrist and His Revelation Which is Now at Hand (From The Restoration of Christianity, 1553)* by Michael Servetus, Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar, eds. (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), xxvii-xxviii).

<sup>641</sup> Servetus, *Christianismi restit.*, 602-603.

<sup>642</sup> This and following translations of Servetus’ Tenth Letter are from Hoffman and Hillar, *Thirty Letters*, 47-49.

Abimelech in Genesis 20 also believed in the justice of God, as did the house of Rahab, the Samaritan, and many others.<sup>643</sup> In the letter, Servetus refers Calvin back to his *De Fide et Iustitia* for further elaboration of these examples. Citing Matthew 17:5 and John 6:40,<sup>644</sup> Servetus argues that God's "gospel" is not an exclusive promise of salvation but the announcement of his son and the instruction to all to listen and believe in his teaching:

*Evangelium Dei est annunciatio illa Dei patris: Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacitum est, ipsum audite. Nihil hic promittit: tantum declarat, quid velit, et quid sibi placeat. Ita Christus docet, hanc esse voluntatem Dei, nobis declaratam, ut hunc filium videntes, in eum credamus. Ioan. 6. Etiam si nullae fuissent unquam promissiones, nec lex, nec prophetae, solus adventus Christi iustificaret sibi credentes, vel solo ipso patris testimonio.*

God's gospel is the announcement of God the Father: "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." At this point He makes no promise; He merely makes clear what He desires and what pleases Him. And thus Christ teaches that this is God's will as made clear to us, that in seeing this son we believe in him (John 6). Although there had been no promises or law or prophets ever, the arrival of Christ alone would justify those who believed in him, and this rather on the authority of the very testimony of the Father.<sup>645</sup>

The universalist spirit informing this passage, and many others like it, scandalized Calvin, not least, perhaps, because of its indiscriminate liberality and consequent imprecision. In contrast, Calvin is very clear and exact about the way God's promises and gifts work for different groups in his reading of Matt 15:21-28. In defining "the children's bread," he distinguishes between "god's gifts in general" and "those which He gave particularly to Abraham and his race:"

*Hic vocari panem filiorum non quae-libet Dei dona, sed tantum quae distincte Abrahae et eius generi contulerat. ... Luce solis, vitali spiritu, terraeque*

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<sup>643</sup> Servetus, *Christianismi restit.*, 605; Hoffman and Hillar, *Thirty Letters*, 48. Servetus' biblical allusions are to the *Book of Jonah*; Acts 10:23-48; *Genesis 20*; *Joshua 2:1-21*; and *Luke 10:25-37*. In all cases, these are stories of presumed "outsiders" displaying a justifying faith and/or goodness.

<sup>644</sup> Matt 17:5: "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him;'" John 6:40: "This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

<sup>645</sup> Servetus, *Christianismi restit.*, 603; Hoffman and Hillar, *Thirty Letters*, 47-48.

*alimentis communiter fruebantur eum Iudaeis gentes, sed benedictio, quae in Christo speranda erat, residebat in una domo Abrahae.*<sup>646</sup>

What is called “the children’s bread” is not God’s gifts in general but only those which He gave particularly to Abraham and his race. ... The Gentiles enjoyed in common with the Jews the light of the sun, the breath of life, the fruits of the earth, but the blessing which was to be hoped for in Christ resided only in the house of Abraham.

Calvin is quick to specify that once the Gentiles were admitted into fellowship, this distinction was removed, but the impression remains that divine grace is complex and qualified in a variety of ways at different times for different people.

In any case, Calvin’s animus towards Servetus was evident as early as 1550, in *De Scandalis*, where, as noted above, he ridicules Servetus’ Christological views as “perverse fictions” and “fanatical opinions” (*pravis commentates, fanaticis opinionibus*);<sup>647</sup> in the French translation of the same tract, Calvin also revealed publicly Servetus’ alias and whereabouts, in effect informing the Inquisition where they could find him. And this animus clearly endured after Servetus’ trial and execution. Calvin’s 1554 *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*, published just a few months after the execution, is nothing less than a defense of his actions and Servetus’ punishment. It was a necessary defense, for controversy followed Servetus’ death. Though Calvin had consulted with reform leaders in Bern, Zurich, Schaffhausen and Basel, all of whom enthusiastically endorsed seeking the death penalty, Basel remained a center of anti-Calvinistic thought and propaganda. In March of 1554, the humanist Sebastian Castellio compiled and published a collection of texts in Basel against the killing of heretics, *De Haereticis an sint persequendi*; Theodore Beza responded, defending Calvin’s actions in his *De Haereticis a civili*

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<sup>646</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 458.

<sup>647</sup> Calvin, *Opera* 8:49.

*magistratu puniendis*, printed in Geneva in the same year.<sup>648</sup> The execution of Servetus catalyzed debates about religious freedom:

The case broadened into discussions of the right of the civil authority to punish disbelief and from this to renewed altercations about the nature and applicability of excommunication, the meaning of heresy and the implications of predestination.<sup>649</sup>

Precisely these questions—belief and faith outside the official Church, ecclesial authority, exclusion, excommunication, election, predestination—are recurring themes in the history of interpretation of the Canaanite woman. Calvin, like the exegetes before him, brought his battles and beliefs to his reading of Matt 15:21-28. Servetus argued that the Canaanite woman possessed a spontaneous, as opposed to a catechized, faith, one based solely on “the mere sight” of Jesus’ deeds. Calvin’s exegesis, in response, resembles earlier readings that accounted for the Canaanite woman’s unschooled faith by arguing that some sort of internal revelation had occurred, and that Jesus and not the woman was the source of her responding faith. Among these were Chrysostom’s reading of Jesus “calling her forth” through his silence; Ephrem of Nisibis’ explanation that, “the silence of our Lord engendered an even deeper cry in the mouth of the Canaanite;” and Augustine’s descriptions of not only the synergy of call-and-response (“She was ignored, not that mercy might be denied but that desire might be enkindled”), but also the lessons she embodies for others (“that humility might be praised”).

Calvin stands in this tradition, insisting on the initiative of divine grace, always grounded in the Word of God as expounded by the Church. The Canaanite woman thus becomes a doctrinally-informed Christian believer in Calvin’s hands. Her knowledge of the Lordship of

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<sup>648</sup> Hans R. Guggisberg, “Religious Freedom and the History of the Christian World in Roger Williams’ Thought,” *Early American Literature* 12:1 (Spring, 1977), 36-48 (42-43).

<sup>649</sup> G. R. Potter, Review of *Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552-1556* by Uwe Plath, *English Historical Review* 90:357 (Oct., 1975), 892.

Christ in Chrysostom's reading has become knowledge of Jesus' role as *redemptor* in Calvin's exegesis, a knowledge that must "consist of an express and distinct knowledge of sound doctrine," "always born of God's word."<sup>650</sup>

## 5.2 BRITISH AND AMERICAN PROTESTANTS INTERPRET THE CANAANITE WOMAN

The sample of post-Reformation Protestant readings below were written by four British and one American clergymen of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Episcopalian denominations, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are for the most part derivative readings, reproducing earlier traditions without significantly complicating their doctrinal content. The Canaanite woman's faith remains a product of divine intervention and not human agency.

The relative conservatism of the following readings is striking, beyond any simple explanation of the power of exegetical tradition to reproduce itself over time. This is partly because these readings emerge out of moments of significant developments within Protestantism. In the case of the five pastors considered here, these developments include the English Civil War of the 1640s, Popish Plots, acts of nonconformity, and interdenominational invective in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the advent of Deism, influence of rationalism, and reforms and enhancements of religious education in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; and the American Civil War, abolitionism, black suffrage,

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<sup>650</sup> Calvin, *Harmoniam Evangelicam*, 457: "*constat diserta distinctaque sanae doctrinae cognition*", "*semper ex Dei verbo nasci*."

transcendentalism, increasing theological liberalism and development of the social gospel in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It can be argued that the seeming indifference to these extraordinary contexts within the readings of Matt 15:21-28 below can be attributed to the overall conservative nature of the commentary genre and the authority of exegetical tradition. Certainly, Phillips Brooks' sermons at the end of the chapter are more resonant with local and historical specificity than the commentaries that come before them. Or, more compelling perhaps, it can be argued that in times of institutional or group instability—times of Civil War, secular critique, or internal religious reform—conservation and consensus, right down to the transmitted lessons of Scripture, become important means of self-preservation. On the other hand, it is sometimes the better part of valor to acknowledge that exegetes, even separated from readers today by time and culture, were human beings. They could be as self-absorbed, idiosyncratic, oblique, over-invested in their scholarly forays, and avoidant as anyone else. This seems to be particularly the case with the first reading to be considered, that of John Trapp.

### **5.2.1 John Trapp: Commentary on the Old and New Testaments**

John Trapp (1601-1699) was an English Anglican public school headmaster, preacher, military chaplain, and bible commentator, who lived and worked in Gloucestershire for most of his career. In 1637, he published his first book, *God's Love Tokens*; it was followed in 1654 by a 5-volume *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*. Trapp was known for his memorable turns of phrase, his sense of humor, and his quirky scholarship. In 1876, C. H. Spurgeon instructed the students at Pastor's College to study Trapp's commentaries when they prepared their sermons. He commended to them his "witty stories," "learned allusions," and "holy

practical remarks,” even as he ventured that Trapp’s criticisms might be “the cause of amusement in these days of greater scholarship.”<sup>651</sup>

Politically, Trapp was more a progressive than a traditionalist, siding with the parliament in the English Civil War and committing to the Covenant of 1643.<sup>652</sup> Trapp also served for two years as chaplain to parliamentary soldiers in Stratford.<sup>653</sup> Indeed, Spurgeon notes that “he was for some time amid the guns and drums of a parliamentary garrison, and he gossips and tells queer anecdotes like a man used to soldier life.”<sup>654</sup>

Trapp’s eccentricity and idiosyncratic associations and formulations are evident in his reading of the Canaanite woman, which is punctuated by learned citations of Cicero, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzus, and biblical passages, as well as enthusiastic and capricious philological glosses like the following:

It was her daughter, dear to her as her own soul, —*Filia, quasi φίλη*. The Greeks call children φίλτατα, the Latins *cara*. And those at Rome that prayed and sacrificed whole days that their children might be *superstites*, long-lived, these were first called superstitious persons.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “A Chat About Commentaries” in *Commenting and Commentaries: Lectures Addressed to the Students of the Pastor’s College, Metropolitan Tabernacle with a List of the Best Biblical Commentaries and Expositions and a Lecture on Eccentric Preachers* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1876), 20-21.

<sup>652</sup> In the *Solemn League and Covenant of 1643*, Scottish Presbyterians agreed to help English Parliamentarians fight Charles I in exchange for the adoption of civil and religious Presbyterian parliamentary governance in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The Church of Scotland signed the covenant in August of 1643; the English parliament in September; and then it was signed by individuals throughout England and Scotland. There is disagreement about the extent to which Oliver Cromwell honored the covenant after he gained power in England in 1646. Cf. J. C. Davis. *Oliver Cromwell, Reputations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>653</sup> Philip Schaff, *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 11:501.

<sup>654</sup> Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 20.

<sup>655</sup> John Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition Upon All the Books of the New Testament, The Second Edition Very Much Enlarged Throughout* (eds., W. Webster and Hugh Martin; London: Bellamy, 1647), 195.



Likewise, Trapp moves freely from the plays of Plautus to the Gorgons to the *Epistle of Jude*,<sup>656</sup> yet, none of these are arbitrary or without serious intent. Trapp's expansiveness is grounded in traditional questions and concerns. Indeed, his reading is derivative in many respects. For instance, he presents the Canaanite woman as an exemplum of faithfulness and persistence, "a well-resolved Christian," an agonistic portrait of spiritual struggle. He reproduces the familiar explanation of her surprising faith as the product of Christ's silent inspiration: "Christ answereth her not with his mouth, but speaketh unto her by that sweet and secret voice of his Spirit, to cry louder."<sup>657</sup> In this sense, he presents a Canaanite woman who is both spiritual wrestler and utterly dependent on Christ's saving grace in the footsteps of Luther.

Trapp also considers at some length the capacity of human beings to bear the afflictions and misfortunes which they encounter and the ways in which God mediates their efforts. On the one hand, "She was that well-resolved Christian, whose part Luther saith it is to believe things invisible, to hope for things deferred, and to love God when he shows himself most angry with him, and most opposite to him."<sup>658</sup> On the other,

He is "a God of judgment," Isa. xxx.18, and knows how and when to deal forth his favours. He lays heaviest burdens on the strongest backs and proportions our afflictions to our abilities, holding us off for deliverance till he finds us fit for it.... How strangely doth God enable and enlarge his weak people many times in prayer! They are carried beyond themselves in a wonderful manner, and though otherwise rude in speech, and unlettered, yet then they have words at will, far above natural apprehension....<sup>659</sup>

Here are echoes of the complementarity of divine love and human need, the diverse ways in which God brings countless diverse souls to salvation, affirmed by Cassian, Isaiah of Scetis,

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<sup>656</sup> In discussing the devil's desire to possess human bodies, Trapp describes the devil striving with the angel, Michael, over "a dead man's body," alluding to the *Epistle of Jude* where Michael disputes with the Devil over the body of Moses (*Jud.* 9) and perhaps also to the dispute Michael is said to have had with Samael over the soul of Moses in the *Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah* (*Midrash Deut. Rabbah*, 11:6).

<sup>657</sup> Trapp, *A Commentary*, 195.

<sup>658</sup> Trapp, *A Commentary*, 196.

<sup>659</sup> Trapp, *A Commentary*, 196.

and Barsanuphius in Chapter 4. The related imagery of spiritual ascent also appears in Trapp, as he describes “weak” human beings “lost in the endless maze of spiritual ravishments, and ascending, with the Church, in those pillars of incense, out of this wilderness of the world, Cant.v.6.” The power of the “well-resolved Christian” is not, then, a Pelagian proposition in Trapp. His text remains focused on the relationship of grace, works, and “deliverance.” Earlier in his reading, in justifying Jesus’ painful testing of the Canaanite woman, Trapp defines the familiar image of manna as grace too “lightly come by”:

Manna, that light meat, was but lightly set by, because lightly come by. But they that earn it before they eat it, and that know how they come by that they have, will set a high price upon it, and know how and why they part with it.<sup>660</sup>

Grace must be earned if it is to be adequately treasured and retained, an assumption that also aligns well with Trapp’s focus on the Canaanite woman’s repentant sinfulness. For, in addition to a Canaanite woman who is an exemplum of faith, Trapp offers a penitent, representative of “us,” begging for mercy *for herself*, “she acknowledged her own sin in her daughter’s suffering... And so must we see ourselves beaten on our sick children’s backs and be humbled, labouring to mend by education what we have marred by propagation.”<sup>661</sup>

Developing this theme, Trapp compares the Canaanite woman to the widow of Sidon in *1 Kings 17* who feeds Elijah. The widow of *1 Kings* perceives her son’s death as punishment for her past sinfulness. When her son dies, she cries out to Elijah, “What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of

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<sup>660</sup> Trapp, *A Commentary*, 195. The image of children beaten for their parents’ sins is borrowed from 2 Sam 7:14, where God promises to David that he will raise up his offspring: “When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.”

<sup>661</sup> Trapp, *A Commentary*, 195. Trapp’s reference to “our” children’s sin as “what we have marred by propagation” aligns with Augustinian traducianism. It assumes the transmission of original sin from parents to children.

my son!”<sup>662</sup> And when Elijah brings him back to life, her exclamation epitomizes the attitude that Trapp, and myriad commentators before and after him have assigned to the Canaanite woman: “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.”<sup>663</sup> Here, an Old Testament passage that features a woman confessing sin and in the end professing belief in Elijah as a man of God, truth, and healing is superimposed upon Matthew’s story of a woman arguing for her right to mercy and help, a story that concludes with Jesus extolling *the woman*. In this way, Trapp remains in line with traditional readings of the Canaanite woman’s sinfulness and her reliance on divine revelation to be saved. On the whole, then, Trapp spices up a derivative, theologically orthodox reading with an eclectic and entertaining assortment of literary and learned associations.<sup>664</sup>

### 5.2.2 Matthew Poole: Annotations on the Holy Bible

Much the same may be said of Matthew Poole and his treatment of Matt 15:21-28, but sans the entertainment. Poole’s “annotations” on the passage, written in 1683, also reproduce much from conventional exegetical traditions about the Canaanite woman. In so doing, he offers yet another depiction of her as symbol of the human soul and spiritual wrestler, even as he sometimes surprises the reader with a memorable scriptural intertext, for instance, comparing the Canaanite woman to Jacob wrestling with God in Genesis 32: “So she said, like Jacob, *I will not let thee go, until thou bless me.*”<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> 1 Kgs 17:18 (NRSV)

<sup>663</sup> 1 Kgs 17:24 (NRSV)

<sup>664</sup> Cf. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 20-21: “Trapp is salt, pepper, mustard, vinegar, and all the other condiments. Put him on the table when you study, and when you have your dish ready, use him by way of spicing the whole thing.”

<sup>665</sup> Matthew Poole, *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible* (3 vols.: London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), 3:73.

Poole was a nonconformist who left England for Amsterdam in 1662 in fearful reaction to the Popish Plot no less than in protest of the Act of Uniformity. He was a bastion of Presbyterian doctrine and governance, early on writing a tract against the founder of English Unitarianism, John Biddle,<sup>666</sup> and endorsing tracts against Quakers.<sup>667</sup> In 1653, as one of two scribes in the Presbyterian Assembly in London, he published a defense of Presbyterian church governance, *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelicium*, in which the two argued that “a *Bishop* and a *Presbyter* are all one.”<sup>668</sup>

Poole takes his cue from tradition; his questions are not original. He is interested in what made the Canaanite woman come to Jesus in the first place. Like Hilary of Poitiers in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, he combines historical and theological explanations to account for her knowledge about Jesus. So, she calls Jesus the “Son of David” because of a “widespread awareness;” a Jewish “confession” of the Messiah’s lineage; but also a faith firmly grounded in God’s Word! He moves from describing the Canaanite woman as privy to local stories of a miracle-worker spread through word of mouth to a story of divine grace working within her “kindling a true (and informed) faith.”<sup>669</sup> The flow of his argument is as follows.

Poole begins with the rationale that, “Living so near Galilee, she had doubtless heard of Christ, both what he had done in casting out devils, and also that he was looked upon as the Son of David and usually called by that name by those who went to him for any cures.”<sup>670</sup> Here, she knows that Jesus performs miracles and that people call him Son of David when they ask for

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<sup>666</sup> *The Blasphemer Slain*, 1654.

<sup>667</sup> Cf. John Toldervy, *The Foot Out of the Snare* (London: J.C. for Tho. Brewster, 1656) for an account of Poole’s separation from Quaker fellowship.

<sup>668</sup> Provincial Assembly of London, *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelicium, or A Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry* (London: Provincial Assembly of London for G. Latham, J. Rothwell, S. Gellibrand, T. Underhill, and J. Cranford, 1654), 99. Cited in Thomas Harley, *Matthew Poole: His Life, His Times, His Contributions Along With His Argument Against the Infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2009), 23.

<sup>669</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:72-3.

<sup>670</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:72.

miracles from him. Poole then quickly goes on to suggest that “she might have received the grace as well as the sound of *the gospel*, so God might have kindled in her heart a true faith *in the Messiah*.”<sup>671</sup> Faith in miracles is now knowledge of the gospel and faith in Jesus as Messiah. By the time she is kneeling before Jesus at the story’s climax, she is “acknowledging his Divine power... showing that she believed him to be the Son of God.”<sup>672</sup>

At the same time, her request (Poole’s own fabrication put into her mouth in the tradition of exegetical ventriloquism) seems to back away from the implications of this reading: “I do not beg such a full manifestation for the Gentiles, I beg but a crumb of mercy for myself and my child.”<sup>673</sup> No full-out Gentile mission required; just a little mercy for this Gentile not far from the Kingdom. Overall, the impression is of a cut-and-paste job, from Poole’s condemnation of the comparison of the disciples’ petitions with Catholic belief in the intercession of saints (as in Calvin) to his paranetic calls to imitation of her humility, modesty and fervency: “by this, we learn our duty in prayer”<sup>674</sup> (as everywhere in the exegetical tradition).

Equally commonplace, and reminiscent particularly of Calvin, is his further attempt to quell any doubts which understandably must have arisen about the source of the Canaanite woman’s faith:

But will some say, Where was her faith? What promise, what word of God, had she to assent to? God doth not speak to us outwardly, but inwardly, as undoubtedly he had to this woman, giving her some inward assurance that he was the Son of God, and both able and willing to grant her the thing she asked.

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<sup>671</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:72.

<sup>672</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:72. Recall from Chapter 2 that already in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Jerome had epitomized this creation of a Canaanite woman convinced of Jesus’ divinity: *Nota quod ista Cananitis perseveranter primum filium David, deinde Dominum vocet, et ad extremum adoret ut Deum*. Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* 2.15.25 (SC 242, 332): “Notice that without becoming discouraged, this Canaanite woman first calls him Son of David, then Lord, and finally adores him as God.”

<sup>673</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:73.

<sup>674</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:73.

Now a firm and fixed assent to any Divine revelation is faith.<sup>675</sup>

In this way, he reinforces the interpretation of her faith as the product of internal revelation.

Thus, Spurgeon's portrayal of Poole, like his description of Trapp, is also borne out, at least regarding Poole's reading of Matt 15:21-28: "Poole is not so pithy and witty... less a commentator, and more an expositor... he can give you the result and outcome of very extensive reading without sounding a trumpet."<sup>676</sup> He provides an example of the definitive influence and resilience of prior traditions. Little wonder that his other major work was *Synopsis Criticorum Aliorumque Sacrae Scripturae Interpretum*, a Synopsis of Critical and Other Interpreters of the Holy Scriptures—in essence, a history of interpretation.<sup>677</sup> His conventional reading of the Canaanite woman aligns with this general portrait.

### 5.2.3 Adam Clarke: The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments

In contrast, Adam Clarke's exposition of Matt 15:21-28, written some 150 years later, offers some local color at least, if briefly, in the form of an admonishing aside to fellow clergymen, even while on the whole his comments are similarly unoriginal. Clarke's interpretation appears in *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments: The Text Carefully Printed From the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorised Translation, including the Marginal Readings and Critical Notes: Designed as a Help to a Better*

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<sup>675</sup> Poole, *Annotations*, 3:73.

<sup>676</sup> Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 19.

<sup>677</sup> Much more interesting and adventurous is Poole's *A Dialogue between a Popish-Priest and an English Protestant: Wherein the principle points and arguments of both religions are truly proposed, and fully examined*. This text has the feel of a scholastic *sic et non* debate, and Poole presents many points of doctrine (from transubstantiation to justification by faith alone), basing the arguments on official Catholic and Protestant doctrines.

*Understanding of the Sacred Writings*, which he published in 1836.<sup>678</sup> His exegesis of Matt 15:21-28 is somewhat disappointing, given his controversial career, especially given that his preoccupations with, for instance, rationalism punctuate his commentaries on other Biblical texts.

Clarke was a Methodist and a strong believer in rational inquiry. This led him to “a determination to submit all ‘bodies of divinity, human creeds, confessions of faith and such like’ to what he called ‘the steady voice of reason,’ which he interpreted as “man’s God-given faculty to determine divine truth from a candid examination of the Scriptures alone.”<sup>679</sup> His commentary on Luke 1:4—the conclusion of Luke’s greeting to Theophilus (*NRSV*: “so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed”)—interprets the verse to mean that Theophilus had already received some instruction in Christian doctrine, but Luke sent him the gospel narrative so that Theophilus could see and judge for himself “the facts and their proofs.” This then serves as an imperative and an ideal for all:

Those who content themselves with that knowledge of the doctrines of Christ which they receive from catechisms and schoolmasters, however important these elementary instructions may be, are never likely to arrive at such a knowledge of the truth as will make them wise unto salvation, or fortify them against the attacks of infidelity and irreligion. Every man should labour to acquire the most correct knowledge, and indubitable certainty, of those doctrines on which he stakes his eternal salvation.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: The Text Carefully Copied From the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorised Translation, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, Old Testament vols. I-IV and New Testament vols. I-II (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1836).

<sup>679</sup> Ian Sellers, *Adam Clarke, Controversialist: Wesleyanism and the Historic Faith in the Age of Bunting* (London: Wesley Historical Society Lecture, 1975), 2.

<sup>680</sup> Clarke, *Holy Bible*, 5:870. For another memorable expression of Clarke’s belief in the synergy of Scripture and reason, see also his commentary on 1 Peter 2.2 (*NRSV*: “Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk so that by it you may grow into salvation”): “this the apostle calls the sincere milk of the word, τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα, or, as some translate, the rational unadulterated milk; i.e. the pure doctrines of the gospel, as delivered in the epistles and gospels, and as preached by the apostles and their successors. The rabbins frequently express learning to know the law, &c., by the term sucking, and their disciples are often denominated those that suck the breast. The figure is very expressive: as a child newly born shows an immediate desire for that nourishment, and that only, which is its most proper food; so they, being just born of God, should show that the incorruptible seed abides in

Clarke's rationalism was at the heart of his denial of Jesus' "eternal Sonship," a notion he found nonsensical since Jesus could not be simultaneously derivative as son and eternal as God. In a letter to his fiancée just months before their marriage, Clarke explained his position on the eternal Sonship of Christ. An excerpt will suffice to catch the gist:

May every grace that constitutes the whole mind that was in Jesus be multiplied unto my dear Mary, that she may stand perfect and entire in the will of God, lacking nothing! Amen. You once asked my opinion concerning the meaning of the phrase "the eternal Son of God." I gave it you, and howsoever singular, and unauthorized by Doctors, it may appear, yet I never had any reason to alter it, nor do I believe I ever shall ... As long as I believe Jesus Christ to be the infinite eternal I AM, so long I suppose I shall reject the common notion of his "eternal Sonship;" not only because it is an absurdity and palpable contradiction, but because I cannot find it in the Bible. On his Godhead, the foundation of the salvation of my soul is laid ... How much more excellent are the plain words of Scripture! — "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." What a piece of insanity to attempt to find out the Godhead, and to ascertain the mode of its existence! And yet this was the method the schoolmen, and the primitive fathers, made use of to explain the Trinity.<sup>681</sup>

One wonders to what degree Clarke's rhetoric of inscrutable mystery best left alone is due to the fact that he is writing to his future wife and not a fellow theologian. Still, he explains to her that the foundation of his position is grounded in logical, philosophical contradiction and a lack of Scriptural witness. All the while, in all his writings, he declared himself a Trinitarian, rejecting only the attribute of "sonship" to Christ, the Logos, before the Incarnation.

Clarke first published his denial of Christ's eternal sonship in the first volume of his commentary, which was begun at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>682</sup> By 1798, his notes on the first

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them, and that they will receive nothing that is not suited to that new nature: and, indeed, they can have no spiritual growth but by the pure doctrines of the Gospel" (Clarke, *Holy Bible*, 2:1762-63).

<sup>681</sup> Adam Clarke, *Letter I: Les Terres, Dec. 24, 1786* in *An Account of the Infancy, Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.A.S., &c.* (ed. J. B. B. Clarke; New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1833), 166.

<sup>682</sup> These occur in his comments on Luke 1:35; Col. 1:16-17; and Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews; the Hebrews passage reads as follows: "Nor can I see it possible that he could be begotten of the Father, in this sense, and be eternal; and if not eternal, he is not God. But numberless scriptures give him every attribute of Godhead; his own



two gospels were complete. This was, however, a troubled time for Wesleyans and this sort of controversial work was not entirely welcome. As Ian Sellers has made clear, the “Wesleyan hierarchy” was anxious about the prevalence of radicalism, “Popery,” Unitarianism, and “well-justified fears about the waning of Methodism’s evangelistic thrust.”<sup>683</sup> Negative reviews and a period of controversy ensued, first between 1815 and 1819: moves of heresy charges against Clarke at an 1817 London District Meeting, defenses of orthodox Trinitarianism in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, a balance of denials and assertions of orthodox doctrine in the *Imperial Magazine*, edited by Clarke’s friend Samuel Drew, and reviews and arguments in pamphlets—7 in one year against Clarke, 3 for him—ranging from the good-humored to the ironic to the combative.<sup>684</sup>

Yet, Clarke’s reading of the Canaanite woman reflects nothing of this drama. As with Trapp’s exegesis of Matt 15:21-28, Clarke’s commentary is a traditional, derivative analysis that features familiar arguments: “The state of this woman is a proper emblem of the state of a sinner, deeply conscious of the misery of his soul;” Jesus remains silent “to give her the opportunity of exercising her faith, and manifesting her fervour;” “Persevering faith and prayer are next to omnipotent;” “This is one of the finest lessons in the book of God for a penitent, or for a discouraged believer;” and “Jesus admires this faith, to the end that we may admire and imitate

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works demonstrate it; and the whole scheme of salvation requires this. I hope I may say that I have demonstrated his supreme, absolute, and unoriginated Godhead, both in my note on Col. i.16-17, and in my *Discourse on Salvation by Faith*. And having seen that the doctrine of the eternal Sonship produced Arianism, and Arianism produced Socinianism, and Socinianism produces a kind of general infidelity, or disrespect to the sacred writings, so that several parts of them are rejected as being uncanonical, and the inspirations of a major part of the New Testament strongly suspected; I find it necessary to be doubly on my watch to avoid everything that may, even in the remotest way, tend to so deplorable a catastrophe” (Clarke, *Holy Bible*, New Testament II: 1712).

<sup>683</sup> Sellers, *Adam Clarke*, 7.

<sup>684</sup> Sellers, *Adam Clarke*, 8.

it, and may reap the same fruits and advantages from it.”<sup>685</sup> For Clarke, persevering faith and prayer are extremely powerful, but they are framed and called forth by Jesus.

There is little of Clarke’s notorious tendency to reproduce in his commentaries “singularities of learning” and “valuable rarities” as in “an old curiosity shop.”<sup>686</sup> His contemporaries faulted him for his love of novelty for novelty’s sake and for conforming his exegeses to his own preconceived views. While his encyclopedic scholarship was known and respected, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, in 1882, would later opine that “he meddled in too many branches of wisdom for his own good.”<sup>687</sup> So, it is noteworthy that he demonstrates such a lack of creativity and free association regarding the Canaanite woman. Indeed, the only characteristic self-indulgent digression in Clarke’s comments on Matt 15:21-28 are practical and political, as he takes local preachers to task for competing with other ministers for the same “lost sheep.” Applying the exclusivity logion (15:24) to his own context, Clarke writes:

There are certain preachers who should learn a lesson of important instruction from this part of our Lord’s conduct. As soon as they hear of a lost sheep being found by *other ministers*, they give all diligence to get that one into *their* fold; but display little earnestness in seeking in the wilderness for those that are lost. This conduct, perhaps, proceeds from a consciousness of their inability to perform the work of an Evangelist; and leads them to sit down in the labours of others ... The wilderness of this world is sufficiently wide and uncultivated. Sinners abound everywhere; and there is ample room for all truly religious people, who have zeal for God... to put forth all their strength...in proclaiming the Gospel of God; not only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but to a lost world. When the pure truth of God is preached, many will be converted.<sup>688</sup>

Perhaps this digression constitutes a response of sorts to the growing competition between radicals, “popery,” Methodists, and Unitarians noted above, or perhaps it is a reflection of his belief that “the day break of revival” had passed and a period of consolidation was

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<sup>685</sup> Clarke, *Holy Bible*, 5:173-74.

<sup>686</sup> Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, 24.

<sup>687</sup> Sellers, *Adam Clarke*, 5.

<sup>688</sup> Clarke, *Holy Bible*, 5:173.

required, including a “better-trained, college-educated ministry,” for which he advocated later in life.<sup>689</sup> In any case, in the end, Clarke’s reading of Matt 15:21-28 provides an instance of his more traditional Wesleyan side, focused on sin, contrition, faith, and salvation in resolutely succinct and simple affirmations.

#### **5.2.4 Francis Augustus Cox: What Christianity Has Done for Women**

The Baptist minister, Francis Augustus Cox, a contemporary of Clarke, faced some similar challenges from within his denomination at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, among these were a desire to engage Deist rationalism in an educated way and a deep hope for unity between the different Baptist factions, from General to Particular to itinerant Baptist ministers. Cox’s reading also reflects the Baptist zeal for evangelism.

In the area of education, Cox promoted the Bible Translation Society, tutored at Stepney College from 1813 to 1822, was associated with the Society for Promoting Ecclesiastical Knowledge, and was prominent in the move in 1826 to found a new unsectarian college, University College, London in the 1820s. He even served as librarian there for a time.<sup>690</sup>

In pursuit of tolerance and unity, Cox campaigned for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act between 1827 and 1828 and was Secretary of the General Board of Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations for those residing in or near London and Westminster from 1838 to 1841. He was also associated with the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty, an interdenominational society that met in London Taverns, including ladies and gentlemen from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, to discuss and advocate for religious

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<sup>689</sup> Cf. Sellers, *Adam Clarke*, 6, fn. 42, where he quotes from Clarke’s *Letter to a Preacher*.

<sup>690</sup> W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: Charles Griffin & Company, 1923), 260.

freedom.<sup>691</sup> He also founded two publications (the *Baptist Magazine* in 1809 and *The Patriot* newspaper in 1832).

Finally, in the arena of evangelism, Cox was a committee member of the Baptist Missionary Society for many years and wrote their jubilee history. He was interested in and wrote a book about Baptists in America in 1836 and, at the same time, he was the joint secretary of the Baptist Home Missionary Society.<sup>692</sup> Cox also served as treasurer of the Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant Preaching for 17 years, beginning in 1797.<sup>693</sup> The links between education, evangelism and social justice seem to have been a given for Cox. While some radicals were arguing that “mere education, even in Bible-reading, could not ameliorate conditions” for the poor or address social injustices, Baptists like Cox were advocating that the Irish be taught in their own vernacular, improving Sunday School methods and books, pushing private schools taught by ministers, as well as attacking the poor laws and wages.<sup>694</sup> Campaigning for the less privileged was the principle; education became, at this time in particular, the means and therefore a duty.

It is in this context that Cox wrote about “what Christianity had done for women.” His reading of the Canaanite woman appears in his 1831 publication, *Female Scripture Biography: Including an Essay on What Christianity Has Done for Women*. In many ways, it is a traditional

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<sup>691</sup> *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature, January to December Inclusive, 1818*, Vol. 13 (George Smallfield, ed.; Hackney: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1818), 455-56. The title page of this publication reads: “To do something to instruct, but more to undeceive, the timid and admiring student; to excite him to place more confidence in his own strength, and less in the infallibility of great names; to help him to emancipate his judgment from the shackles of authority; to teach him to distinguish between shewy language and sound sense; to warn him not to pay himself with words; to shew him, that what may tickle the ear or dazzle the imagination, will not always inform the judgment; to dispose him rather to fast on ignorance than to feed himself with error.”

<sup>692</sup> Some of the information in the prior two paragraphs about Cox’s society affiliations is listed in the historical biographies section of *The Leighton-Linslade Past Times*, a website that narrates the history of Leighton-Buzzard, where Cox was born (<http://www.leighton-linslade.com>).

<sup>693</sup> Whitley, *British Baptists*, 268.

<sup>694</sup> Whitley, *British Baptists*, 262.

reading of the passage. The Canaanite woman is held up as “a remarkable specimen” of humility, earnestness, and faith. The questions of where her faith came from and how she came to call Jesus “Son of David”—“O blessed Syrophenician, who taught thee this abstract of divinity”<sup>695</sup>—are treated at some length; the conclusion is that she had surely heard news of Jesus, but “under the guidance of that Spirit who wrought conviction in her mind, hastened to cast herself at his feet.”<sup>696</sup> In other words, she was internally inspired and convicted. She is contrasted to the Scribes and Pharisees, and all Jews, who were granted signs and wonders in abundance and yet did not believe.

These are all familiar themes which fall decidedly on the side of divine, rather than human, agency in the Canaanite woman’s salvation. More interesting in this commentary is the use to which Cox puts these themes, for each contributes to an overall meditation on the theme of religious education, learning, repentance, and conversion. Cox begins by defining how New Testament stories instruct Christians:

The facts and incidents of the New Testament furnish the best exposition of its doctrines... The sublimest doctrines and the finest precepts are taught by example... We are not introduced into the school of Socrates, the academy of Plato, or the Lyceum of Aristotle, where some wise maxims were undoubtedly dictated... but we are conducted from the region of abstractions to real life. Christianity is taught by showing us Christians.<sup>697</sup>

He brackets philosophical schools based in abstractions and wise maxims and praises the diversity of exempla in the New Testament that allow “an opportunity of witnessing the diversified modes in which truth operates on men; we see the various workings of the passions, the progress of conviction, the development [sic] of character, and the designs of Infinite

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<sup>695</sup> Francis Augustus Cox, *Female Scripture Biography, Including an Essay on What Christianity Has Done for Women* (Boston, Lincoln & Edmands, 1831), 240.

<sup>696</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 241.

<sup>697</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 233-34.

Mercy.”<sup>698</sup> The lesson that the New Testament stories teach is that human passion, conviction, and character are the product of divine “design” and mercy. Submitting to the lesson, therefore, becomes a central piece of the exegesis.

Because Cox focuses on the ways that gospel stories and characters work as Christian instruction, he marvels at the untutored nature of the Canaanite woman’s faith and contrasts it with the “defiance of evidence, of signs and wonders daily performed before their eyes” of the Jews when they rejected Christ. In Cox, however, the familiar anti-Jewish rhetoric serves a purpose beyond denunciation. The polemic moves into a more general anxiety about the equally lamentable resistance to “the claims of truth” and “the commands of Christ” amongst the most carefully instructed Christians:

Amidst the most favourable circumstances for spiritual improvement, what awful degeneracy of character exists! Multitudes who have enjoyed the best means, who have been religiously educated, repeatedly admonished, and carefully superintended; who have been taught the holy Scriptures from their youth—who have been led to the house of God, and had “line upon line, and precept upon precept”—on whose behalf a thousand supplications have been presented to heaven, and over whom ten thousand thousand tears have been shed—have continued to manifest an aversion against the claims of truth, and the disobedience of spirit to the commands of Christ.<sup>699</sup>

It is not just the Jews, then, that can become “a barren fig-tree, unproductive of any good fruits.”<sup>700</sup> Religious education is a privilege, an analogue to the Law and the covenant given to the Jews, both epitomized in Christ’s teaching, yet perversely rejected by many. This privilege

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<sup>698</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 234. This does not mean, however, that he rejects rational or philosophical inquiry outright. He seems eager to engage it. In his treatment of the daughter’s demonic possession, he acknowledges rationalist explanations—“The question has been often agitated, whether the possessions of the New Testament are to be ascribed to demoniacal influence, or whether they are so represented in conformity to the popular prejudices of the age, being in reality nothing more than diseases.” He concludes, based on the conversations the demons have with Jesus and their articulated desires and passions that they are “evil spirits” with “a distinct existence:” “Is it credible that a mere *disease* should be said to have addressed Christ in such language?” (Cox, *Female Scripture*, 236, fn.)

<sup>699</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 242.

<sup>700</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 242.

entails “responsibility” to apply religious instruction to “advance to higher degrees of spiritual attainment and excellence,”<sup>701</sup> just as the Canaanite woman responded to Jesus’ inspiration.

Consistently, Cox extrapolates general lessons from specific exempla by lifting up the Canaanite woman as untutored, inspired faithfulness and repeatedly using the Jews to represent the universal errors of humanity. He also rationalizes Jesus’ use of the canine epithet as a sarcastic lesson about the unreasonableness of prejudice and makes the traditional intertextual connection to Joseph in Egypt, feigning stern indifference with his brothers. However, Cox sees Jesus teaching everyone, not just his disciples or the Jews:

In nothing is the preposterous arrogance of mankind more apparent than in the violence of their national antipathies... Owing to the natural propensity of human nature to vilify and degrade, the vocabularies of all languages have been swelled with such odious terms...It is to be most deeply lamented, that even where Christianity has taken root in the mind, this unholy leaven does not seem to be entirely purged away... O, when will the reign of perfect charity, that “thinketh no evil,” commence! When will “the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord!” When will men of every rank and class associate as Christians, and Christians of every order unite as brethren!<sup>702</sup>

Here again, the “rooting” of Christianity within the mind is hard-pressed to battle “the unholy leaven” of human nature. Indeed, Cox’s repeated questioning of Jesus’ mysterious “deviation from his general goodness” in Matt 15:21-28—“Is the Lamb of God turned lion? Doth that clear fountain of mercy run blood? O Saviour, did ever so hard a word fall from those mild lips?”<sup>703</sup>—has the effect of dramatically reproducing Jesus’ method of instructing, by foregrounding so emphatically his surprising silences, tests of faith, and parodies of prejudice. Indeed, Cox points to other instances of Jesus’ teaching silence, for instance, when the Scribes

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<sup>701</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 242.

<sup>702</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 248.

<sup>703</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 247.

and Pharisees bring the “adulterous transgressor” to him, he stoops to write with his finger on the ground “to disappoint their malice”<sup>704</sup> and, presumably, to interrupt and redirect it.

In the end, Cox presents an energetic call to accept the encouragement at the heart of this gospel passage and to dare to imitate the Canaanite woman, even while he dramatizes the difficulty of truly internalizing the lessons embodied in gospel stories and characters. He ends on a note of hopefulness, referring to Matt 15:21-28 as “a specimen and pledge of the influence of Christ and his salvation. He is become the centre of universal attraction, the powerful magnet of the world, pervading by his influence the moral creation, and gradually drawing all into himself.”<sup>705</sup> Indeed, Cox concludes, even the house of Israel will soon be redeemed: “The period of Jewish dispersion is hastening to its close. Party names and ancient prejudices will soon disappear, and mankind of every class and country be eternally united in one blessed fraternity.”<sup>706</sup>

### **5.2.5 Phillips Brooks: The Silence of Christ**

Just a few decades later, the American Anglican Phillips Brooks preached on Matt 15:23. Brooks was born in Boston, Massachusetts, lived and preached first in Philadelphia and then in Boston, and was eventually ordained Bishop of Massachusetts at the end of his life. He was a popular and, by all accounts, stirring preacher, compared routinely to the likes of George Whitefield, Dwight Moody, and Henry Ward Beecher. He was known for the practical emphasis in his sermons as well as the optimism and encouragement they conveyed to his listeners that

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<sup>704</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 243.

<sup>705</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 253.

<sup>706</sup> Cox, *Female Scripture*, 254.



they might personally embody the ideals and truths found in Scripture.<sup>707</sup> In a sermon delivered in 1864 to the Episcopal Diocesan Convention in Pittsburgh, Brooks laid out the power of the Prayer Book by advising fewer proofs of abstract truths, more demonstrations of their personal power; less study, more prayer:

The only way to make men orthodox as to special beliefs is to make the great Christian truths self-demonstrated by the vigor with which they shape themselves into Christian duty and Christian life. The Prayer Book is full of doctrines, and yet fills them through and through with the interest of human life. It never tells men what to believe without telling them what blessing will come from such a belief.<sup>708</sup>

This focus on the personal and practical implications and imperatives of Christian Scriptures, liturgy, and faith must account, at least partly, for his popularity and for repeated testimonies about the powerful effects of his preaching: “There was one characteristic of Phillips Brooks regarding which the verdict was unanimous,— his power of excitation over an audience.”<sup>709</sup>

Furthermore, the immediate applicability of his sermons was reinforced and fostered by a sustained optimism about the potential for spiritual growth of each person. Indeed, in his estimations of the human potential to know God and to reflect God’s image he is palpably in tune with the transcendentalist spirit of his time. The emphases within transcendentalism on an indwelling God, a monism conflating world and God, and the capacity of humanity to directly experience God are equally evident within Brooks’ letters and sermons. A few examples will give a sense of the assumptions that informed Brooks’ exegesis and preaching.

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<sup>707</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brooks’ death, Leighton Parks recalled in the *Harvard Theological Review*, “In this pulpit he made our insignificance seem accidental and our possibilities the reality which God would glorify.” (Leighton Parks, “Phillips Brooks,” *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Oct., 1918), 395.

<sup>708</sup> Alexander V. G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks: 1835-1893, Memories of His Life with Extracts from his Letters and Note-books* (New York: E. P Dutton and Company, 1907), 169.

<sup>709</sup> Alexander V. G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* (New York: E. P Dutton and Company, 1901), 3:397.

The first from “The Mystery of Man” makes confident claims for human nature: “We are not brutes before Him; we are His children. While we are not Divine, and so are of a different nature from Him, yet we are capable of Divinity, and so are really one with Him in nature.”<sup>710</sup>

The monism that lay behind the Emersonian “World-Soul”<sup>711</sup> is even more apparent in another of Brooks’ sermons entitled, “The Eternal Humanity:”

God made man like Himself. Ages before the incarnation made God so wonderfully in the image of man, the creation had made man in the image of God... Before the clay was fashioned and the breath was given, this humanity existed in the Divinity; already there was a union of the Divine and human...

Brooks’ father was a Unitarian, out of which transcendentalism had initially sprung. He had read Emerson while at Virginia Theological Seminary<sup>712</sup> and referred to him in a lecture to theology students as “him whom I reverence and honor;” quoting Matthew Arnold, he concurred with his assessment of Emerson as “the friend and helper of those who would live in the spirit.”<sup>713</sup> He officiated at Harvard’s 1865 commemoration of those lost in the Civil War, a ceremony that featured poetry readings by Julia Ward Howe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell!<sup>714</sup> Such an event captures the intellectual and artistic contours and energy of Brooks’ Victorian Boston. Lowell’s presence, for instance, reinforces the argument many critics make that Brooks’ “humanistic, Romanticized Christianity” was greatly influenced by his love of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Romantic poetry.<sup>715</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Phillips Brooks, “The Mystery of Man,” *Seeking Life* (New York: E. Dutton and Company, 1904), 265.

<sup>711</sup> Cf. Emerson’s 1836 poem, *Nature*: “Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.”

<sup>712</sup> Washington Gladden, “Phillips Brooks: An Estimation,” *The North American Review*, Vol. 176, No. 555 (Feb., 1903), 257-281 (265).

<sup>713</sup> Phillips Brooks, “The Minister and His People,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Apr., 1908), 223-238 (229).

<sup>714</sup> Gladden, *Phillips Brooks: An Estimation*, 271.

<sup>715</sup> Gillis J. Harp, *Brahmin Prophet: Phillips Brooks and the Path of Liberal Protestantism*, American Intellectual Culture Series (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 9.

Brooks was an aristocrat, educated at Harvard, a progressive, and a proponent of open communion. As early as the 1870's, he referred to "all of us Broad Churchmen" seeking "to keep or make the Church liberal and free,"<sup>716</sup> a witness to his complex relationship to creeds and liturgy,<sup>717</sup> as well as his break with Evangelical Episcopalians between 1859-1873.<sup>718</sup> He supported the North in the Civil War, and was an outspoken abolitionist. In his November 1864 Thanksgiving Day sermon, he told his congregation that his sermon would be "what some people call politics; what I can National Morals" and then proceeded to denounce "the devil of slavery that had kissed the strong shoulders of the Republic..." and attack "the prejudice against color, rebuking the Street Car Directory, pleading with pathos mixed with satire, and most solemnly, for negro suffrage."<sup>719</sup>

It should perhaps come as little surprise, then, that Brooks' reading of Matt 15:21-28 is an exploration not of doctrine or supercession or repentant submission, but rather of spiritual need, developing understanding of God, and moving beyond language to "the revelation too great for words to contain."<sup>720</sup> He focuses entirely on 15:23 and Jesus' silence with the Canaanite woman in order to plumb the psychology of prayer, suggest possible reasons for unanswered prayer, and create a kind of continuum, if not hierarchy, of spiritual acumen.

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<sup>716</sup> Allen, *Life and Letters*, 2:81.

<sup>717</sup> "They did not exhaust his faith; they symbolized it. Much of the conventional opinion identified with them he utterly repudiated, although he could and did use them.... He claimed the right not 'to stretch the Creeds,' in the ecclesiastical slang of his day, but to interpret them according to his own private judgment guided by sound learning" (Parks, *Phillips Brooks*, 402).

<sup>718</sup> Gillis J. Harp, "'We Cannot Spare You': Phillips Brooks's Break with the Evangelical Party, 1859-1873," *Church History*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec., 1999), 930-953. Cf. also Harp, *Brahmin Prophet*, which argues that Brooks' liberalism reshaped American Protestantism and betrayed evangelical orthodoxy.

<sup>719</sup> Allen, *Brooks: Memories of His Life*, 172-73.

<sup>720</sup> Phillips Brooks, "The Silence of Christ," in *The Light of the World and Other Sermons* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1905), 139.

This choice to focus on Jesus' silence reflects, if nothing else, Brooks' "dread of any word, however deserved, that would discourage any soul."<sup>721</sup> The complete elision of Jesus' repeated rebuffs, his rejection, exclusion, and dehumanization of the Canaanite woman, is quintessential Brooks. Not one of Jesus' refusals is reproduced in the sermon. Furthermore, from the opening lines of the sermon, even silence is presented as various, just as often sympathetic or intimate as it is censorious or indifferent: "There is the silence of utter condemnation, and the silence which is sweeter than any spoken praise."<sup>722</sup> Likewise, the tension and drama of Jesus' rejection of the Canaanite woman and her persistent pleading so exploited over centuries of exegesis are resolved in very short order in Brooks, almost as if he could not tolerate a portrait of seemingly arbitrary judgment. So by the second paragraph Brooks settles the mounting tension:

But, behold! I think that I can see her slowly lift her eyes. She cannot bear this suspense. She must look this awful silence in the face. Her eyes find out the face of Christ, and then she feels Him behind, within, His silence. She knows Him not clearly, but certainly. He is there, and she has found Him.<sup>723</sup>

With this baseline of trust and certainty safely established, even prior to or above understanding, Brooks goes on to explore "God's apparent "silences" and the soul's incapacities and blind spots.

For instance, in a fascinating and softened assimilation of the canine epithet of Matt 15:26, Brooks compares the human incapacity to understand God's silences to the confusion of a dog—"your beast"—trying to decipher its master's responses, "unable to understand how his appeal touches you:" "Perhaps he catches some glimpse of sympathy upon your face, perhaps he is aware of some tone in your voice; but all your thoughtfulness, all your care and plan to help him, of that he knows nothing."<sup>724</sup> Even this is not sufficient to reassure, however. Brooks

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<sup>721</sup> Parks, *Phillips Brooks*, 405.

<sup>722</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 125.

<sup>723</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 126.

<sup>724</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 128.

protests that the analogy cannot hold entirely because we are much more to God than a dog is to its owner, and then he reiterates central concepts from his sermon on “The Mystery of Man” cited above, “We are of the same nature as God. We are God’s children.”<sup>725</sup>

The psychologizing that colors Brooks’ canine analogy pervades the sermon, a reflection perhaps of contemporary developments in the field of experimental psychology in a city and a time in which the likes of William James were teaching and publishing. So Brooks explains “unanswered” prayer as partly a function of “unconscious needs” unknowingly supplied:

Think of the unconscious wants in us which are forever laying themselves before God: needs which we do not know ourselves enough to apprehend, far less to understand; deficiencies whose worst defect is that they are not aware of their own falling short; poverties which count themselves riches; sin which calls itself goodness...all of these go with a pathetic urgency into God’s presence and plead for a supply which is all the more needed because the needy soul itself to which they belong is not aware of want! God answers all these prayers. He gives to each unconscious need all the supply which, in its unconsciousness, it is able to receive; but the soul, ignorant of the need, cannot know the answer which its needs are getting. It does not dream what God is doing for it.<sup>726</sup>

Here is a modern, psychologized complement to Romans 8:26-27.<sup>727</sup>

With this reassuring basis, Brooks proceeds to examine the modes of “wakening” in each soul’s “history” and the relationship of each soul’s prayers to all others’. Prayers “pouring in from Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and the islands of the sea,” prayers “of the weakest child of His,” prayers “blended with a million others.” This portion of the sermon rewrites, in effect, the separatist tones of the gospel passage, culminating in the affirmation, “He best finds God and is

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<sup>725</sup> Cf. fn. 115 above: “We are not brutes before Him; we are His children. While we are not Divine, and so are of a different nature from Him, yet we are capable of Divinity, and so are really one with Him in nature.”

<sup>726</sup> Brooks, “Silence of Christ,” 129.

<sup>727</sup> “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (NRSV).

God's who finds Him and becomes His, not in separation from his brethren but in the certainty of God's love to all and of the belonging of all souls to God."<sup>728</sup>

At the same time, Brooks distinguishes between types of prayers and types of people who pray. He explores what lessons may be learned from unanswered prayers based on "what classes they belong to." First, there are those prayers which ask God "to do our work for us:" "Christ answers you not a word. And why? Those are your problems. It is by hard work of yours, by watchful vigilance, by careful weighing of consideration against consideration, that you must settle those things yourself."<sup>729</sup>

Second, there are times when the supplicant's needs exceed his ability to understand the response. More work must be done before the precocious prayer may be answered. Here, the semblance of a spiritual hierarchy or continuum begins to be visible: "He must be John or Peter before the Lord can do John's or Peter's work in him."<sup>730</sup>

Finally, in another softened recuperation of the gospel message of exclusive rights, Brooks acknowledges the reality of competing claims within "the largeness of God's kingdom." One need may exceed the other in priority; one person's child is dying while another needs only for his spirits to be raised. One prayer may involve "the sacrifice of something else which is of far more importance."<sup>731</sup> For the judgment and wisdom of God's priorities then, Brooks concludes, all should be grateful and feel reassured. In the end, it is not to Christ's words, but to Christ himself that the Christian should turn: "Not the gift but the giver is the real answer to prayer; not to get God's benefactions, but to get God, is the soul's true answer."<sup>732</sup> Unanswered

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<sup>728</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 130-31.

<sup>729</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 133.

<sup>730</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 135.

<sup>731</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 135.

<sup>732</sup> Brooks, "Silence of Christ," 132.

prayers are precious because they ultimately train our attention not on God's blessings or gifts made manifest in ourselves, but back onto God.

Brooks' defining optimism regarding God's love for humanity and the capacity of human beings to respond and dwell within that love permeates his reading of Matt 15:21-28 and transforms the passage into a statement of universal access to God's love. Of the post-Reformation Protestant readings considered here, it is thus both the most encouraging of human effort and the most compelling in its depiction of God's saving actions of behalf of human beings.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

The Protestant exegetes in this chapter are, to a man, intent upon attributing the Canaanite woman's salvation not to the institutional church and its sacraments and not to human intellectual or spiritual efforts, but to God alone. They may celebrate human virtue, piety, and faith, but always as products of divine grace.

## 6.0 AVATARS OF THE CANAANITE WOMAN: LIVED NARRATIVES OR RHETORICAL PERFORMANCES?

One cannot assume that the only way that a text will reveal its meaning is through exegesis, for codified signs can also appear as types of texts that are expressed in patterned behavior. Although the mediators between thought and action remain difficult to explain, no one doubts their existence. They cannot be wished away or dealt with by a sort of textual gnosticism. Individuality, intentionality, and free will also have a place in the spectrum of assigned causes [mediators].<sup>733</sup>

In his 1990 study, *Listening for the Text*, Brian Stock presents the intricate mediation between text, reception, thought, and action as a Weberian feedback loop: “The two aspects of the experience work together: the objectivity of the events spills over into the subjectivity of the records, perceptions, feelings, and observations. The transcribed experience also feeds back into the lived lives.”<sup>734</sup> Texts organize experience, structure thought, are enacted as living narratives that follow their rules, norms, and meanings.<sup>735</sup> Biblical exegesis, as documented in this

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<sup>733</sup> Stock, *Listening*, 29.

<sup>734</sup> Stock, *Listening*, 29. Max Weber acknowledged the *mutually* reinforcing influences of ideas, value systems, ideologies, and theologies, *and* individuals’ rational choices to act upon and behave according to them. In his study of the Protestant work ethic, he reconstructed probable motives – adequate but not necessary motives, culled from existing religious discourse – that might account for the actual sequence of historical outcomes. Thus, internal and external determinants appear to intersect and provide a sort of mutual feedback. (Cf. Max Weber, “Politics as a vocation,” in *From Max Weber*, eds. Hans Gerth and C.W. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), *passim*.) Stock addresses Weberian theory in his introduction as important to his thesis, though he argues that it lacks proper consideration of orality and literacy in the construction of subjectively meaningful action out of cultural narratives.

<sup>735</sup> Stock, *Listening*, 104.



dissertation, depends upon precisely this mediation. Its goal is as much the inculcation of desired standards and conduct as the explication of a semantic text.

In the handful of readings I have chosen below, three different, but related, types of texts adopt the Canaanite woman's persona. A nice tidy argument could be made about these texts. It would build a straightforward contrast between interpretations of the Canaanite woman that *impose* moral dictates and normative behaviors and interpretations that *embody* their internalization, inevitably in idiosyncratic or locally-determined ways. The texts to be considered include a very unique moral *speculum principum* of the Carolingian Renaissance; two instances of communal prayer—monastic and Eucharistic; and three instances of “private” devotional literature—a book of devotional poems and two prayer books. In these, the Canaanite woman's cries to Jesus, her entreaties, and her boldness are not just retold or interpreted or commended to readers, they are also enacted, ventriloquized, and in some cases seem to be profoundly internalized. Nonetheless, it is critical to recall that this dissertation cannot analyze historical experiences per se of internalizing ideals, but rather only textual records of human motives and experiences. Consequently, at least two complications arise.

First, while the texts directly adopt the Canaanite woman's persona and role, they belong to genres that, de facto, function to transmit, maintain, and impose religious norms. For instance, the moral *speculum principum*, or “mirror of the [ideal] prince,” of the Carolingian Renaissance was produced for the laity, especially obstreperous Frankish nobility, to teach Christian ideals of ethical behavior, by appealing to the authority of the Church Fathers and to biblical precedents and precepts.<sup>736</sup> Monastic Books of Hours, liturgies, and divine offices have, for centuries, scripted the spiritual and emotional aspirations and disciplines of the monks who whisper and

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<sup>736</sup> M. A. Claussen, “Fathers of Power and Mothers of Authority: Dhuoda and the *Liber Manualis*,” *French Historical Studies* 19:3 (1996), 785-809 (786).

sing them, from early morning Matins through midnight Vigils. And even the “private” devotional poems and prayers examined towards the end of this chapter were consciously written and published for the edification of, and use by, other Christians.

Secondly, the aesthetics of identification with textual phenomena is a veritable vortex of historical, literary, and psychological factors, vexed, not least, by the ever present dynamics of rhetorical conventions. In his *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, Jauss dealt at length with the complexity of reader or audience interaction with literary ideals and personae. He stressed, in particular, a range of aesthetic responses, from identification to distancing, which result when the aesthetic object (textually-produced character or persona) either transcends or disappoints ideal expectations.<sup>737</sup> Jauss mapped a continuum of possible responses to literary, biblical, or religious characters, roles, and actions. These range from full aesthetic immersion in the depicted role or identity; to admiration, emulation, and sympathetic solidarity; all the way to cathartic and ironic distancing which liberate readers to choose their own actions freely.<sup>738</sup> This diversity of response is part of what Jauss called “the ambiguity of the imaginary,” all part and parcel of the unpredictable, uncontrollable effects of texts.<sup>739</sup>

Yet, even given these qualifications, the texts below which directly adopt the Canaanite woman’s voice and persona are clearly of a different order than those commentaries and homilies in earlier chapters. If throughout this dissertation the focus has been upon textual paranetic devices applied towards the internalization of ideals and the embodiment or enactment of norms, then the texts in this final chapter represent the achievement of that embodiment and enactment. Whether rhetorically-motivated or internally-driven, they enact the full internalization and

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<sup>737</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (transl. Michael Shaw; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 153-188.

<sup>738</sup> Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, 159.

<sup>739</sup> Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, 155, 167.

embodiment of a biblical character; that is, they represent the desired *effect* or *product* of centuries of exegetical paranses. Even so, we may still ask if the individuality, intentionality, and human will that Stock refers to above are at all discernible as mediators of thought and action, in the case of these receptions and appropriations of Matthew 15:21-28.

## 6.1 CLAIMING THE CANAANITE WOMAN'S WISDOM AND AUTHORITY

### 6.1.1 Dhuoda of Septimania: *Manual For My Son*

With this question in mind, it will be useful to begin with a unique use of the Canaanite woman's story, an ostensibly empowering appropriation of the Canaanite woman's identity, couched within the language of *humilitas*. It appears in a family testament written by a 9<sup>th</sup> century Carolingian aristocrat, Dhuoda of Septimania, which Dhuoda herself refers to as a "manual" or handbook, a bit of morality literature in the form of a portrait of the ideal Christian prince. As such, it belongs to the broader category of *speculum principum*, a popular genre of the time. Dhuoda wrote her manual as a kind of "testament," to transmit the essentials of the divine teachings, that is, to inculcate her religious, political, and social values in her eldest son, William, and his younger brother. The two boys had been taken from her at a very early age by her estranged husband, Bernard. William was leveraged as a political hostage, a pledge of loyalty to Charles the Bald in return for Charles' political protection. Meanwhile, Dhuoda was kept in isolation on a country estate for the duration of her life.

Dhuoda structures the handbook to first teach the love of God, then the Trinity and faith, and finally, worldly obligations to father, family, lords, and priests. Her use of imagery from

Matthew 15:21-28 comes near the beginning of her book as she explains to her son that they must both seek to understand God, in spite of her lack of intelligence and knowledge, and that she must count on God to help her write the handbook well, for William's sake (and for his younger brother, when William shares the handbook with him):

*Nam solet fieri ut aliquotiens importuna catula, sub mensa domini sui, inter catulos alteros, micas cadentes ualeat carpere et mandere. Potens est enim ille qui os animalis muti loqui fecit, mihi secundum suam priscam clementiam aperire sensum et dare intellectum; et qui parat fidelibus suis in deserto mensam, dansque illis in tempore necessitatis satietatem tritici mensuram, potest et me ancillae suae ex suo desiderio compleri uoluntatem, [p]saltem ut sub mensam illius, infra sanctam uidelicet ecclesiam, possim procul conspiciere catulos, hoc est sanctis altaribus ministros, et de micis intellectu spirituali mihi et tibi, o pulcher fili Wilhelme, pulchrum et lucidum dignumque et abtum colligi ualarem sermonem.*<sup>740</sup>

Now, it happens sometimes that a little indiscreet dog, under the table of her master, amongst the other little dogs, may be able to catch and eat the crumbs that fall. He who made the mouth of a mute animal [Balaam's donkey] speak is certainly capable in his ancient indulgence, to open my spirit and give me intelligence; and he who prepares a table in the desert for his faithful and gives them the satisfaction of a measure of wheat in time of need can also accomplish what I, his handmaid, will, according to his desire. At least, may I be able under his table, that is to say from within the holy Church, to watch from afar the little dogs, I mean the ministers of the holy altars, and be able to gather for myself and for you, my beautiful son, William, from amidst the crumbs of spiritual intelligence, beautiful and luminous words, worthy and suitable to be collected.

In considering the tone and meaning of this passage, we should recognize the ways that Dhuoda's handbook is an aberration and the ways that it is not. It occupies a unique place in the Latin literature of this period. There are no other works in this genre by women or mothers, other than three letters of exhortation to Didier, Bishop of Cahors, from his mother.<sup>741</sup> Carolingian *specula* were written by priests, comprised of collections of prescriptions for a pious life for laypeople; they typically featured 1) some comparison of virtues and vices, 2) a fusion of

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<sup>740</sup> Dhuoda, *Manuel Pour Mon Fils* I.2.7-20, SC 225, ed. Pierre Riché; transl. Bernard de Vregille and Claude Mondésert (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1991), 98-100.

<sup>741</sup> Pierre Riché, Introduction to Dhuoda, *Manuel* (SC 225, 14, n. 2).

Christian morality and the moral code of the warrior, 3) a dependence on Augustinian thought, and 4) a strong orientation towards the particular audience which determined both their tone and content.<sup>742</sup> Dhuoda's "manual" shares these basic characteristics, yet it is often described as unique in its "personal" tone, as well as in its resemblance to an educational primer or even a primitive catechism.<sup>743</sup> The spiritual, political, and personal didacticism of her manual reflect her understanding of Christian mothers as spiritual teachers and guides for their children:

*Et multi tunc et nunc et semper, per Euangelium, inquit, et doctrinam sanctae praedicationis, uel exemplum conuersationis operum bonorum, cotidie in sancta Ecclesia non desinunt generare filios.*<sup>744</sup>

And many are those [mothers] who, then, now, and always, unceasingly give birth each day to children of the Holy Church *through the Gospel*, as it is written, through teaching holy doctrine, and through the example of frequent good works.

Her justification for taking on the role of primary counselor and teacher of her sons is based in this view of maternity, expressed in Book VII, but not before she has built an extensive apparatus authorizing her temerity. She uses Matt 15:21-28 to justify her religious pedagogical authority in Book I, but not before she has built a foundation for it by writing several prefaces—clearing her throat, as it were. She offers 1) 50 lines of definitions of the book and etymologies of its titles; 2) an *incipit* which explains to William why and how she has come to write the manual for him, along with a list of epigrams; 3) a short prologue, also entitled *Incipit*, defending her right to produce a manual for William, even though she is weak and unequal to the task, and

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<sup>742</sup> This is the schematic description originally put forward by French medievalist, Pierre Toubert, cited in Y. Bessmertny, "Le monde vu par une femme noble au IXe siècle: La perception du monde dans l'aristocratie carolingienne," *Moyen Âge* 93 (1987): 162-84. Marie Anne Mayeski re-cites it in her *Dhuoda: Ninth Century Mother and Theologian* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1995), 27.

<sup>743</sup> Claussen, *Mothers of Authority*, 795, also notes the intertextual influence of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, virtually unheard of in a Carolingian lay author's text. Claussen then notes that Dhuoda's father-in-law was William, the founder of the monastery at Gellone, and that it is not unlikely that she had access to Benedict's rule, whether from Aniane (cf. Benedict of Aniane, Chapter 4) or Gellone. Her interweaving of the language and concerns of monastic rule and Benedictine thought, then, also distinguish Dhuoda's *speculum*.

<sup>744</sup> Dhuoda, *Manuel*, VII.3.15-19 (SC 225, 302).

insisting it will be of value to William; and 4) a preface in which she narrates the history of her marriage, childbearing, and current isolation.<sup>745</sup> Finally, after all of this self-authorization, she begins Book I and leverages the Canaanite woman as a further Scriptural precedent for her religious authority.

Recognizing this not-so-deep structure of hesitation is important, because Dhuoda's traditional use of the humility topos—for instance, citing the state of her human fragility: *Certe et ego, quanquam indigna fragilisque ad umbram, eum ut ualeo, quaero, et eius adiutorium, ut scio et intelligo, et indesinenter peto*<sup>746</sup>—is otherwise quite conventional, as is her claim that the inspiration and knowledge in her text come from God. Her serial self-authorizations are suggestive surplus; they exceed the traditional rhetorical topos. Her use of Matt 15:21-28 can be understood in the same light: her early reference to “begging without ceasing,” included within the conventional humility topos, sets up the parallel she desires between herself and the Canaanite woman as biblical precedent for her own (intellectual) efforts on behalf of her sons, possessed, in a different yet perhaps equally threatening way, by a king and father, if not a demon.

What Dhuoda does with Matt 15:21-28 through allegorizing and intertextual citation, however, turns out to be a skillful synthesis of claims. First, her definition of the key allegorical terms is unique, even if other aspects of her exegesis are derivative. In her 1995 study of Dhuoda's manual, Marie Anne Mayeski analyzes Dhuoda's use of the Syro-Phoenician woman by mapping her dependence on Jerome's and Bede's earlier commentaries, in particular her adoption of their allegorical understanding of table, crumbs, and dogs/children: “In line with

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<sup>745</sup> Mayeski, *Dhuoda*, 87.

<sup>746</sup> Dhuoda, *Manuel*, I.2.3-6: “As for me, so unworthy and frail like a shadow, I seek him to the limits of my strength, and I beg his help without ceasing so that I may know and understand.”

both Bede and Jerome, she accepts the essential antithesis with which the narrative concludes, but re-works it for her own purposes.”<sup>747</sup> Re-works, indeed! If the traditional exegeses on which Dhuoda based her reading stressed the antithesis of dogs and children, she creates a continuum of proximate canines—mothers and priests—under the table, within the church. She, like the Canaanite woman, is a little indiscreet dog under the master’s table which stands now for the holy altar and, by extension, the holy Church. But also there, if closer to the table than she, are priests (ministers of the Eucharistic table) who, *like herself*, “catch and eat the crumbs that fall.” The crumbs are spiritual intelligence, beautiful and luminous words that are suitable for collection and discussion. Dhuoda’s identification of priests as dogs eating beneath the table of the church amounts to a leveling move; they are closer to the source, but she and they are engaged in the same endeavor from the same vantage point. This, surely, amounts to more than what Mayeski calls a “very personal appropriation of the text” or “intimate self-revelation.”<sup>748</sup> But how much more?

On some levels, Dhuoda’s is a fairly benign and conventional reading. Indeed, her allegorical equation of crumbs with inspired knowledge of God or internal revelation can be seen as an early iteration of Calvin’s later reading of Matt 15:21-28, which was, in turn, picked up by Trapp et al. Dhuoda, like the Canaanite woman, is a passive recipient of God’s help, an unknowing and somewhat marginalized petitioner (watching from afar, within holy Church). The Canaanite woman that Dhuoda mimics is a model of divinely inspired knowledge about God and the Law—the very image that Calvin later painted. Dhuoda does use the possibility of inspiration to authorize her teachings and to retain some influence over her absent children, in the context of her physical exile and maternal helplessness, in much the way the Canaanite woman is depicted

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<sup>747</sup> Mayeski, *Dhuoda*, 86.

<sup>748</sup> Mayeski, *Dhuoda*, 87.

as doing in Matthew, to save her child. On the other hand, she is certainly not, at this point, dispensing Eucharistic crumbs from the table herself.

There is, however, another important aspect of Dhuoda's treatment of Matt 15:21-28, one that is germane to this question of the dynamics between her hesitation and chutzpah: it is her use of intertexts. In this passage, Dhuoda alludes to two Scriptural verses: Numbers 22:28 and Psalm 78:19, neither of which appear in Bede's or Jerome's exegeses of Matthew's Canaanite woman. The first allusion is to God's power to give a dumb animal, Balaam's donkey, the gift of speech: *Potens est enim ille qui os animalis muti loqui fecit, mihi secundum suam priscam clementiam aperire sensum et dare intellectum.*<sup>749</sup> Dhuoda, too, is given this gift by God. And what does Balaam's donkey (a female) utter when its mouth is opened by the Lord? "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"<sup>750</sup> A question that verges on protest, to which the only answer is that she has refused to oppose the angel of the Lord by moving past it and, by doing so, has made a fool of Balaam who wishes to proceed.

With this source text in mind, one is logically moved to ask: who is Dhuoda's "Balaam?" In *Numbers*, Balaam is a non-Israelite prophet, who nevertheless receives divine inspiration from God and utters oracles, a man who, in the end, will not "go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will."<sup>751</sup> Yet in alternative traditions, he is depicted as a magician and a charlatan for hire. He is vilified as a seer, whose "secrets of the art" and "proficiency in

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<sup>749</sup> Dhuoda, *Manuel*, I.2.6-9: "He who made the mouth of a mute animal [Balaam's donkey] speak is certainly capable in his ancient indulgence, to open my spirit and give me intelligence."

<sup>750</sup> Num 22:28: "The Lord then made the donkey speak, and she said to Balaam: 'What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?'"

<sup>751</sup> Num 24:13. That is, Balaam must bless and not curse the Israelites, even against his own will. He says: "Were Balak to give me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not disobey the command of the Lord by doing anything of my own will, good or bad. What the Lord says to me, that is what I must say."



augury” are described as the money-grabbing craft of a poseur.<sup>752</sup> Given the placement of this intertext, within a claim to receive and transmit spiritual intelligence along with priests, “ministers of the holy altars,” it is difficult not to wonder if Dhuoda, the “mute” donkey, the “indiscreet” dog, the untutored “Canaanite” woman is questioning the powerful “prophets” standing near her under the Lord’s table, as she positions herself firmly in the middle of the road, waiting for the angel to speak. Is there a hint of anti-clerical sentiment here? A veiled reproach, based in popular traditions about Balaam? It is impossible to say for sure, but this tone, that challenges and protests, arguably continues in Dhuoda’s second intertextual allusion which carries a similar ambiguity.

Dhuoda’s allusion to Psalm 78:19 reads: *et qui parat fidelibus suis in deserto mensam, dansque illis in tempore necessitatis satietatem tritici mensuram, potest et me ancillae suae ex suo desiderio compleri voluntatem.*<sup>753</sup> In the Psalm, this image of a table in the desert refers directly to the defiance of the Israelites during the Exodus, “a disobedient and rebellious generation,” who refused to live by God’s laws:

But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the wilderness against the Most High. They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God; they said, “Can God really spread a table in the wilderness?”<sup>754</sup>

Yet in Dhuoda’s text, there is no doubt that God spreads the table amply. It thus becomes clear that Dhuoda’s confidence in God’s ability to provide for the needs of his faithful, and specifically in his readiness to “accomplish what I, his handmaid, will,” directly contrasts with

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<sup>752</sup> Cf. Numbers 31.16, but also Philo, *Mos. 1*, 264-275 [Colson, LCL], 413-417; Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 9.8; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Exodus 1.15; *Sever ha-Yashar* 61-85; Ambrosiaster, 2 Timothy on 3.8; Strack Billerbeck 3, 660-4. Cf. Judith R. Baskin, *Pharaoh’s Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition. Brown Judaic Studies, no. 47.* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983), 75-113.

<sup>753</sup> Dhuoda, *Manuel*, I.2.10-15: “And he who prepares a table in the desert for his faithful and gives them the satisfaction of a measure of wheat in time of need can also accomplish what I, his handmaid, will, according to his desire.”

<sup>754</sup> Psalm 78:17-19.

the Israelites' lack of faith. Furthermore, the language of God accomplishing what she "wills" (*voluntatem*) is a direct allusion to Jesus' words at the end of Matt 15:21-28: γενηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις—"may it be for you as you have willed." At the very least, there is an edginess, here; at most, a challenge and a reprimand to anyone who doubts that God can empower Dhuoda to teach her sons spiritual truths.

Dhuoda's version of Matt 15:21-28 is definitely "re-worked," then, primarily through her use of intertexts. Far from being an intimate personal application of biblical texts, as Mayeski repeatedly suggests, "consonant with the character of contemporary feminist theology,"<sup>755</sup> Dhuoda's use of Matt 15:21-28 is a sophisticated rhetorical performance aimed at claiming the authority of spiritual teacher, through elegant literary devices. Whether delivered with a muzzled snarl or yelp, we will never know.<sup>756</sup>

Dhuoda's "internalization" of the Canaanite woman produces an authoritative and divinely-inspired voice, a "player" within the political arena of aristocratic education and princely guidance. The next text, also written in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, is very different in genre and effect. The anonymous *Book of Hours of Sinai*, written about 850 A.D., an Eastern liturgy and one of the oldest extant books of hours, features a powerful instance of the communal adoption of the Canaanite woman's voice and identity. The passage that alludes to the Canaanite woman,

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<sup>755</sup> Mayeski, *Dhuoda*, 7.

<sup>756</sup> Mayeski further argues that texts like Dhuoda's represent a kind of "practical theology," a "theological method that is rooted in life and action," too often understood as "mere devotional texts" of women, devoid of systematic rigor and traditionally disparaged within male biblical scholarship. She argues for a "recovery" of "an earlier mode of doing theology and biblical study" that fuses exegesis and praxis, biblical interpretation and lived experience, one she implies is particularly visible in women's texts. In this, she is reminiscent of Frances Young; however, Young sees the fusion of commentary and homily, exegesis and praxis, in *patristic* texts. The comparison should be instructive: the application of exegesis to a transformed, lived experience is precisely what the Fathers and the exegetical Tradition that follows them intend. This is the essence of *parenthesis-within-exegesis*, as understood in this dissertation. Dhuoda's claim to embody Scripture is not in any need of recuperation or defense against scholarly disdain. Her textual claims are, as stated above, the perhaps thornier-than-anticipated product of centuries of exegetical *paranesis*.

the “Seventh Ode,” is a confession of sin. It could not be less confident in tone, though its urgent pleas for salvation could be construed as insistent, perhaps. With this text, we move from the world of public political virtue to cloistered communal prayer.

## 6.2 COMMUNAL IDENTIFICATION THROUGH PRAYER

### 6.2.1 Anon: Book of Hours of Sinai

The *Book of Hours of Sinai* comes from the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, at the foot of Mount Horeb, a monastery originally dedicated to the *Theotokos* and only in the 15<sup>th</sup> century rededicated to Catherine. The liturgy provides a window into the prayer life of the monks who lived there, revealing details of the metrics and rhythms of their sung prayer and their daily observances.<sup>757</sup>

At the same time, the manuscript is compromised, mutilated, and reconstituted in some places only with great difficulty. While it contains some basic components of the full Office—Vigils (Office of Midnight), Sext, and None—it is missing the Major Hours of Vespers and Matins.<sup>758</sup> It also combines a broad range of Eastern Orthodox musical forms before and after the canonical portions--*troparia*, *stikera*, *theotokia*—and these are dedicated to a series of

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<sup>757</sup> It is useful to recall that the reciting of prayers at certain hours of the day is a practice that emerges out of Jewish tradition, and that Jesus and the Apostles are described as continuing the Jewish practice of praying at regular intervals of the day (e.g., Psalm 88.13, Psalm 119:162, Mark 1:35, Acts 10:3, 9). We may also find prescribed hours of prayer defined in the *Apostolic Constitutions*: "Precationes facite mane, hora tertia, sexta, nona, et vespere atque galli cantu" (VIII, iv). (Cf. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11219a.htm>.) These examples, and more, demonstrate the complex relation between tradition, praxis, and meaning entailed in historical acts of prayer that signified obedience, covenantal observance, communal lament, and ultimately identification not only with exemplary petitioners like the Canaanite woman within the tradition, but also with Jesus himself.

<sup>758</sup> Maxine Ajjoub, introduction to Anon., *Livre d'Heures du Sinai, Le Contenu Liturgique du Codex*, SC 486, ed. Maxine (Leila) Ajjoub (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 60-61.

intercessors, the Theotokos (Mary), the Precursor (John the Baptist), and the Cross. The editor, Maxine Leila Ajjoub, thus concludes that the Book of Hours is a compendium, an anthology of the considerable cumulation of liturgical sources in the monastery's famous library.<sup>759</sup>

The Seventh Ode belongs to one of the Offices of Midnight in the Book of Hours. It is not labeled thus, but is instead referred to as "Another Canon." Still, it bears all the characteristics of a Night Office. Like all night prayers, it is a vigil, focused on examination of conscience and intentionally unsettling themes such as sinfulness, punishment, preparing the soul for final judgment and eternal life. In an extended series of urgent pleas to Jesus and Mary in the First through Sixth Odes, the monks begin to compare themselves to Adam, the prodigal son, the publican, Peter, Israel, the sterile fig tree, and the servant who buried the five talents. The prayers themselves are highly intertextual mash-ups of biblical verses, mainly from the Psalms, prophets, and Gospels.

In the Seventh Ode, in which the Canaanite woman appears, the urgency is stepped up. The direct appeals to Jesus become more repetitive, direct, and personal:

Κύριε Κύριε,  
πρὸ τέλους με  
σῶσον ὡς εὐσπλαγχνος.<sup>760</sup>

The confessions of sinfulness become profoundly abject:

Ἡμάρτηκα,  
παρηνόμησα,  
οὐκ ἐφύλαξα τὴν ἐντολὴν σου...  
Περίελε  
τὸ φορτίον μου  
ὃ συνέλεξα ἐξ ἀφροσύνης,  
λῦσον μου τὰς σειρὰς τῶν πταισμάτων....<sup>761</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> Maxine Ajjoub, introduction to Anon., *Livre d'Heures du Sinai*, (SC 486, 61, 83).

<sup>760</sup> Anon., *Livre d'Heures du Sinai* 21.3, 220-21: "Lord, Lord, save me before the end, for you are merciful."

<sup>761</sup> Anon., *Livre d'Heures du Sinai* 21.3, 218-19: "I have sinned; I have violated the Law; I have not kept your commandment... Lift the burden which I, in my folly, have brought upon myself, undo the chains of my faults..."

It is at this point of utter abjection that the Canaanite woman becomes the primary model for those praying, as they voice their desperate prayer and battle against relentless demons:

Προσπίπτω σοι  
καὶ κραυάζω σοι  
τῷ υἱῷ Δαυΐδ· “Ἐλέησόν με,”  
ὡσπερ ἡ Χαναanaία ἐκεῖνη  
ὑπὲρ <αὐτῆς> θυγατρὸς  
δαιμονιζομένης κακῶς,  
καὶ κατάβαλε, Δέσποτα,  
ἐχθροὺς δυσμενεῖς  
τοὺς πολεμοῦντας ἡμᾶς.<sup>762</sup>

After this moment of full prostration, the Eighth and Ninth Odes return to long lists of prototypes of compunction—the lament of the publican, the sobs of the prostitute of Luke 7:38, the tears of Peter—and of blessed recipients of Jesus’ saving actions, even reaching back into the Hebrew Bible—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion’s den, the widow’s son of Luke 7:11-15, the inhabitants of Nineva, and the thief on the cross.

This “Other Canon,” with its Nine Odes, is the only Office in the entire *Book of Hours* that displays such a concentration of typological identifications and that involves the direct adoption of the prayer of one Biblical figure. There is only one other spot in the *Book of Hours* that features this identificatory logic. It is in another Midnight Office and it is just two verses, and not nine odes, long. The monks again imitate the publican, the prodigal son, and Luke’s prostitute:

Τὸν τελώνην μιμοῦμαι καὶ κράζω σοι, «Ὁ Θεός μου ἰλάσθητι [καὶ] σῶσον με.»  
Ὡς ὁ ἄσωτος κράζω τὸ Ἥμαρτον, ὡς ἐκεῖνον με πρόσδεξαι, Δέσποτα.  
Ὡς ἡ πόρνη κατέχω τοὺς πόδας σου νοητῶς καὶ ζητῶ τὴν συνχώρησιν.<sup>763</sup>

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<sup>762</sup> Anon., *Livre d’Heures du Sinai* 21.5, 221: “I prostrate myself before you and I cry out to you, son of David: ‘Have pity on me,’ just as that Canaanite woman cried out for her own daughter, cruelly tormented by a demon, and cast out, O Master, the relentless enemies that wage war on us.”

However, the Office then moves on to describe the Savior's actions in history and does not return to the theme of identification.<sup>764</sup>

This one midnight Vigil, then, represents an intense and intimate adoption of the Canaanite woman's vulnerability, powerlessness, need, and pleading urgency. The long tradition of conflating the daughter's sickness with the mother's sinfulness (now the monk's sinfulness) is evident in this text's articulation of susceptibility to demonic forces, social ostracization, and distance from any (Divine) help. These, and not her divinely-inspired understanding, are replayed here as abject confession. It is hard to imagine a clearer contrast to Dhuoda's claims to spiritual authority. Instead, the avatar of the Canaanite woman that we find in the *Book of Hours of Sinai* is much more like the repentant excommunicated monk who prostrates himself before his entire community in the *Rule of the Master*, the 6<sup>th</sup> century text incorporated into Benedict of Aniane's contemporaneous (9<sup>th</sup> century) *Codex Regularum*. The comparison provides a suggestive analogue for the Sinai text and challenges our intuitive responses to it. What appears in the monastic rule *Codex Regularum* as institutional intervention and discipline reappears in the Midnight Vigil as intimate individual soul-searching, albeit collectively spoken in the dark. The two are, arguably, not as distinct as they appear. Both seek to produce contrite self-disciplining Christians who concede a deep need for humility, obedience, and pardon. This is the nature of the identification and the Canaanite woman represented and articulated in these texts.

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<sup>763</sup> Anon., *Livre d'Heures du Sinai* 40.12-13, 281: "I imitate the publican and I cry out to you: 'My God, be indulgent and save me.' Like the prodigal son, I cry 'I have sinned, receive me, Master, as you have received.' Like the prostitute, I hold onto your feet in spirit, and I seek pardon.'"

<sup>764</sup> There are three other places where typological identifications are made in passing: 12.6, 8; 73.1, and 75.5. But these are brief and do not significantly define the relevant Offices the way they do in the "Other Canon."

## 6.2.2 Thomas Cranmer: Anglican *Prayer of Humble Access*

I now turn to another instance of communal identification with the Canaanite woman, one that places the imagery of Matt 15:21-28 within a liturgy that encourages the identification of each praying person with the Canaanite woman. I refer to Thomas Cranmer's 1548 addition to the Anglican Communion Liturgy, the *Prayer of Humble Access*:

We do not presume to come to this thy table, O Merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies: *we be not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table*: but thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood in these holy Mysteries, that we may continually dwell in him, and he in us, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood. Amen.<sup>765</sup>

The prayer was one of a small selection of texts in English that were inserted into the Latin Mass, originally during the Prayers of Penitence (that is, the Exhortation, General Confession, Absolution, and Comfortable Words). Its larger significance lies in the theological controversies of the English Reformation, particularly the Eucharistic debates of Edward VI's reign and their role in the path of religious reform followed by the new Protector, Somerset, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer himself.

The Book of Common Prayer and the Communion liturgy within it were part of the reform agenda of Cranmer and the Council of Regency, a unifying move to encourage uniformity and, thence, stability; indeed, Cranmer had begun work on the Book of Common Prayer under Henry VIII as early as the 1530s. But the pushback from the Catholic bishops still in power made the 1540s a time of slow and contentious change. Reformers' sermons against the

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<sup>765</sup>Thomas Cranmer, "Prayer of Humble Access," in *The Two Liturgies, A.D. 1549, and A.D. 1552: with other documents set forth by authority in the reign of King Edward VI* (ed. Joseph Ketley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), 92.

superstitious use of religious images and the veneration of relics were counterbalanced by Catholic injunctions against zealous reformers removing and destroying images and against unauthorized innovations in worship. The principal areas of *successful* reform involved “the abolition of processions, the reading of the Gospel and the Epistle in English, and the saying or singing of the Litany in English by the priests and choir.”<sup>766</sup>

It is in this light that we may understand Cranmer’s insertion of English prayers, including the Prayer of Humble Access with its allusion to Matt 15:21-28, in the Latin Mass of the 1548 Communion Liturgy. Of equal relevance is Cranmer’s well-documented and decisive rejection of any doctrine of “real presence” in the Eucharist. By 1547-48, Cranmer had moved from a quasi-Lutheran understanding of the “true,” not “real,” presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements to a belief in his “spiritual presence.” The evolution of his thought was watched anxiously by Continental Reformers and is attested in their letters to one another on his eventual conversion to their point of view.<sup>767</sup> The unequivocal reflection of his theological transformation in The Book of Common Prayer was also registered by his Catholic opponents:

Not only was the doctrine of Transubstantiation—in which Cranmer had ceased to believe ten years ago—excluded, but that of the Real Presence was implicitly rejected. The elevation and adoration of the Sacrament were left out, the word *oblation* was studiously avoided, and Bonner asserted that there was “heresy in the book” because the elements were still described as bread and wine after the

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<sup>766</sup> Albert Frederick Pollard, *Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation, 1489-1556* (New York and London: G. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 196.

<sup>767</sup> Pollard quotes several of these anxious reports in Pollard, *Cranmer*, 216. For instance, the English Refomer Bartholomew Traheron writes to Heinrich Bullinger that “Latimer has come over to our opinion respecting the true doctrine of the Eucharist, together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the other bishops, who heretofore seemed to be Lutherans” (Hastings Robinson, ed., *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation Written During the Reign of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary: Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich, II* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1847), 383). Another correspondent, “John Ab Ulmis,” writes, “Even that Thomas [Cranmer] himself, by the goodness of God... is in a great measure recovered from his dangerous lethargy” (Robinson, *Original Letters*, I), 322. For similar examples, cf. also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 392.



completion of those ceremonies which implied to a Catholic their transubstantiation.<sup>768</sup>

The Mass as priestly sacrifice was transforming into the Holy Communion of the laity. Entitled “the Order of the Communion,” it was still an English addendum to the traditional Latin rite of the Mass. Only after the priest had communicated did it proceed:

He then suddenly broke into English, with an exhortation to those present to “be partakers of the communion”: “dearly beloved in the Lord,” it began, with an evangelical informality which must have seemed shocking.... There followed a series of texts, short exhortation, confession, absolution, “comfortable words” for frightened sinners, prayer of humble access, administration and blessing.<sup>769</sup>

The priest’s and the people’s communions followed in quick succession. A debate ensued in December of 1548, but the Act of Uniformity that sanctioned the First Book of Common Prayer was finally passed in January of 1549;<sup>770</sup> the official imposition of the Prayer Book, however, was not compulsory until June of that year.<sup>771</sup>

This is the context in which Cranmer inserted the image of Anglican congregations as Canaanite women unworthy of crumbs under the Lord’s table. As already noted, this prayer originally appeared in the Prayers of Penitence, *before* the celebration of the Eucharist. However, only four years later, in 1552, Cranmer moved it, embedding it *within* the Eucharistic Prayer itself, after the *Sursum Corda* and the *Sanctus*, and right before the Memorial of the Institution of the Lord’s Supper. It is reasonable to conclude that the move was meant to emphasize the reception of the bread and wine by the people, over and above the consecration of them by the

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<sup>768</sup> Pollard, *Cranmer*, 215-16.

<sup>769</sup> MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 385.

<sup>770</sup> Pollard, *Cranmer*, 219.

<sup>771</sup> MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, 410. MacCulloch goes on to point out that in the 1549 Prayer Book, Cranmer allowed for some conciliatory gestures, including partially restoring the word “mass” to the Communion Service, now entitled “the supper of the Lord and the holy communion, *commonly called the mass.*”

priest.<sup>772</sup> This is certainly of a piece with Cranmer's fully-developed Eucharistic theology. In the same vein, in spite of our present-day sense of the prayer as highly penitential, it actually can be understood, especially given Cranmer's removal of it from the Prayers of Penitence, as a prayer of humble thanksgiving and worthy reception, thanks to God's "manifold and great mercies."<sup>773</sup> This theologically-charged and quietly defiant liturgical innovation affirmed with finesse the people's direct access to God's grace with confidence. Against this backdrop, congregations of 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestants figured themselves over and over again at every communion as "Canaanite women" grateful for, and confident of, their right to God's grace, regardless of the precedents of the established faith, the "Old Learning," or old rules of penitence and consecration. The communicants became the Canaanite woman; more precisely, they became the Canaanite woman who wins the argument about old and new paths to salvation.

Thus, Cranmer's prayer, repeated for five centuries by countless Anglicans and Episcopalians, continues to reenact the Canaanite woman's petition to Jesus for healing. Her 16<sup>th</sup> century avatars cite Jesus' merciful nature, just as she did, and they concede their unworthiness to receive his healing grace, just as she did. And it may be, as Katie Badie suggests, that her confidence and chutzpah are also present in the protestant play for direct appeal to Jesus within a part of the liturgy traditionally reserved for priestly mediation of a divine mystery. If so, nothing could be further from the abject obedience of the monks at Sinai.

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<sup>772</sup> Colin Buchanon, *What Did Cranmer Think He Was Doing?* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1976), 26.

<sup>773</sup> Katie Badie, "The Prayer of Humble Access," *Churchman* 120:2 (2006): 103-117 (105).

## 6.3 THE CANAANITE WOMAN IN “PRIVATE” PRAYER

### 6.3.1 Gregory of Narek: Book of Lamentations

While the next text ostensibly takes us back into the domain of deeply personal private prayer, it turns out, instead, to be one of the most publicly revered books in Armenian literature, one that was reprinted over 50 times between 1673 and 1875, “testifying to the power of the book and the size, level and appetite of the Armenian readership.”<sup>774</sup> Gregory of Narek’s *Book of Lamentations* (or Prayers) was written in 1002 in Armenian. Written late in the life of this monk, teacher, and mystic, his last work was a book of prayers in poetic meter written at the request of the other monks in the monastery. Known popularly as “the Narek,” it became and remains an exemplum in its expression of a particular type of private encounter with God, much the way Matt 15:21-28 is an exemplum. More than this, the Narek has been regarded by devout Armenians as having healing or medicinal powers, based on Gregory’s description of his prayers as “powerful salves for incurable wounds, effective medicines for invisible pains.”<sup>775</sup> Its poems have been incorporated into the liturgy as well as religious music. Its author, Gregory Narekatsi, who refers to himself as “a living book” in Prayer 39 of the Narek,<sup>776</sup> is one of the most beloved, venerated, and imitated of Armenian saints.

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<sup>774</sup> Thomas J. Samuelian, *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart: The Armenian Prayer Book of St. Gregory of Narek* (Yerevan: Vem Press, 2001), 7. Cf. also Roberta R. Ervine, *The Blessing of Blessings: Gregory of Narek’s Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo, Cistercian Publications, 2007), 2, who confirms: “Of his poetic work there are more copies and editions—manuscript and printed alike—than of any other original text in Armenian.”

<sup>775</sup> Ervine, *Blessing of Blessings*, 2; Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 29. Indeed, the Narek is often regarded as “a talisman against powers of evil and placed under the pillow to ward off all kinds of dangers” (Mischa Kudian, *Lamentations of Narek: Mystic Soliloquies with God* (London: Mashtots Press, 1977), 11.

<sup>776</sup> “I am a living book, written like the scroll in the vision of Ezekiel, inside and out, listing lamentations, moaning and woe” (Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 303).

Gregory was placed in the monastery at Narek at a very young age, upon the death of his mother. His father, the Bishop Khosrov Antsevatsi, and his elder brother Hovannes were also monks at Narek where his mother's cousin, Anania, was the erudite and respected abbot. The monastery, founded in 935 by Anania, was part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century monastic revival and as such became a center of not only asceticism and monastic prayer, but also of thought and learning. Indeed, almost all of Armenian literature from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and all of the *vardapets*, or doctors of the Armenian church, came out of monastic settings.<sup>777</sup> Monks were revered as angelic, engaged in ceaseless prayer, and often as miracle-workers.<sup>778</sup> It was to this class of teacher and writer that Gregory belonged, as he wrote his hymns, commentaries, histories of relics, and poems.

The *Book of Lamentations* is known for its seamless fusion of scriptural citation with Gregory's own distinctive poetic style, his repetitive incantatory syntax, heaped-up lists of metaphors, and serial, often visual, representations of abstract concepts. One characteristic passage from Prayer 93 that describes God's grace will suffice to give a sense of the way this technique washes over the reader:

the ray of grace, the splendor of our forehead,  
the guardian of our lips, the attendant of our faith,  
the guide of our behavior, the tie that binds,  
the strength of souls, the fortitude of resistance,  
the barrier to spells, the destroyer of talismans,  
the repeller of wizards, the confounder of sorcerers,  
the exposor of heretics, the vanquisher of demons,  
the dispeller of pain, the fulfiller of the baptized,  
the fervent desire of converts, the incomprehensible mystery of outsiders,  
the bewilderment of pagans, the envy of non-believers,  
the unmasker of secrets, the honor of the humble,

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<sup>777</sup> Ervine, *Blessing of Blessings*, 4: "Classical Armenian literature—which covers everything written in the classical idiom from the fifth through the fifteenth centuries, and even beyond—is almost entirely clerical literature, and the overwhelming majority of it was produced in monastic settings."

<sup>778</sup> Ervine, *Blessing of Blessings*, 12-13.

the glory of slaves, the adornment of women,  
the growth of children, the joy of the aged....<sup>779</sup>

The effect is more a course of meditation and worship than a narrative. Thomas Samuelian further asserts:

As he [Narek] notes in his Prologue, the book was designed to be an applied synthesis of theology and worship, a handbook for the spiritual development of monastics the world over. It is a rule of monastic life formulated as an experiential spiritual exercise. The theoretical indoctrination and instruction is ingeniously implicit and designed to be inculcated by the practice of learning to pray.<sup>780</sup>

Samuelian attributes a didactic, indoctrinating intention to Gregory's personal prayers, one which is also evident in Gregory's initial "Tenets of Prayer," which he describes as "practical words" on "repentance, on counsel for the benefit of the soul, on self-discipline, on the rules of contrite living, on dedication and commitment" and more.<sup>781</sup> How does this play out in his use of Matthew 15:21-28?

Gregory cites Matthew 15:21-28 at the end of Prayer 35, which begins, like all the rest, with the assertion, "From the bottom of the heart, a conversation with God." It is at the end of the poem that Gregory assumes the role of the Canaanite woman. After praising and thanking God for loving not just the angels but also humanity, and for giving humanity gifts, healing, signs and wonders, he cites God's love of Moses and David, the gift of the Law, and asks God to give him right speech and the ability to see anew and speak aright and rid himself of his sins. At the conclusion of this plea for renewal and cleansing and inspiration come the following lines:

In the voice of the Canaanite woman,  
I pray from the bottom of my heart,  
like a starving dog yelping, wretched and anxious, begging for scraps,  
a few crumbs of the bread of life,

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<sup>779</sup> Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 717. This particular series from Prayer 93R continues for several more lines.

<sup>780</sup> Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 8.

<sup>781</sup> Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 29.

from your bountiful table.  
Save my physical altar, Son of bitterness,  
who came to rescue me when I was lost.<sup>782</sup>

Gregory's impersonation of the Canaanite woman is marked by its anguished urgency, its depiction of his suffering in extremity. The "crumbs" he seeks are "the bread of life;" they appear to be critical to the salvation of his "physical altar," perhaps an image for Gregory's body, whose function must become the consecration and memory of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In Samuelian's translation, it is Jesus who is referred to as "Son of bitterness;" indeed, Samuelian capitalizes the word "Son." This is a dark image suggesting costly atonement, perhaps acknowledging Jesus' suffering as instrumental in Gregory's "rescue." There is a visceral incarnate immediacy to the images of starving dog, scraps of meat, Jesus' bitter sacrifice, and Gregory's rescue. Whatever triumph is represented here is paid for in full, by Jesus and, in gratitude, by Gregory, as he becomes a chastened and contrite Canaanite dog, dedicated to the celebration of Jesus' "atonement and healing, renewal and bliss."<sup>783</sup>

On the other hand, the translation is apparently not a simple one. Isaac Kéchichian, in the 1960 *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of Gregory's prayers, renders the passage as follows:

à moi, chien de chasse, hurlant de faim, si malheureux, en grand peril,  
donne de quoi vivre des miettes de pain  
qui tombent de ta table très abondante!  
Veuille me délivrer, moi vase sacré de l'Autel,  
bien que je sois devenu fils d'amertume  
Toi qui es venu me chercher et vivifier, moi qui étais perdu!<sup>784</sup>

to me, dog of the hunt, howling with hunger, so unhappy, in great peril,  
give me what I need to live from the crumbs of bread  
that fall from your abundant table!  
Please deliver me, me a sacred vessel of the altar,  
even if I become a son of bitterness,

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<sup>782</sup> Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 285.

<sup>783</sup> Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 285.

<sup>784</sup> Gregory of Narek, *Le Livre de Prières* 35.3.6-9, SC 78, ed. Isaac Kéchichian (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960), 225.

you who came to find me and give me life, me who was lost!

The difference between “Save my physical altar, Son of bitterness” and “deliver me, a sacred vessel of the altar, even if I become a son of bitterness” is not trivial! While I am not able to offer an opinion regarding the original Armenian, I will observe that the darker translation, focused on costly atonement and sacrifice and of Jesus as a “son of bitterness,” is less characteristic of Eastern orthodoxy generally. The expectation would not be a focus on the passion, but rather on Jesus’ victory in Hades, resurrection, new life, and the end of death. At the same time, the ideal of being a consecrated vessel of the Eucharistic altar, in spite of his own propensity to bitterness and darkness sounds very much like Gregory, who in Prayer 56 defines “the agents of death” by describing himself and his own attributes for some 50 lines, including “my sinister heart,” “dark inclinations,” “deranged sage,” and “grotesque rhetorician.”<sup>785</sup> In any case, Prayer 35 presents Gregory as a sinful, bitter creature, desperate for salvation, yearning to be made new by Jesus. The Canaanite woman of private prayer cum spiritual exercise in the Narek is near unredeemable.

### **6.3.2 Anglican Devotional Texts**

It is also as an abject sinner that the Canaanite woman resurfaces in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Anglican devotional texts that comprise the final set of readings in this chapter. Equally popular to the Narek and with similarly large readerships and cultural and religious import, such texts were part of the general surge in primers, psalters, books of hours, guides to Christian living, and

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<sup>785</sup> Samuelian, *Speaking with God*, 404-405.

meditations that accompanied the Protestant paradigm of universal access to the Bible, the priesthood of all believers, and individual spiritual development and devotion.<sup>786</sup>

Though fashioned as manuals for “private” religious devotions, these texts, like those already discussed above, belong to the arena of religious and cultural instruction. As C. J. Stranks has pointed out, this rich devotional literature,

indicates the kind of spiritual training which underlay the outward observances of religion.... The obvious purpose of those who wrote these books was to educate and direct the deepest thoughts and feelings of all whom they could persuade to accept their guidance.<sup>787</sup>

From the occasional prayers of Ludovicus Vives, the Catholic tutor of Princess Mary, to the prayer collections, catechisms and polemic of Thomas Becon, popular Protestant minister, religious professionals and laymen, virtually all men, produced more than eighty devotional books during Elizabeth’s reign.<sup>788</sup> Furthermore, many of these were directed at women, most famously Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones* (1582).<sup>789</sup>

### ***Thomas Bentley, The Monument of Matrones***

*The Monument* was a huge compilation of prayers and meditations which had been written or translated by women. Bentley collected these and organized them, roughly, by occasion. He filled over 1500 quarto pages with extracts from the Bible, vitae of Biblical and other model women, and religious writings (prayers and translations) of aristocratic and “gentle”

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<sup>786</sup> C. J. Stranks, *Anglican Devotion: Studies in the Spiritual Life of the Church of England between the Reformation and the Oxford Movement* (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1961), 13.

<sup>787</sup> Stranks, *Anglican Devotion*, 9.

<sup>788</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. 1 of *From Cranmer to Hooker, 1534-1603* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 407, 411-416.

<sup>789</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: conteining seuen seuerall Lamps of Virginitie, or distinct treatises whereof the first fiue concern praier and meditation: the other two last, precepts and examples, as the woorthie works partlie of men partlie of women; compiled for the necessarie use of both sexes out of the sacred scripture, and other approoued authors by Thomas Bentley of Graies Inne Student*. Imprinted at London by H. Denham, dwelling in Pater noster Rowe, at the signe of the Starr, being the assigne of William Seres, 1582.



women such as Katherine Parr (“godlie praiers and meditations” collected out of holy works) and Princess Elizabeth herself (with her English translation of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Le miroir de l’âme pécheresse*, under the English title given to it by John Bale, *A Godlie meditation on the inward loue of the soule towards Christ our Lord*.)<sup>790</sup> Bentley himself described *A Monument of Matrones* as “divers verie godlie, learned and diuine treatises, of meditations and praier, made by sundrie right famous Queenes, noble Ladies, virtuous Virgins, and godlie Gentlewomen of al ages.”<sup>791</sup> Even so, significant portions of the *Monument* are not comprised of women’s writings, but rather of Biblical materials, colored by Bentley’s own glosses, interpolations, textual manipulations, and edifying comments.<sup>792</sup>

The seven “Lamps” or chapters are organized roughly as follows: Lamp 1 reproduces biblical excerpts, including, for example, the prayer of Hagar; Lamp 2, the collections and translations of famous women mentioned above; Lamp 3, prayers that praise Elizabeth I; Lamp 4, prayers for every time of day, Sabbaths, misfortunes, and other occasions; Lamp 5 (in which the reference to the Canaanite woman occurs), prayers for women, whether virgins, wives, servants, or widows; Lamp 6, selections from the Bible that depict the Christian duties of all types of women; and Lamp 7, lives of Biblical women.<sup>793</sup> It was a work of instruction, edification, and disciplining of female conduct, presented as “private” devotions.

Bentley’s reference to Matthew 15:21-28 appears in the “Fifth Lampe of Virginitie,” which contains prayers for “all sorts and degrees of women, in their seuerall ages and callings; as

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<sup>790</sup> Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Subordinating Women: Thomas Bentley’s Use of Biblical Women in ‘The Monument of Matrones’ (1582),” *Church History* 60:3 (1991), 289-300 (289).

<sup>791</sup> Cited in Atkinson and Atkinson, “Subordinating Women,” 290.

<sup>792</sup> Cf. Atkinson and Atkinson, “Subordinating Women,” 298: “Time and again we see Bentley subtly using the Bible to present models of submissive female behavior. He rearranges biblical texts, adds phrases, and shifts emphasis. Lamp Seven is, therefore, not simply a useful compendium of biblical women’s lives, but is rather a patriarchal rewriting of the biblical texts to support women’s subordination.”

<sup>793</sup> I have taken this general outline of Bentley’s mammoth project from Atkinson and Atkinson, “Subordinating Women,” 290.

namelie, of Virgins, Wiues, Women with child, Midwiues, Mothers, Daughters, Mistresses, Maids, Widowes, and old women.”<sup>794</sup> The association of the Canaanite woman with female sinfulness is uncategorical in this prayer. Her status as “wandering sheepe” outside the fold and her relegation to submissive begging under the master’s table is linked with the sin of the woman of Samaria and Mary Magdalene, all understood as ciphers of sexual transgression. The prayer—or more aptly, the script created to be repeated by Bentley’s wayward women readers—is entitled: “A lamentation of anie woman, virgin, wife, or widowe, for hir virginitie or chastitie, lost by fornication or adulterie: not unapt also to be used by anie Christian sinner or sinfull soule adulterated and fallen awaie by sinne from hir spirituall spouse Christ Ieius.” As is often the case, the sinful Christian woman, figured as Canaanite woman, appears at the end of this long, disconsolate prayer:

Oh blessed Trinitie, that though wilt shew mercie unto the wandering sheepe, which is subject to the renting teeth of the ravenous wolfe. Save me, O Lord, out of his mouth. Suffer me not to become the sacrifice of sinne, but let downe upon me thy holie spirit, that with his firie countenance, he may put to flight the crooked feend of the Divell, that I may be brought home againe unto thy wisdom; that the bill of sinne written against mee, be blotted out and cancelled; that the sowe may be washed from hir filthiness; the dog eate of the crumbs that fall from hir maisters table, and a sinner worse than Marie Magdalen, yea chiefe of all sinners, be saved.<sup>795</sup>

Such fevered refortification of virtuous conduct in portrayals of pious Christian women—often in peril, as in this passage—is conventional in the Protestant devotional texts of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, the *Monument* itself belongs to the translation and publication of religious works into the vernacular that began towards the end of Henry VIII’s reign and continued through the radical Reformation years of Edward VI. Its contents also attest to the critical role played by aristocratic women of the Tudor court in the popularization of Protestant

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<sup>794</sup> Bentley, *Monument, The Fifthe Lampe of Virginitie* frontispiece, 1.

<sup>795</sup> Thomas Bentley, *Monument, The Fifthe Lampe of Virginitie*, 26.

humanism. Not only through their devotional writings and translations, but also through their patronage, they were integral to the humanistic “edification of a mixed audience of elite and ordinary readers.”<sup>796</sup> Radical reform publishers such as John Bay and John Bale, historian-writers such as John Foxe, and cultural arbiters at court such as Catherine Parr, Catherine Brandon, Anne Seymour, Anne Askew, and Mary Fitzroy entered into relationships of patronage, mutual protection, and publication. Fitzroy, in particular, was engaged, along with Bale and Fox, in the publication of books designed to come ‘into the hands of the people.’<sup>797</sup> Catherine Parr was instrumental in the translation of Erasmus’ *Paraphrases of the New Testament* and Edward VI then commanded that every parish purchase one. As Margaret Hannay has explained,

The translation project is an excellent example of the commitment of Protestant women to broadening the audience for devotional texts to include both aristocrats and commoners. Udall’s [publisher’s] preface includes the queen [Parr] in the company of noble women who are able to write theological treatises and translate devotional works “for the use and commoditie of such as are rude and ignoraunte of the sayd tounes....”<sup>798</sup>

Humanistic principles and Reformation ideals lay behind such projects. Meditations and prayers on grace, faith, penitence, justification by faith alone and more appeared in devotional manuals, popular biblical poetry, even set to the tunes of folk ballads. In such ways, “gospelling poets” answered “Erasmus’ call in *Paraclesis* for universal literacy, translation of the Bible into the vernacular, and the generation of popular biblical poetry so that ‘even the lowliest women’ could understand the Scriptures.”<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>796</sup> Margaret Patterson Hannay, ed., *Silent But For the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985), 43.

<sup>797</sup> Hannay, *Silent*, 51, citing a report by the Protestant translator Nichola Lesse on the Duchess’ activities.

<sup>798</sup> Hannay, *Silent*, 48.

<sup>799</sup> Hannay, *Silent*, 54, quoting Erasmus, *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings*, ed. John C. Olin (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 97.

*Anne Wheathill, A handfull of holesome (though homelie) hearbs*

And so at least one “lowly” woman did, in the last text to be discussed here, a collection of devotional prayers and meditations published just two years after Bentley’s *Monument*, in 1584, by a commoner, Anne Wheathill, entitled, *A handfull of holesome (though homelie) hearbs, gathered out of the goodlie garden of Gods most holie word: for the common benefit and comfortable exercise of all such as are devoutlie disposed. Collected and dedicated to all religious ladies, gentlewomen, and others by Anne Wheathill, Gentlewoman*. Applying the term “gentlewoman” to herself is the opening stroke in Wheathill’s self-presentation, indicating that she is not noble, not aristocratic, but nonetheless has some education and some understanding of manners. While books of devotion had been written by women before, Wheathill’s was the first addressed to women particularly, and apparently the first written by a gentlewoman.<sup>800</sup>

Wheathill’s book was published by Henry Denham, the same printer who produced Bentley’s *Monument*. She is resolutely Protestant; her text is built largely out of the language, images, and metaphors of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. She is distinctly Calvinist in her theology; her prayers are strewn with acknowledgements of human sinfulness, Christ’s purchase of human salvation with his blood, and the need for grace and faith. Atkinson and Atkinson have pointed out that her 49 prayers, 7 prayers x 7 weeks, move “from humility and awareness of sinfulness through lamentation to thanksgiving for redemption.”<sup>801</sup>

Wheathill’s prayers for women are of particular interest in the context of this chapter and its questions about the dynamics of rhetorical adoption and devout internalization of the

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<sup>800</sup> Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Anne Wheathill’s A Handfull of Holesome (though Homelie) Hearbs (1584): The First English Gentle woman’s Prayer Book,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 27:3 (1996), 659-672 (661).

<sup>801</sup> Colin B. Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Four Prayer Books Addressed to Women during the Reign of Elizabeth I,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60:4 (1997), 407-423 (419).

Canaanite woman's persona, not to mention how that persona is defined in either case. How does a simple gentlewoman acquire the mettle to write a book of prayers at this particular moment in the development of devotional literature? Why does she address the book to women? What sort of Canaanite woman does she channel? Do we expect, from a Calvinist, an intellectual wit who bests Jesus? Can we even anticipate a reformer's depiction of equal access to God from Wheathill, as avatar of the Canaanite woman? Or equal sinfulness before God?

Wheathill adopts the Canaanite woman's stance in her eighth prayer, the first of the second week, entitled "A praier of the iustice of God, and of his mercie." Note that it is not a prayer for women, but a prayer for all sinful human beings. She begins with "the burthen, wait, and filthiness of sinne" within her, but goes on to rehearse the fates of equally sinful Biblical characters—Adam, Nathan, Abiram, and David—"Who would not then feare, seeing we sinne dailie with most greuous sinnes?" She appeals to Jesus as the remedy, "our bulworke and house of defense between thine anger and us."<sup>802</sup> She then proceeds to a lamentation in which "we" and the Canaanite woman become one:

We are all carnall, sold under sinne; so that the good we would doo, that doo we not; but the evill that we wold not, that we doo. We are all evill of our selves. Consider O God our contrite hearts, and penitent minds, and heare, heale, and amend us.

Hope biddeth us still to crie and call upon thee for helpe, as the woman of Canaan cried still upon they sonne Christ for the helpe of hir daughter, and at the last was heard to hir owne contentation: so we, knocking and calling still, doubt not but thou wilt grant, through our importunacie, our desires, as he that granted his neighbor three loaves.

We do now knocke, crie, and will never cease, till thou Lord turne towards us, and deliver our soules.... Dwell in us still by thy continuall grace, make us to be of thy housefold, that we may live and praise thee in this world.<sup>803</sup>

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<sup>802</sup> All of the quotes in this paragraph are from Anne Wheathill, *A handfull of holesome (though homelie) hearbs* (London: H. Denham, 1584), 17-18.

<sup>803</sup> Wheathill, *A handfull*, 19-20.

Wheathill's Canaanite woman is a universal exemplum of the human soul before God. Any details of her womanhood, her maternity, any sense that her sin is particularly sexual in nature, are absent. This is not Thomas Bentley's Canaanite woman, palpably female, a filthy sow, a sinner worse than Mary Magdalene. Wheathill is not engaged in the disciplining of gendered sin. Indeed, she seems surprisingly uninterested in her gender per se. Like many of the earlier devotional texts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century—the Book of Common Prayer for public worship, John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and Thomas Becon's *Works* for home reading, Henry Bull's *Christian Praiers and Holie Meditations* and Richard Day's *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (slightly later)<sup>804</sup>—she equates men's and women's spiritual concerns.

It is interesting, then, that current critics find evidence that Wheathill is concerned with her gender, that she “stresses her limitations as a woman” and that “she wrote as a woman acting in a public sphere on religious matters—violations of the feminine norms of silence and subordination.”<sup>805</sup> To the contrary, she seems to be much more focused on her “class” status, her “rudeness” and the “weaknes of my knowledge and capacitie,” not as a woman, but in contrast with “the learned” and “others with more understanding.”<sup>806</sup> Aristocratic women had been writing prayers and translating devotional texts for decades, but they were queens and noble ladies. Of more concern to Wheathill than her womanhood was the possibility that “of the learned I may be iudged grose and unwise....”<sup>807</sup> Wheathill's defense is not like Dhuoda's, authorized by her maternity, the history of her marriage and childbearing, and inspired by God like the Canaanite woman. Wheathill, a young, unmarried Calvinist, is authorized instead by her

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<sup>804</sup> This list and the point about their gender-neutral orientation come from Atkinson and Atkinson, “Four Prayer Books,” 407.

<sup>805</sup> Atkinson and Atkinson, “Wheathill's A Handfull,” 663.

<sup>806</sup> Wheathill, *A handfull*, a.ijj.

<sup>807</sup> Wheathill, *A handfull*, a.ijj.

zeal and her “willing hart and feruent mind,” as one of the elect of “the Lord Iesus Christ, who moisteneth all his elect with his most precious blood.”<sup>808</sup> This Canaanite woman is a lowly sinner, ungendered, universal, whom Christ saves because of her fervent heart and mind, her faith, and her desire for “a sweete taste in him.”<sup>809</sup>

#### 6.4 CONCLUSION

What are we to conclude from the examples above? Is there any evidence of authentic or “real” or historical identification in them, not to mention any mediation between thought and actual action? If these “transcribed experiences” are rhetorical performances, how do they aim to persuade? What do they claim for their authors? Dhuoda claims an inspired religious authority, but what relationship does it bear to the Canaanite woman’s submissive retort to Jesus? The Sinai monks lie prostrate in a midnight oratory, begging for pity and forgiveness, but what relationship does this bear to the Canaanite woman’s “unseemly” and “embarrassing” pursuit of Jesus and his disciples in the streets? Anglican congregations confess their unworthiness to partake of the Eucharist even as their confidence in God’s grace trumps priestly mediations, but what has this to do with the Canaanite woman’s settling for crumbs? Gregory of Narek wavers back and forth between becoming a sacred vessel of the altar and a son of bitterness, emblem of spiritual emptiness and sinfulness, while the Canaanite woman, resolute and unwavering, single-mindedly demands healing for her daughter. And Anne Wheathill’s Canaanite woman is a sinful

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<sup>808</sup> Wheathill, *A handfull*, a.iv.

<sup>809</sup> Wheathill, *A handfull*, a.iv.

Calvinist maiden desperate for God's redeeming grace, not a mother insistently seeking an exorcism for her daughter.

It is difficult to see these "transcribed experiences" as anything more than reproductions of traditional interpretations of the Canaanite woman, selective renditions of her, passed down within the exegetical tradition, applied to the religious standards and measures of their historical contexts, understood by means of contemporary cultural markers, and claimed as individual spiritual experience. These are, arguably, the essential components of identity, be it lived or narrated. This dissertation has argued that there is a disciplinary power in exegetical discourse, one consciously constructed to ensure solidarity, unity of belief, conformity of practice, and maintenance of institutional hierarchies. Yet, texts do not provide evidence for the efficacy of this power, only for the perception of its utility.

Jauss acknowledged the "fundamental ambivalence" born of the mediation of the imaginary; that is to say, he acknowledged the relatively unpredictable outcomes of identification with textual ideals and characters. These outcomes range from a new frame of possible action to complacent curiosity to naïve amazement to coerced collective behavior.<sup>810</sup> Yet, he distinguished the Christian aesthetic as particularly aware of this instability and deemed religious authority to be consciously antithetical to such indeterminacy. Over and against cathartic cleansing, Jauss saw Christian authorities exhorting compassion that leads to righteous action; over and against the issueless enjoyment of the imaginary, he saw them choreographing the productive power of the exemplary; over and against the aesthetic pleasure of mimesis, he saw them substituting the hortatory principle of *imitatio*.<sup>811</sup> The readings of Matthew 15:21-28 in this dissertation obviously align with Jauss' argument. I have located and analyzed the how and

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<sup>810</sup> Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, 155, 167.

<sup>811</sup> Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, 92.



why of this aesthetic in them; more than this, I have argued the local, situated, and interested nature of the prescriptions, prohibitions, and ideals that they espouse. The dynamic relationship between the semantic text and its exegetical afterlife in the case of Matthew 15:21-28 should be clear, even if the historical transformation of textual imperatives into lived praxis is not. In sum, the inculcation of normative attributes at any given moment in any given context has driven the explication of the semantic text.

## 7.0 EPILOGUE

Current scholarship on Matt 15:21-28 runs the gamut from traditional textual and historical criticisms to post-colonial analyses. Recognizing this, two New Testament scholars have recently offered interpretations of the passage in order to illustrate contradictory assumptions within current exegetical methods. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, looking at the history of its interpretation, notes the two interpretive strategies highlighted in this dissertation (anathema/exemplum) only to argue that a focus upon them serves to deflect “a critical theological discussion and ethical evaluation of the prejudice and discriminatory stance ascribed to Jesus.”<sup>812</sup> Amy-Jill Levine defines Matt 15:21-28 as “a major site of contention” between “two sibling schools of interpretation:” an older, historical-critical, objectivist brother-historian who uses source, form, redaction, historical and social-scientific criticism, on the one hand, and a younger, feminist, post-colonial, unabashedly experientialist sister-narratologist who uses literary-critical, political, and ideological criticism, on the other.<sup>813</sup>

These metacritical evaluations of current exegetical methods sound pretty cutting-edge: Levine’s, in favor of rapprochement, if not reconciliation, between “social-location based

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<sup>812</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Reading the Bible as Equals,” in *In Search of a Round Table* (eds. Rachel Angogo Kanyoro and Musimbi Kanyoro; Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1997): 57-70 (66-67): “In the subsequent history of interpretation two rhetorical strategies compete with each other. The salvation-historical approach employs the allegorical method of interpretation and carries anti-Jewish overtones.... The exhortative reading approach focusses on the paradigmatic behaviour of the woman, especially on her exemplary faith, which is differently understood in different confessional historical contextualization.”

<sup>813</sup> Amy-Jill Levine, “Matthew’s Advice to a Divided Readership,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study* (ed. David E. Aune; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 22-41 (22-23).

criticism” and “historical rigor”<sup>814</sup> and Schüssler Fiorenza’s, in favor of connecting theology, ethics, and “global emancipatory movements for freedom and equality with women’s struggles in Christianity and biblical exegesis.”<sup>815</sup> Yet, the categories and the criticisms within their arguments, at this point in this study, should sound very familiar whether they are arguing for or against the search for clarifying historical contexts, the existential impact of the Biblical text, the link between biblical interpretation and the fate of the oppressed, the exposure of eisegetic moves, or the awareness that exegesis has powerful political and social utilities. There is, on the other hand, one thing that is new—new at least within the historical exegetical corpus: it is Levine’s naming and disavowal of the anti-Jewish implications of universalist and ecumenical arguments. Otherwise, all are in abundant supply within the history of interpretation and reception of Matthew’s passage. Furthermore, if the readings in this dissertation have demonstrated anything, it is that scholarly distinctions between exegesis, history, theology, existentialist hermeneutics, moral paranesis, anti-Other polemic, and ideological and liberatory biblical criticism obscure the clear functional correspondences between them.

Consider, for example, that the most uncompromising advances of Levine’s younger experientialist sister, such as the criticism coming out of feminist post-colonial interpretation (the current method that diverges perhaps most radically from the assumptions and interests of Levine’s “older historical-critical” brother) promote theological and existentialist applications, just as the traditional exegesis analyzed in this study has done for centuries. Representative readings of the Canaanite woman have been written over the last 15 years by Musa Dube, Aruna Gnanadason, and Surekha Nelavala in which the Canaanite woman becomes 1) a figure of a Batswana woman-diviner who integrates African and Christian religious faiths, 2) a native

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<sup>814</sup> Amy-Jill Levine, “Matthew’s Advice,” 41.

<sup>815</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, “Reading the Bible,” 57.

Indian woman who is seen as “polluted,” “impure,” and in need of colonizing and Christianizing, and 3) a Dalit (untouchable) woman, a “trickster” resistant to domination who is able to bring about change in the oppressor, Jesus.<sup>816</sup> These interpretations locate meaning and applicability within the reader’s autobiography and social location. These scholars read the Bible for healing and empowerment; they claim a new theological authority that is inclusive, contextual, and liberating. The social location of feminist, post-colonial exegetes is certainly not that of the Church fathers; indeed, they understand and emphasize that they occupy a diametrically opposed position in terms of cultural power and authority. Their method cannot therefore be said to “discipline” in the same way, yet they unapologetically seek to influence their readers by liberating and by castigating. Furthermore, subjectivist readings that transform the Canaanite woman into a Batswana woman-diviner or a Dalit untouchable woman are no more or less solipsistic than those of Julien of Vézelay, who saw the Canaanite woman and her daughter as figures of a divided monkish soul (much like his own), or Calvin’s divinely-inspired, catechized Christian seeking atonement for her sins (not unlike himself). It is, I am suggesting, as interesting to consider what critics do as to heed what they say about what they do.

What does current biblical criticism of Matt 15:21-28 do, then? Is there anything new under the sun? Amongst the most often consulted commentaries today, there is little variation, substantive or methodological, from what has come before.<sup>817</sup> Familiar questions are reproduced

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<sup>816</sup> Musa W. Dube, “Readings of Semoya: Batswana Women’s Interpretations of Matt 15:21-28,” *Semeia* 73 (1996): 111-129; Aruna Gnanadason, “Jesus and the Asian Woman: A Post-colonial Look at the Syro-Phoenician Woman/Canaanite Woman From an Indian Perspective,” *Studies in World Christianity* 7 (2001): 162-177; Surekha Nelavala, “Smart Syrophoenician Woman: A Dalit Feminist Reading of Mark 7:24-31 in *Women in Christianity: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, Vol. 1 (ed. Kwok Pui-lan; London and New York: Routledge, 2010): 343-350.

<sup>817</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 245-248; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1995), 438-443; Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*. Interpretation Series: A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 176-

with no real innovations in their resolution: the meaning of (sequential) priority between Judaism and Christianity, the question of the institution of the Gentile mission; form and redaction critical genealogies that reveal historically transparent moments in the parting of the ways; intratextual clues within Matthew to his larger ethos; social-scientific readings of the woman's behaviors; the contextualization of exorcism, demonic possession and their link to purity laws; apology for Jesus' behavior as a test of faith; the historical meaning of (domestic) dogs; and the overall *scopus* or goal of the passage, including providing an exemplum of faith. Furthermore, these questions are equally definitive within the broader scholarly literature on the passage, from historical critical to social-scientific to reader response criticism.

In contrast, trumpeted as innovation in the commentaries of Luz but also found within the work of other commentators, such as R. Schnackenberg and F. Bovon,<sup>818</sup> is the arrival of reception history, specifically its integration into the practice of historical exegesis, though it is still often presented separately, as supplemental to historical inquiry. The roots of reception history in older forms of history of interpretation were illustrated in detail in the introduction. In Luz, this genealogy and its residual effects are most apparent as he uses reception history as a tool for focusing exegesis back onto existential, spiritual applications. Luz sifts through the history of reception in order to find "moments of deep experience," in order to "highlight the

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179; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 414-418; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary (Transl., James E. Crouch; ed., Helmut Koester; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 336-342; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 628-636; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Transl., David E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 328-330.

<sup>818</sup> Rudolf Schnackenberg, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, Evangelische-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 10 (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1982); François Bovon, *De Vocatione gentium: Histoire de l'interprétation d'Ac. 10.1-11.18 dans les premiers siècles*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 8 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1967); François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 4 vols, Evangelische-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989-2009).

religious, devotional spirit of the texts.”<sup>819</sup> As Mark Elliot sums it up, Luz’ effective history aims to “sustain an ecclesial communion of the saints’ hermeneutic which can then join with historical criticism to gain the religious gist of any given passage.”<sup>820</sup> Thus, Luz chooses to focus on the use of the story of the Canaanite woman to demonstrate, first, “the power of God’s love that bursts the borders of Israel” and then its use, by the time the Gentile church was ascendant, as exclusive justification “of the legitimacy of the church’s status quo in history. It no longer opened new doors; it merely injured the Jews who were not present in the church.”<sup>821</sup> The ideal for Luz is the fusion of historical criticism and ethical concerns, the latter of which he illustrates by means of effective history, “to connect with New Testament writers and implied readers, and gain guidance for today’s church.”<sup>822</sup>

There are, of course, instances of reception historical readings of Matt 15:21-28 today that aim to adopt a more “purely academic” and descriptive stance. Louise Lawrence’s “‘Crumb Trails and Puppy-Dog Tales’: Reading Afterlives of a Canaanite Woman” is a good example of this contemporary type. Like Schüssler Fiorenza, she recognizes the salvation-historical and the exemplum strands within the history of interpretation. In addition, she goes on to describe several feminist and post-colonial readings, noting their resistance to “the straitjacket of the history of interpretation” and their “resurrection of the Canaanite woman to speak to contemporary political issues.”<sup>823</sup> This particular juxtaposition of “straitjacket” and “resurrection” seems to imply that such a move towards topicality constitutes some sort of methodological break in the interpretive tradition. Yet, Lawrence limits herself for the most part

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<sup>819</sup> Elliot, “Effective-History and Ulrich Luz,” 171. Cf. n. 52 above.

<sup>820</sup> Elliot, “Effective-History and Ulrich Luz,” 171.

<sup>821</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 341.

<sup>822</sup> Elliot, “Effective-History and Ulrich Luz,” 163.

<sup>823</sup> Lawrence, “Crumb Trails,” 275. Cf. n 132 above.

to cataloguing patterns, recyclings, and reprocessings within the tradition and ends the article with what can only be categorized as a long-standing conventional nod to the real-life influence of exegetical works: “For puppy-dog tales and their afterlives are not limited to words on a page but ultimately are stimulants to human agency, for good and ill, within the world.”<sup>824</sup> Once again, the reading and its application, the academic and the advocate merge. This is an extremely well-established technique: If William Jay saw biblical exegesis as a tool to render women readers amiable, prudent, and useful,<sup>825</sup> Louise Lawrence describes others who see it as “explosive and politically subversive,” capable of urging “those used to grovelling on hands and knees at the table of oppression” to wish she would “get on her feet, first to whisper but eventually to bark back, not only at the Christ that calls her ‘dog’, but also the myriad disciples, missionaries and interpreters that stand in his wake.”<sup>826</sup>

To be fair to Lawrence and others writing reception histories of this sort, the practice of reception history is full of pitfalls and potential *faux pas*. As noted in the introduction, current scholarly discussion remains focused on differentiating reception history from traditional histories of interpretation, but there are other salient methodological questions developing today, beyond the persistence of advocacy or paranetic comment.

Eight years ago, Mary Lynn Callaway began her SBL talk, “What’s the Use of Reception History?,” with the distinction between “theological” histories of interpretation and “historical and cultural” reception histories. She cited A.E. Harvey, who had just reviewed the Blackwell Bible Commentary Series in the the *Times Literary Supplement* (Aug 2004), specifically his questions about whether and how the series represented “something new:”

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<sup>824</sup> Lawrence, “Crumb Trails,” 275.

<sup>825</sup> Recall Jay’s 1856 *Lectures on the Female Scripture Characters*, discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>826</sup> Lawrence, “Crumb Trails,” 275

For the reviewer, biblical commentaries had collected and reproduced the comments of earlier interpreters since the first catena in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Contrasting the Blackwell commentaries with other contemporary critical commentaries, he writes, “These reception-history commentaries, with their deliberately wide-ranging comments and illustrations from many different centuries, may claim to be offering something that is genuinely new in terms of contemporary scholarship, even if at times they appear to be returning to an older and well-established model.” That older and well-established model is the history of interpretation, and for the Times reviewer, reception history is essentially a fashionable name for that ancient way of reading. In asking about the commentaries, “Are they really something new?” the reviewer throws down the gauntlet, challenging us to distinguish Reception History from History of Interpretation.<sup>827</sup>

This question presented the practices of reception history and history of interpretation as monolithic entities when, on the contrary, the work that reception historians were doing and are still doing today is widely diverse, just as it has been historically.<sup>828</sup> Even correcting for this generalization, however, the question is outdated. I would like to conclude, then, with some methodological observations about reception history and the questions it is capable of answering.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to explore the relationship between biblical exegesis and the broader cultural production of normative identities and ideals. In the process, I have discovered a wealth of local negotiations of the cultural and the textual, resulting in extraordinarily fluid and diverse interpretations of Matt 15:21-28. The question that I set myself led me to 1) move away from determining the original meaning of the Biblical text, 2) approach questions of the aesthetics of reception by way of historical and cultural context, and 3)

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<sup>827</sup> Mary Lynn Callaway, “What’s the Use?,” 1.

<sup>828</sup> Consider the disparity between Yvonne Sherwood’s study of the afterlives of Job and Christopher Hall’s reading of Scripture with the Church Fathers. Cf. n. 24 and 56 above.



characterize much exegetical practice as both a technology of domination and self-fashioning.<sup>829</sup>

In the first instance, within reception history the interest in any biblical text as a fixed or “self-evident intellectual object,” including the pursuit of its intrinsic or “original” meaning, even understood to better or lesser degrees, is not the point. Such pursuit of the semantic text has no place within the historical findings in the chapters above. These findings reflect, instead, the plasticity and political and cultural utility of discourse, including interpretations of the Bible, within local and particular culture-making. On this view, texts are less *things* and more *cultural negotiations* or even transactional *events*. I would further emphasize that for reception historians, the primary question is not about subsequent misreadings or “lesser” readings of an original text. The meaning of Matthew 15:21-28 has always been a locally produced meaning. (Did the “original meaning” reside in an earlier conflict story or miracle story or their fusion? Does Matthew’s addition of the exclusivity logion expose the meaning of the text or his own authorial preoccupations?)<sup>830</sup> On an even more material level, reception history can only benefit from the obvious but often overlooked circumstance that biblical interpretations in different times and places are often based on quite different versions of the same texts and different translations of the Bible, whether Greek, Latin, English, or other. It is useful to remember, for instance, that Ephrem of Nisibis’ “text” was Tatian’s *Diatesseron* while Calvin’s was the Geneva Bible.

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<sup>829</sup> These terms are Foucaultian. In his work they refer to the analysis of genealogies of cultural power relations and the creation of ethical agency. Here, I use them to characterize the ways that anathema and *imitatio* function in the reception history of Matt 15:21-28.

<sup>830</sup> Granted, Matt. 15:21-28 will repeatedly evoke a different category of responses than, say, Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Messiah at Matt. 16:13-20 and this is indicative of “the text’s agency” in meaning-making. This is so even if, as Iser theorized, texts have an infinite number of meanings and interpretations are practically little more than “illusory gestalts.” It is, still, patently, the text’s indeterminacies and gaps that direct readers’ actualizations of them. The point that I am making is that reception history analyzes the illusory gestalts and “the text” itself cannot be the litmus for their accuracy. Indeed, accuracy is not the object of study, but rather utility.

In the second instance, reception historical method has often been understood to be about the reader, yet its relationship to the aesthetics of reception and philosophical hermeneutics practiced by reception theorists like Iser and Gadamer is inconsistent, as noted in the introduction. The particular interpretations of the Canaanite woman in this study, as well as their parnetic goals and power, acquire meaning only within the cultural environments that produced and required them, including religious, social, and political practices, and cultural forms, representations, and discourses in each historical period. This constitutes the history in reception history. The internal processes of “readers at work, fashioning meaning”<sup>831</sup> subsist in this study upon debates and spiritual claims about interpretation, advertisements, censors, cultural arbiters, as well as more institutional, openly pedagogical influences such as catechism, liturgy, homiletics, and devotional literature.<sup>832</sup> Certainly, the uses of Matt 15:21-28 in Chapter 6, whether personal “internalizations” of the Canaanite woman’s identity or not, suggest that historical debates, arbitrations, prior readings of the passage and stock lessons were not only a part of the reading process for these authors, but that they also used them to represent themselves as embodiments of the biblical message.

In the third instance, the questions raised and answered in this study address more than the reception historical questions of impact, influence, or effects alone; they also encompass the textual construction of idealized identities. The question here becomes whether the sustained historical practice of interpreting the Bible has functioned repeatedly as a form of “on-going subjugation, how subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through

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<sup>831</sup> Robert Darnton, “First Steps Toward a History of Reading” in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 154-187 (157).

<sup>832</sup> Cf. Darnton, “First Steps,” 171-187.

a multiplicity of forces, energies, materials.”<sup>833</sup> The seemingly amorphous agent in Foucault’s understanding of discursively-produced subjugation or subject-formation—“a multiplicity of forces, energies, materials”— is understood in this study as the very local historical, political, theological, and cultural forces that influence the production and cultural meaning of biblical interpretations.

The idea that biblical interpretations and their historically and culturally produced meanings “constitute subjects” also aligns with feminist principles cited in this study regarding the textual construction of normative subjectivities and the use of female figures to inscribe male subjectivity. Certainly, the intention to impose normative ideals and identities, if not the full effect of such identity construction, has been demonstrated in the readings in this study.

It may be that the type of reception history represented by this study comes closest to what Timothy Beal is now calling “the cultural history of Scriptures,” a move to emphasize “the cultural meaning” of texts, rather than their influences. Defining cultural meanings, Beal suggests, requires less attention to “literary content” (the semantic text) and more attention to “material and media-historical approaches... socio-economic processes of production, marketing, and consumption of Bibles and the biblical...”<sup>834</sup> Yet, why construct such a choice? Granted, reception history has roots in the theological search for biblical truths within histories of interpretation as well as the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and Jauss, and both arguably remain too focused on the “literary content” or semantic text. However, in neither case has awareness of the contextual production of biblical meanings been absent. Furthermore, the cultural meanings of texts always represent a fusion of both the cultural implications of the

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<sup>833</sup> Michel Foucault, “Two Lectures” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (transl., C. Gordon; New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 97.

<sup>834</sup> Timothy Beal, “Reception History and Beyond: Toward the Cultural History of Scriptures,” *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011): 357-372 (369-372).

semantic text and the material processes of its production and dissemination. Surely, I can—and did—for instance, describe Ephrem of Nisibis’ immense popular influence through his “Teaching Songs” and his commentaries, as well as their further dissemination and influence through incorporation into liturgies and catechisms, but if I had not focused equally on the content of his reading of Matt 15:21-28—specifically, the biblical and cultural materials, the anti-Semitic traditions out of which he built his bulwark for Nicene orthodoxy within Syrian Christianity—I would not have presented the full cultural meaning of his exegesis and its reception.

Reception history is no longer restricted to being the handmaiden of biblical exegesis, enhancing and enriching its explications of the semantic text as Rachel Nichols or Christopher Hall prefer. It does not need to function only as a tool in the communication of more ethical, existential, or liberating studies of “the biblical” either, as Ulrich Luz or Musa Dube prefer, though this is a useful role for it in some settings. As a form of cultural or intellectual history, it may free itself from the constraints of both of these roles and describe instead the extraordinarily malleable utility of biblical exegesis through complex and diverse genealogies of the cultural norms—in this case, normative Christian identities—it has engendered over the centuries.

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