

# Matthew studies today – a willingness to suspect and a willingness to listen<sup>1</sup>

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*It may be that this situation, in its apparent distress, is instructive: it may be that extreme iconoclasm belongs to the restoration of meaning.*

(Paul Ricoeur 1970:27)

## 1. “BEHIND” – “WITHIN” – “IN FRONT OF”: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This year the renowned Bible Studies Colloquium in Leuven, Belgium also had the state of present-day Matthean scholarship as its theme.<sup>2</sup> The focus of the colloquium was succinctly formulated as “The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity”. Clearly, the intent was not “crossroads” in an historical and geographical sense alone, but also in the temporal terms of location where exegetes find themselves today. Pivotal to proceeding beyond the crossroads is the hermeneutical aspect of a willingness to suspect and a willingness to listen,<sup>3</sup> which was mostly absent during the discussions. Such a willingness includes suspect with regard to outdated values explicitly advocated by the text and a genuine listening to unarticulated voices that remain hidden because of ideologies that render them inaudible. This compact review aims to “hear into speech” some of the silent voices of the history of biblical exegesis.

The presupposition of such a hermeneutics of suspicion is the conviction that a text cannot be read at face value. Critical reading includes “both intuitive insight and

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<sup>1</sup> Society of Biblical Literature 2009 Annual Meeting, November 21-24, 2009, New Orleans, Matthew Section.

<sup>2</sup> Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, July 29-31, 2009, “The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity”, [http://theo.kuleuven.be/page/centr\\_collbibl\\_2009](http://theo.kuleuven.be/page/centr_collbibl_2009), viewed on 3 November 2009.

<sup>3</sup> “Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience. In our time we have not finished doing away with *idols* and we have barely begun to listen to *symbols*. It may be that this situation, in its apparent distress, is instructive: it may be that extreme iconoclasm belongs to the restoration of meaning (Paul Ricoeur 1970, *Freud and philosophy: An essay on interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage, p.27. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT).

political or theological suspicion".<sup>4</sup> When reading critically, the "hidden agendas" of those who take part in the communicative events may be divulged. Hidden agendas are not always deliberately concealed or consciously present. Peeling through the layers of communication exposes the hidden meanings behind it.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of searching for meanings "behind" originated during the time of transition from rationalism to Romanticism at the turn of the 18th to 19th century.<sup>6</sup> Since that time different perspectives (*Sehe-Punkte*) of different people have been recognized. They are points of view found *behind* the text (those of the author and her/his sources), *within* the text (those of explicit or implied narrated characters) and *in front of* the text (those of interpreters from the past and present). According to such an approach a text is not seen as an "object" to be simply "correctly understood". Understanding begs respectful interaction with the text.<sup>7</sup> In this regard Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803)<sup>8</sup> and Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton [2001] 2006, "'Postmodern' challenges to hermeneutics: 'Behind' and 'In front of' the text – Language, reference and indeterminacy", in *Thiselton on hermeneutics: Collected works with new essays*, pp. 607, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. H.-G. Gadamer [1960] 1994, *Truth and method*. Second, revised edition. Translation revised by J. Weinsheimer & D.G. Marshall, Continuum Publishing Company, New York: "Thus a person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said. He must understand it as an answer to a question. If we go back *behind* what is said, then we inevitably ask questions *beyond* what is said. We understand the sense of the text only by acquiring the horizon of the question – a horizon that, as such, necessarily includes other possible answers. Thus a meaning of a sentence is relative to the question to which it is a reply, but that implies that its meaning necessarily exceeds what is said in it. As these considerations show, then, the logic of the human sciences is a logic of the question" (p. 370).

<sup>6</sup> See Thiselton 2006:607-624.

<sup>7</sup> Schleiermacher, Friedrich D.E. [1805-1833] [1974] 1977, *Hermeneutics: The handwritten manuscripts*, pp. 112-113. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, transl. by J. Duke & J. Forstman, ed. by H. Kimmerle. Scholars Press, Missoula, MT. (AAR Text and Translation.)

<sup>8</sup> Forster, Michael, 2008. "Johann Gottfried von Herder", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), viewed on 5 November 2009 from URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/herder/>>. This entry was first published on 23 October 2001 and was last modified on 29 August 2008 (substantive content change).

1834)<sup>9</sup> were the hermeneutists “of the first importance” (Michael Forster 2008: n.p.). Thiselton points out that “Schleiermacher did define the role of ‘New Testament Introduction’ as a necessary way of reaching behind the text to ‘understand’ similarities, differences, genre, motivations and goals that the text presupposed.”<sup>10</sup> However, the understanding that results from reaching “behind the text” may transcend what the author had specifically intended and articulated.

Different to Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics,<sup>11</sup> “Formal Structuralism” defines a text as an entity in and of itself, which has to be understood as such. Information about the author and background could only “contaminate” the “pure” text and therefore also the hermeneutic enterprise.<sup>12</sup> Thiselton describes this movement – which became known as “the new criticism” in the 1940s – as follows: “The text was seen as an autonomous world of literary, poetic, linguistic, semantic, stylistic and semiotic forces.” In this approach reaching “behind” the text was replaced with the focus on meaning “within” the text. Some even regarded it as a “paradigm shift’ from history to literature”.<sup>13</sup>

However, also the so-called “scientific objectivity” of an “autonomous” text was eventually recognized as an impossibility. It is not possible to divorce a text from its context of origin. Furthermore the perspective (*Sehe-Punkt*) of the readers cannot be ignored. Thiselton explains this development as follows: “Hence linguistic and semiotic structuralism collapsed into post-structuralism and formalism collapsed, in effect, into reader-response theory.” Wolfgang Iser puts it as follows: “The text

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<sup>9</sup> See inter alia Jörg Lauster, 2004, *Prinzip und Methode: Die Transformation des protestantischen Schriftprinzips durch die historische Kritik von Schleiermacher bis zur Gegenwart*, pp. 49-65. Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen.

<sup>10</sup> Thiselton, A.C., [2001] 2006, “‘Postmodern’ challenges to hermeneutics: ‘Behind’ and ‘in front of the text – language, reference and indeterminacy”, p. 608-609, in *Thiselton on hermeneutics: Collected works with new essays*, pp. 607-624. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>11</sup> See Thiselton, A.C., 1992, “Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics of understanding, in *New horizons in hermeneutics*, pp. 204-236. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>12</sup> See Jurij Streidter 1989, *Literary structure, evolution, and value: Russian Formalism and Czech Structuralism reconsidered*, pp. 50, 56. Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>13</sup> Thiselton 2006:609-610.

represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process.”<sup>14</sup> In the interaction between the reader and the text meaning is produced.

The result was that the completed process of understanding is not an identification of the interpreter with the writer, but merely the *grasping* and *appropriation* of the writer's intentions. Nor is reproduction identical to production. For this reason, the interpreter can understand the thoughts of writers *better* than they themselves understood them. The interpretation can bring nuances and aspects to the fore, which were only subconsciously present in the original production. Writers can therefore say more than they intended, and readers can understand more than the writers intended.

This approach with its focus on the reader has been described as a concern with what is “in front of” the text. However, a reading perspective “in front of” the text does not exclude the meaning “behind” and “within” the text. With regard to this “integrated approach”<sup>15</sup> the influence of Paul Ricoeur can be noted.<sup>16</sup> Though this approach seems fairly comprehensive, according to Thiselton, it does not take into account the world “beyond” the text “to which the text may point, or which the text may presuppose.” Thiselton points therefore to a fourth approach, namely the postmodern idea that texts are not “representational” at all and that a definite “meaning” cannot be captured.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. PAUL RICOEUR AND THE SECOND NAIVETÉ

The dilemma which the integrative approach creates is that it is not viable to try and be comprehensive in reviewing the history of the interpretation of even a single writing such as the Gospel of Matthew. An overview can at best be selective by focusing, for example, on a singular topic or a particular exegetical approach. The

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<sup>14</sup> Iser, W. 1978, *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*, p. ix. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.

<sup>15</sup> W. Randolph Tate 1991, *Biblical interpretation: An integrated approach*, p. xvi, Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass.

<sup>16</sup> See P. Ricoeur 1984, *Time and narrative*, vol. 1, p. ix. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

<sup>17</sup> Thiselton 2006:611-612.

chord that keeps the diverse tones together in this paper is the notion “hermeneutical circle”. This concept dates from the Enlightenment, has developed throughout the modern era and has been adapted to fit postmodern literary theories today. The paper presents a “hermeneutic map”, the centre of which charts Paul Ricoeur’s contribution. Both the theories of interpretation leading up to Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and those that have influenced its aftermath will be passed over, though exactly this history has produced the postmodern insight of “hermeneutic critique against hermeneutics”.<sup>18</sup>

Not only did Paul Ricoeur's notion of the “hermeneutical arc” offer a corrective to the unconvincing application of the concept of the “hermeneutic circle”, but it was also shown to be biased, especially through the *critical theory* of the so-called Frankfurt School. Critical theory was in fact meant as an *alternative* to the traditional hermeneutic approach. The consensus principle (merging of horizons) was not unquestioningly accepted without further ado.<sup>19</sup> Such a critical hermeneutical approach proceeds from the assumption that a “merging of the horizon” occurs in the communicative interaction process between *subject* and *object* and that an exchange of roles occurs at the same time. *Object* is *subject*. An illustration of the problem is that, if the *object* has for example internalised *pain*, for instance on account of systemic oppression, an exchange of roles cannot of itself entail that the experience of *pain* is recognised and identified as a problem. On the contrary, precisely because the *object* which is the bearer of *pain* now gains the status of *subject*, the possibility of recognition becomes even further obscured.

Critical theory promotes and encourages the ideal of non-manipulation and exploitation.<sup>20</sup> Critical theory emphasizes that what society regards as the ultimate

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<sup>18</sup> See, e.g. D. E. Klemm, 1986, Introduction to Habermas’ *On systematically distorted communication* and *Toward a theory of communicative competence*, in Klemm, D. E. (ed.), *Hermeneutical inquiry, Vol. 2: The interpretation of existence*, pp. 203-208. AAR Studies in Religion. Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA.

<sup>19</sup> See Klemm 1986:203-208.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. N. Adams, 2006, *Habermas and theology*, pp. 106-123, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

good has not been or ever will be realised. Therefore people in all societies are called upon to be constantly aware of the danger of manipulation and exploitation.<sup>21</sup>

Against this background, Mark I. Wallace describes the notion of the “hermeneutical circle” as follows: “The hermeneutical circle, then, is a productive circle that consists of our first pregrasp of the text’s subject matter (understanding) and our later critical construal of the text’s constituent elements (explanation) which, in turn, sets up our pregrasp as a candidate for revision in order to enable a new understanding of the text’s subject matter (appropriation)”.<sup>22</sup> The “trialectics” of *understanding, explanation* and *appropriation* correlates with Ricoeur’s hermeneutical arc of pre-figuration, configuration en re-figuration.

Ricoeur’s<sup>23</sup> emphasis on narrativity in the hermeneutic process means that the involvement of readers / listeners in a story opens up the possibility of their being the “agent” (not victim) of their own lives, in symmetrical interaction with others. Reading is not simply about reading and listening. It is also about the reader’s / listener’s ability to tell his/her own story. Thus the relationship between text and reader/listener brings the reader/listener to self-understanding and an interpretation of the self.

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<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., A Wellmer (1976), *Communication and emancipation: Reflections on the linguistic turn of critical theory*, in J O’Neill (ed), *On critical theory*, pp. 231-263. In the words of Jacques Derrida ([1997] 1999, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, transl. by P-A Brault & M Naas, pp 20-21, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA (concurring with both Immanuel Kant’s idea of the *categorical imperative* and Emmanuel Levinas’ idea of the *infinite responsibility*): “How, then, are we to interpret this impossibility .... Does this impossibility signal a failing? Perhaps we should say the contrary. Perhaps we would, in truth, be put to another kind of test by the apparent negativity of this lacuna, this hiatus between ethics ..., on the one hand, and, on the other, law or politics ... Would it not in fact open – like a hiatus – both the mouth and the possibility of another speech, of a decision and a responsibility ... where decisions must be made and responsibility, as we say, *taken* without the assurance of an ontological foundation? (Derrida’s emphasis) (cf. Hent de Vries 2001, “Derrida and ethics: Hospitable thought”, in T. Cohen [ed.], *Jacques Derrida and the humanities: A critical reader*, pp. 172-192, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>22</sup> Wallace, M. I., [1990] 1995, *The second naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale theology*, p. 60. *Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics* 6. Mercer University Press, Macon, GA.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Ricoeur, P., 1970, “The function of fiction in shaping reality”, *Man and World* 12, pp. 123-141; 1976, “Metaphor and symbol”, transl. by D. Pellauer, in *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning*, pp. 45-69, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth, TX; 1978, “The narrative function”, *Semeia* 13, pp. 177-202; 1979, “The metaphorical process as cognition, imagination and feeling”, in Sacks, S. (ed.), *On metaphor*, pp. 141-157, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; 1981, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences: Essays on language, action and interpretation*, transl. and ed. by J. B. Thompson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; 1984, *Time and narrative*, vol. 1, Chicago University Press, Chicago, IL; 1985, *Time and narrative*, vol. 2, Chicago University Press, Chicago, IL; [1986] 1991, *From text to action: Essays in hermeneutics*, vol 2, transl. by K. Blamey & J. B. Thompson, Athlone Press, London.

Prefiguration is about reaching the meaning “behind” the text. Configuration is to comprehend the meaning “within” the text. The birth of one’s own existential new story as a result of interaction with the text is refiguration, appropriation. The new story can only be born when unacceptable and irrelevant values in the text are identified and rendered obsolete. This is accomplished by a “willingness to suspect” and “willingness to listen”. This means that the text is also revived.

The aim of the paper is to describe the state of Matthean studies by means of this hermeneutical arc. The focus will be on matters of gender, considering the relationship of women in Matthew’s gospel to the male disciples. The role of intertexts provides the material for the prefiguration (“behind” the text). Insights into the texture of Matthew provides the material for the configuration (“within” the text). Refiguration (“in front of” the text) will be demonstrated by means of examples of gender. By means of Matthean scholarship I will explain the interconnection between gender, postcolonial and empire-studies. This paper provides a preview of facets in Matthean studies that could become prominent in future.

### 3. MATTHEW’S INTERTEXTS<sup>24</sup>

Intertextuality is “less a name for a work’s relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of culture.”<sup>25</sup> Every text reflects the social context from which it is communicated.<sup>26</sup> Ulrich Luz – probably the most renowned Matthean scholar of our time - asserted that, in his exegetical, historical and hermeneutical work, he is *grundsätzlich* [fundamentally] interested in intertextuality as a source of a model in terms of which an author’s ideology and technique – what

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Andries G. van Aarde 2008, “Matthew’s intertexts and the presentation of Jesus as healer-messiah”, in T.R. Hatina (ed.), *Biblical interpretation in early Christian gospels, volume 2: The Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 163-182. T&T Clark International, New York.

<sup>25</sup> Culler, J., [1981] 2001, “Presupposition and intertextuality”, p. 103, in J. Culler, *The pursuit of signs: Semiotics, literature, deconstruction*, pp. 100-118. Augmented edition with new preface. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Danow, D.K., 1987, “Lotman and Uspensky: A perfusion of models”, *Semiotica* 64:343-57. Danow (1987: 352) quotes a remark from the work of Boris Uspensky and Yuri Lotman with important intertextual implications: “A text can only be understood if it is compared extensively with the culture, or more precisely with the behavior of the people contemporary with it; and their behavior can likewise only be made sense of if it is juxtaposed with a large number of texts.”

he calls the *Art und Weise* [nature and manner] – can be uncovered.<sup>27</sup> However, the crux of the matter is the question whether the identified intertext is really connected to the author's intention and whether the method used in identifying this intertext is properly applied. Luz comments:<sup>28</sup> “Ultimately, intertextuality is nothing other than the textual form [*textliche Gestalt*] in which culture, history and society engrave themselves on texts” (my translation from the original German).<sup>29</sup> Textual form denotes “texture”, interwoven with culture, history, and society. These three notions provide the conscious and subconscious echoes that reveal the world of either the author or the reader at a diachronic or synchronic level of interaction with the text.

Intertexts on the first level, that is conscious echoes, include the sources of the text that disclose the memories of both the author and the intended readers embedded in these sources. They are memories that narrate either consciously or implicitly the life stories of figures from a sacred history who serve as models of identity and behavior for the author and/or the reader(s). Intertexts on the second level, that is subconscious echoes, pertain to codes that aesthetic theorists have highlighted in reception theories.

With regard to the “conscious echoes” in the Gospel of Matthew, the “memories” embedded in the Gospel and those of its intended readers through those text-internal signs that can be referred to as the text's “encyclopaedia”.<sup>30</sup> In order to

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<sup>27</sup> Luz, U., 2003, “Intertextualität im Matthäusevangelium”. Paper read to the Gospel of Matthew Seminar, Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, 57<sup>th</sup> General Meeting, Bonn, Germany, 29 July-2 August 2003. Published in English in 2004 as “Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew”, *Harvard Theological Review* 97(2), 119-137.

<sup>28</sup> Reflecting on the works of Julia Kristeva's (1969) and Roland Barthes (1985): Kristeva, J., 1969, *Sémiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Seuil, Paris; Barthes, R., 1985, “Texte (théorie du)”, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, volume 17, pp. 996-1000. Seuil, Paris.

<sup>29</sup> Luz (2003: n.p.): “Intertextualität ist also letztlich nicht anders als die textliche Gestalt, in der sich Kultur, Geschichte und Gesellschaft in Texte eingravieren.”

<sup>30</sup> Stefan Alkier (2005:4) describes the concept “encyclopaedia” as follows: “First one has to choose an encyclopaedia that is relevant to the aim of the interpretation. Should one be interested only in the *intentio operis* pertaining to the time and culture of the production of the text, the encyclopaedia that is applicable at the production level of the text, will be used. As a consequence, only the relations to other texts guaranteed by the signs of the text will be investigated. I refer to this way of reading as *production-oriented intertextuality*. Should one want to investigate the history of reception, only the intertextual relations given in the texts of concrete readers are analysed. In this case the encyclopaedias of those concrete readings one wishes to investigate are to be used. This way of reading can be termed as *reception-oriented intertextuality*. Should one be interested in useful or interesting readings for today, the text can be creatively related to any other text in the expectation



accomplish such a goal, codes should be provided for reading Matthew's gospel within its cultural context.

To recognize the echoes of the world in which meaning is attributed to a text, the author and first readers need to be de-contextualized. This is done by means of a reconstruction of the authorial intent by distinguishing between the "voices of sources" and an author's particular intent. These "voices" constitute the so-called "encyclopaedia" of the document, and are called by Gérard Genette "secondary texts". He refers to them as the intertext, the paratext, the hypertext, the hypotext, the architext, and the metatext.<sup>31</sup> The concept *intertext* refers thus to the occurrence of another text in a specific text.<sup>32</sup>

To begin with the last category mentioned, namely *metatext*, the general scholarly assumption is that the Markan tradition served as the framework for Matthew to which material from Q was added. This assumption raises the question whether the Gospel of Mark should be seen as Matthew's *hypotext* ('*Grundtext*') and whether Matthew should be read as a "commentary" on Mark or as a *hypertext* to it. If one deems the Gospel of Matthew as a *hypertext*, that would entail a lesser degree of independence from Mark – an option which previous scholarship would not endorse. The first option is more easily defended: it implies that the Gospel of Matthew as a whole is a *metatext*, essentially distinguished from Mark as *hypotext*, and that Q is an *intertext* taken up in Matthew (and Luke) as its *hypotext*.

If one sees Matthew as a *metatext* (i.e., as a "commentary" on Mark), one can describe Matthew's contents as comments in the format of an independent narrative.

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that this intertextual relation may generate interesting and rewarding effects of meaning. This being the case, the encyclopaedic knowledge of one's own society must be applied. This way of reading is called *experimental intertextuality*" (Alkier, S., 2005, "From text to intertext: Intertextuality as a paradigm for reading Matthew". *HTS Theological Studies* 61(1&2), 1-18).

<sup>31</sup> Genette, G., 1982, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, pp. 7-16. Seuil, Paris.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., quotations, copying as plagiarism, and allusions). In addition to *intertext*, there is also what is referred to as *paratext*, that is, the occurrence of texts within another text, such as forewords, footnotes, marginal notes and even the title. Then, thirdly, there is the *hypertext*, which refers to the type of text that was produced after a 'base text', the so-called *hypotext*, but which is neither taken up into the *hypotext* as the 'first' text (like an 'intertext') nor functions as a commentary on the 'first' text (like a 'metatext'). (Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example, is a 'hypertext' to the *Odyssey* as 'hypotext'.) An *architext* refers to a general text type which serves as a model for other texts, that is a *Gattung* [genre]. Finally, there is the so-called *metatext*, which is a text such as a commentary which should be distinguished from the '*Grundtext*' (*hypotext*).

These “comments” are based on a *différance* between Matthew and Mark with regard to an evaluation of the disciples’ relationship to Jesus. This assessment results from my understanding of the narrator’s viewpoint with regard to both Jesus’ and the disciples’ interaction with the “crowds” in Matthew’s plot as a story.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, seen from the perspective of Matthew’s use of Q, Matthew is simultaneously *hypotext* and *metatext*. As a *different* text which substitutes Mark, Matthew creates an analogy between Jesus’ commission and that of the disciples towards the “crowds”. Both commissions are distinctly different to those depicted in Mark. In this sense, Matthew serves as a specific kind of “commentary” (that is, a *metatext*) to Mark. The interaction between Jesus, the disciples, and the crowds is of considerable significance to understand Matthew’s gospel.

Central to Mark’s gospel is the death of Jesus on the cross. I find the following depiction of “Mark’s basic rhetoric” well formulated (holding personally on to the “Markan priority” with regard to the so-called “Synoptic problem”, over against the conviction of the authors of the quote):

“Scholars reading Mark on the macro-level have long noted that essential to its structure is a basic tension among three groups who dominate the action in the narrative: Jesus, the disciples, and the religious and political authorities. The issue of faithfulness is central. Throughout Mark Jesus is faithful to his initial proclamation of the Gospel of God (Mk 1:14). The political authorities (both Jewish and Roman) stand at the other end of the spectrum in opposition to him. In the middle are the disciples. They teeter on the line between belief and unbelief. Much of the drama in Mark results from developing crises of the disciples’ ultimate allegiance. One way to perceive this is to look more closely at how Jesus and the disciples act vis-à-vis those in the wider sector who are openly hostile to them.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Andries van Aarde, 2007, “Jesus’ mission to all of Israel emplotted in Matthew’s story”, *Neotestamentica* 43(2), 416-436 (esp. pp.421-422); cf. Boris Repschinski 200, *The controversy stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their redaction, form and relevance for the relationship between the Matthean community and formative Judaism*, p. 309. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.

<sup>34</sup> Peabody, D.B (with Cope, L. & McNicol, A.J.) (eds.), 2002, *One Gospel from two: Mark’s use of Matthew and Luke. A demonstration by the research team of the International Institute for renewal of Gospel studies*, p. 56. Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, PA. However, David Peabody *et alia* do not convince me with their arguments against the “Markan priority” theory, or for that matter their endeavor to argue against the existence of the Q hypothesis (see McNicol, A.J. [ed.], with Dungan, D.L. & Peabody, D.B., 1996, *Beyond the Q impasse – Luke’s use of Matthew: A demonstration by the research team of the International Institute for Gospel Studies*, Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, PA).

Seeing who are they who form this “wider sector” is a prerequisite to understand not only the drama unfolding in Mark’s gospel, but especially one of Mark’s metatext, namely the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus comes into conflict not only with antagonists such as the Israelite and Roman élite, but also with the Israelite crowd (Mk 4:1-2), those who are supposed to be his “friends”, his family (Mk 3:20-21, 31-35) and fellow villagers (Mk 6:1-5). Alienation is reported throughout Mark and it leads to Jesus’ suffering and eventual death on the cross (Mk 15:25-41). Mark shows that Peter (Mk 8:29-30), the Twelve (Mk 9:33) and the sons of Zebedee (James and John) (Mk 10:35-45) do not understand what God intended.

It is at this point that narrative point of view in Matthew’s gospel, as a *commentary* on Mark in a “metatextual” sense of the word, becomes remarkable. The Gospel of Matthew is about understanding and doing God’s will. Commenting on Mark, Matthew changes the roles of both the disciples and the crowd.<sup>35</sup> In Matthew, the disciples fare better than in Mark. They do know who Jesus is, but they have difficulty doing God’s will as Jesus does. The crowd’s role in the story is to demonstrate the message of Jesus, which is God’s love for *all people*.<sup>36</sup> The disciples are supposed to emulate Jesus, but they display an inability to do so. Although Matthew warns against the teachings of the Pharisees (Mt 16:5), he does not advocate a total break with the Second Temple customs<sup>37</sup> (Mt 17:24-27). Had he

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Michael J. Wilkins 1998, *The concept of disciple in Matthew’s gospel*, p. 166. NovT Sup 59. E.J. Brill, Leiden. See the discussion by Jeannine K. Brown 2002, *The disciples in narrative perspective: The portrayal and function of the Matthean disciples*, pp. 9-12. JBL Society of Biblical Literature, Academia Biblica 9. E.J. Brill, Leiden. In addition to among other my own view on Matthew’s portrayal of the disciples, Brown (2002:145) presents a subtle, yet an agreeable perspective on the role of the disciples in Matthew’s story: “In Matthew’s concrete world, the disciples are not to be identified as transparent for the Matthean community, in spite of the long-standing (redaction-critical) tendency to do so. Rather, the disciples’ characterization functions as part of the way Matthew communicates the complex of values he wants to instill in his reader. These (or at least some of these) values may indeed address the issues facing Matthew’s audience, but caution needs to be exercised before assuming a one-to-one correspondence between any one such value or theme and Matthew’s concrete world.”

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Andries van Aarde 2007, Jesus’ mission to all of Israel emplotted in Matthew’s story, pp. 428-430. *Neotestamentica* 42(2), 416-436. A similar view is found in J.R.C. Cousland 2002, *The crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum. E.J. Brill, Leiden. Cousland (2002:285) formulates Matthew ambivalence towards the crowds as follows: “In other words, Matthew has not written the crowds out of the prospect of salvation. Their present lack of understanding is something that can be amended in the future.”

<sup>37</sup> According to Daniel M. Gurtner (2008, “Matthew’s theology of the Temple and the “parting of the ways”: Christian origins and the First Gospel, in D.M. Gurtner & J. Nolland [eds.], *Built upon the rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, pp.128-153. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI), “Matthew’s

taken Mark over as it stands (see for instance Mk 7:14-23; 10:1-12) – that is, seeing Mark as *intertext* and not as *hypotext* – he would have defended a break with Israelite culture as codified in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 and 24:1, 3.

Matthew's texture represents the genre (*architext*) of a discursive-biographical gospel type and, as a result, the narrative and argumentative structure of this gospel is important. The Gospel of Mark as Matthew's *hypotext* represents the so-called biographical gospel type.<sup>38</sup> An understanding of this *architext* has important heuristic consequences for the unraveling of the communication strategies in Matthew that are concealed within its texture, consisting of discourse alternating with biographical material. The five speeches should therefore be seen in relation to the narrative discourses which appear alongside and between them.<sup>39</sup> This combination creates

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Temple is surely an *intra muros* issue" (p. 153). Gurtner (2008:152) formulates Matthew's ambivalence towards the Temple as follows: The assertions by Lohmeyer [Ernst, 1942, *Kultus und Evangelium*, pp.109-110. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen; 1967, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, p. 184, hrsg. Von W. Schmauch, 4. Auflage. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen] that Matthew is anti-Temple fail to distinguish between the Temple and the leaders responsible for it. Andreoli's [D. 1998, "Il vello squarciato nel Vangelo di Matteo", *Biblical Studies on the Web* 1, 35-40] argument that Matthew is against the Temple because it represents the 'old order' fails to account for Matthean redaction of Markan texts or for positive statements about the Temple's cult. Instead, Matthew is an author 'emphasizing the sovereignty of Jesus over the Temple rather than one reflecting an antagonism, towards it' [R.A. McConell 1964, "Law and prophesy in Matthew's gospel", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Basel; W.R. Telford 1980, *The barren Temple and the withered tree: A redaction-critical analysis of the cursing of the fig tree periscope in Mark's gospel and its relation to the cleansing of the Temple tradition*, pp. 83-84. JSNT Supplement Series 1. JSOT Press, Sheffield]. Matthew's references to its destruction are made only following a lament over the unwillingness of its leaders to repent."

<sup>38</sup> The Gospel of Thomas and Q are "sayings" gospels and the Protevangelium of James is a discursive gospel. Like Matthew, the Epistula Apostolorum and the Acts of John are examples of a discursive-biographical gospel type (see J.D. Crossan, 1998, *The birth of Christianity: Discovering what happened in the years immediately after the execution of Jesus*, pp. 31-40, HarperSanFrancisco, San Francisco, CA).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. H.J.B. Combrink, 1983, "The macrostructure in the Gospel of Matthew", *Neotestamentica* 16, 1-20; 1983, "The structure of the Gospel of Matthew as narrative", *TynBul* 34, 61-90. Although there are different possibilities for structuring Matthew's gospel (see, e.g., W.D. Davies & D.C. Allison [1997] 2004, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, Volume III, pp 58-72. A Continuum Imprint. T&T Clark, London; P. Luomanen, 1998, *Entering the kingdom of heaven: A study on the structure of Matthew's view of salvation*. WUNT II/101. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen; the structure of C.A. Lohr (1961, "Oral techniques in the Gospel of Matthew", *CBQ* 23, 403-435) is, according to me, the most convincing. Lohr uses the five speeches in Matthew as point of departure and uncovers a concentric chiasmic structure in light of the formula in Matt 7:28-29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1: "And when Jesus finished these sayings ...." These five speeches do not represent "breaks" in the composition but should be seen in relation to the narrative discourses that follow and intersperse (see, among others, D.L. Barr 1976, "The drama of Matthew's gospel: A reconsideration of its structure and purpose", *ThD* 24, 349-359; D.L. Turner 2008, *Matthew*, pp. 8-10. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI).

the analogy between Jesus' commission and that of the disciples. Each narrative discourse links up with the speech that follows it in an associative manner, which continues the spiral to the next narrative discourse and results in the integration of Jesus' commission with that of the disciples. Both the disciples and the Israelite crowd are present at the beginning of each speech by Jesus.<sup>40</sup> These five speeches are directed at the disciples and have particular relevance to the relationship between the disciples and the Jewish crowd.

Although the "Israelite crowd" (*hoi ochloi / ho ochlos*) and "the Gentiles" (*ta ethnē*) do not fulfill the same character roles in Matthew's gospel, both groups function together as the object of the mission of Jesus and that of the disciples in the "post-paschal" period.<sup>41</sup> Both Judeans and Galileans during the Second Temple period referred to themselves as the "people of God" or the "house of Israel" (e.g., Mt 10:6). With regard to the followers of Jesus, Matthew does not depict them as "Christians" but as "people" (*anthrōpoi*, e.g. in Mt 4:19; or *ethnos*, e.g. in Mt 21:43) who constitute an *ekklēsia* (in contrast to a *sunagōgē*).<sup>42</sup> These "people" are seen as part of the "house of Israel" which, for Matthew, also includes the "sheep without a shepherd"<sup>43</sup> (Mt

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<sup>40</sup> The disciples: Mt 5:1; 9:37; 10:1; 13:10; 18:1; 23:1; the Israelite crowd: Mt 4:23-51b; 9:35ff; 13:2f; 18:2; 23:1.

<sup>41</sup> See Andries van Aarde 1994, *God-with-us: The dominant perspective in Matthew's story, and other essays*, pp. 80-87. HTS Supplementum Series 5. Gutenberg Publishers, Pretoria.

<sup>42</sup> "In my opinion, Matthew originated not in Antioch, but somewhere in northern Galilee and southern Syria after 70 CE (*Galilaia tōn ethnōn* – Mt 4:15). In this region, there was conflict between the *grammateus* Matthew and village scribes who were in the process of establishing the first phase of a Pharisaic rabbinate. The Gospel of Matthew could therefore be seen ... as a product of scribal activity within the context of the revitalization of villages after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. These communities struggled to come to grips with the loss of Jerusalem and the temple" (Andries G. van Aarde 2008, "Matthew's intertexts and the presentation of Jesus as healer-messiah", in T.R. Hatina (ed.), *Biblical interpretation in early Christian gospels, volume 2: The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 178. T&T Clark International, New York).

<sup>43</sup> Both Anthony Saldarini (1994:33) and Joel Willitts (2007a; 2007b:365-382) argue, in my opinion correctly, that is that the expression "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" is a "social and political description" of Israel. They, however, differ in the sense that Saldarini (1994:33) refers to "the main body of Israel" and Willitts (2007b:379) to "the oppressed and marginalized remnant of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel". According to me, "all of Israel" is intended. Matthew probably had in mind "the leaders of Israel (as shepherds) [who] are depicted with regard to outcasts (as sheep), namely that of loveless disregard, [and] the disciples are called upon to 'continue' Jesus' *God-with-us* mission" (Van Aarde 2007:422). See Saldarini, A. J., 1994, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish community*. CSHJ. Chicago University Press, Chicago IL; Willitts, J., 2007, *Matthew's messianic shepherd-king: In search of the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. BNZW 147. De Gruyter, Berlin; 2007b, "Matthew's messianic shepherd-king: In search of the lost sheep of the house of Israel", *HTS Theological Studies* 63(1), 365-382).

10:36). The latter expression refers to both Israelite outcasts and non-Israelites<sup>44</sup> (the “one sheep among the ninety-nine others”; Mt 18:12-14).<sup>45</sup>

Matthew’s representation of the Joshua motif is transformed into a story about a choice of leadership. This choice is concretized in either the people’s acknowledgement of *lesous* (“Joshua”) as the Davidic Messiah who was commissioned by God to *save* all of Israel from its sins, or in their killing him and letting their descendants share the responsibility for his blood (Mt 27:25). Those who remain faithful to the “law of the messiah”, which is the “Gospel of the Kingdom”, will live in the presence of the God-with-us (Mt 28:16-20). In other words, the Joshua-Moses story functions as a *hypertext*.<sup>46</sup> We have seen that the concept *hypertext* refers to the type of text that was produced by relying on a “base text”. In Matthew’s case, the base text was the Gospel of Mark. However, as has already been noted, Matthew developed as an independent narrative with an autonomous point of view.

At the turn of the Common Era, against the background of the *Pax Romana*, the “grand narrative” in Israel’s history was the expectation of an apocalyptic savior who would liberate God’s people. First-century Pharisaic formative rabbinic forms the social-cultural context of Matthew’s gospel, localized in the setting of various village synagogues. Matthew refers to his community as an *ecclesia* built upon a rock established by Jesus’ Father who is in heaven, and not by “flesh and blood” (Mt

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Lidjia Novakovic 2009, “‘Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table’: Matthew’s gospel and economic globalisation”, *HTS Theological Studies* 65(1), Art. #321, 7 pages. DOI:10.4102/hts.v65i1:“There is no doubt about who the children and who the dogs are in this saying. The statement about Jesus’ exclusive mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, which Matthew inserts before the saying about the children’s bread and the dogs, makes it perfectly clear that the ‘dogs’ are those who do not belong to the house of Israel, meaning Gentiles” (p. 3of 7).

<sup>45</sup> See Van Aarde 2007:420-422; cf. Levine, A.-J., 1988, *The social and ethnic dimensions of Matthean salvation history*, pp. 14, 55-56, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* 14. E. Mellen, Lewiston, NY. My position is quite different than that of Robert H. Gundry, 2005, “Matthew: Jewish-Christian or Christian Jewish? At an intersection of sociology and theology, pp. 111-119, in *The old is better: New Testament essays in support of traditional Interpretations*, esp. pp. 115-116. WUNT 178. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen. Gundry denies “an intramural debate with post-70 Judaism” and argues that the use of the term “Jews” in Matthew “stresses a qualitative difference.” According to Gundry (2005, 119), the “little ones” in Matthew “appear not to be marginal Christians, sinning Christians ..., but Christians suffering the results of persecution and liable to be caused to sin, i.e., to apostatize under persecution, if their fellow professing Christians do not help them as some (goats) are failing to do though others (the sheep) are helping.”

<sup>46</sup> However, this does not mean that *the* book of Joshua as a specific text among the Hebrew Scriptures, or any other text in which the Joshua figure from the Hebrew Scriptures functions as the protagonist was used as an explicit *intertext* for the author who produced Matthew’s gospel.

16:17). God's people are safeguarded in this community, though they are like lost sheep without a shepherd, bearing in mind how their own leaders collaborated with powerful individuals whose power was enforced by Rome.

The voices of the marginalized and their stories would have become unheard if it were not for people such as the author of Matthew's gospel, who in his own words in Matthew 13:52, became like a "scribe trained for God's kingdom" and who told his "little story" in the light of Israel's history. His story about a new-born Joshua deconstructs the coalition between first-century Roman imperialism and Pharisaism as the "metanarrative"/"grand narrative" of that time. Dorothy Jean Weaver put it as follows: "Accordingly, while the emperor himself is not an 'onstage' actor within Matthew's narrative, it is evident that his impact on the lives of the occupied populace extends both to the most mundane aspects of daily life and to the most terrifying of human catastrophes."<sup>47</sup> However, it is at this point that a "willingness to suspect and a willingness to listen" becomes a hermeneutical necessity.

According to Warren Carter, Matthew's gospel paradoxically criticizes imperialism on the one hand, but foresees God's coming triumph in the language of his own "imperialist hopes" – and this means that "God's coming triumph concerns the violent means by which God's empire is imposed." Carter here refers to the "eschatological" dimensions in Matthew's language. Such a "violent imposition is at odds with the way in which the Gospel conceives the empire to be at work in the present in communities of service, inclusion, healing, relieving need, mercy." Carter does not want "violence to be the final word in imposing God's empire", because "[t]hat would make God nothing other than a copy of any emperor."<sup>48</sup> His solution is to eliminate this type of language: "Without an imperial mindset there can be reconciliation and transformation."<sup>49</sup> Carter's identification of a dichotomy between the present

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<sup>47</sup> Weaver D. J., 2005, "Thus you will know them by their fruits: The Roman characters of the Gospel of Matthew", p. 114, in Riches, J. & Sim, D. C. (eds.), *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman imperial context*, pp. 107-127. Early Christianity in Context, JSNT Supplement Series 276, T&T Clark International, London.

<sup>48</sup> Carter, W., 2001, *Matthew and Empire: Initial explorations*, p. 178. Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, PA.

<sup>49</sup> Carter 2001:179.

peaceable presence and the violent future imposition in Matthew's thinking<sup>50</sup> represents a praiseworthy hermeneutics of suspicion. It tries to neutralize violence by means of "nonimperial terms such as 'reconciliation' and 'transformation' in the establishment of 'God's just world' – because these terms are "more consistent with the Gospel's vision of God's work in the present."<sup>51</sup>

Yet, the critical question is whether the author of Matthew's gospel is "consistent" also with regard to his own prejudices, or could it be that his own male-dominated patriarchal domestication constituted a similar obstacle that he as author, for example, confronted Peter in the story by means of words that were put in the mouth of Jesus: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mt 16:23). The obstacle is that even the author could not escape his own metanarrative of male-dominated patriarchal domestication.

Therefore, also with regard to Matthew's gospel, the truism is that gender matters if the exegete is willing "to suspect and to listen".

#### 4. GENDER MATTERS IN MATTHEW

In first-century Mediterranean world hierarchical patriarchy was part and parcel of imperial politics. Current empire studies go hand in hand with postcolonial hermeneutics.<sup>52</sup> The latter, in turn, has been induced by feminist theories.<sup>53</sup> Exegesis of Matthew's gospel from a feminist hermeneutical perspective have produced important insights.<sup>54</sup> Positioned *in front of Matthew's text* and viewing the text from a

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<sup>50</sup> Carter, W., 2003, "Are there imperial texts in the class? Intertextual eagles and Matthean eschatology as 'lights out' time for imperial Rome (Matthew 24:27–31)", *JBL* 122(3), 467-487.

<sup>51</sup> Carter 2001:178,

<sup>52</sup> See R.S. Sugirtharajah 2004, "Complacencies and cul-de-sacs: Christian theologies and colonialism", in Keller, C., Nausner, M. & Riviera, M. (eds.), *Postcolonial theologies: Divinity and empire*, pp. 22-38. Chalice Press, St. Louis, MO.

<sup>53</sup> See Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (eds) [1995] 2009, "Feminism", in *The post-colonial studies reader*, pp. 233-259. 2d Edition. Routledge, London; Kwok, Pui-lan, Kwok 2005, *Postcolonial imagination and feminist theology*. Westminster, Louisville, KY.

<sup>54</sup> Musa W. Dube 1996, "Readings of *Semoya*: Batswana women's interpretations of Matt 15:21-28", *Semeia* 73, 111-130 (however, cf. Elaine Wainwright 2001, "Not without my daughter: gender and demon possession in Matthew 15:21-28", in Levine, A.-J. [with M. Blickenstaff] [ed.], *A feminist companion to Matthew*, pp.126-137, esp. p.127, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH). Cf. Musa W.



gender-sensitive perspective – knowing that outdated patriarchal values could be harmful to women and others – one cannot but see how women and women’s roles were usurped by male control and the androcentric self-interest of the authors and interpreters of the texts behind and within Matthew’s gospel.

Recent mainstream Jesus studies have shown that women were welcomed in an “egalitarian” way and made an important contribution to the earliest Christian faith community.<sup>55</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the silencing and invisibility of women in the patriarchal world of the Middle East. Probably the only overtly “misogynist” passage in Matthew is the parable of the wise and foolish women. Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt acknowledges the misogynist implications of the parable, but points out that Matthew does portray the women in this passage in a positive light.<sup>56</sup> However, this insight does not mean that Matthew’s story is not told from a dominating androcentric narrator’s point of view. Carolyn Osiek, confronting Jerome Neyrey discussion of domestic “gendered space” in Matthew’s gospel, emphasizes that in Matthew “gender differentiation” is more subtle.<sup>57</sup> To me, what Osiek indicates with regard to Matthew’s evasion of “any diminution of honor” for males and the evangelist’s dodging of “feminization” in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, are

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Dube, 1998, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19a): A postcolonial perspective on biblical criticism and pedagogy”, in Segovia, F. & Tolbert, M. A. (eds.), *Teaching the Bible: The discourses and politics of biblical pedagogy*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY; Musa W. Dube 2000, *Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible*, pp. 127-195. Chalice Press, St. Louis, MO; Musa W. Dube 2001, “Fifty years of bleeding: A storytelling feminist reading of Mark 5:24-43”, in Dube, M. W. (ed.), *Other ways of reading: African women and the Bible*, pp. 50-62. Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, GA; Patte, D, Stubbs, M A, Ukpong, J & Velunta, R. 003. *The Gospel of Matthew: A contextual introduction for group study*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon; Patte, D., 2006, “Reading Matthew 28:16-20 with Others: How it deconstructs our Western concept of mission”. *HTS Theological Studies* 62(2), 521-557.

<sup>55</sup> Terms such as “egalitarianity” and “equity” are modern-day concepts (see Elliott J.H., 2003, “The Jesus movement was not egalitarian but family-oriented”, *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 11[2], 173-210). To avoid ethnocentrism or anachronism one should rather refer to Matthew’s tendency of inclusivity (see, e.g., In-Cheol Shin & Andries van Aarde 2005, “Matthew’s and Paul’s inclusive tendencies: A comparison”, *HTS Theological Studies* 61(4), 1353-1372).

<sup>56</sup> Rosenblatt, M.-E. [1993] 2001, “ Got into the party after all: Women’s issues and the five foolish virgins”, in Levine, A.-J. (with M. Blickenstaff) (ed.), *A feminist companion to Matthew*, pp.171-195. The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH.

<sup>57</sup> Neyrey, J.H., 1998, *Honor and shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 218-220. Westminster John Knox, Louisville, CT; idem 2004, *Render to God: New Testament understandings of the Divine*, pp. 65-66. Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.

demonstrable in other sections in Matthew's gospel as well. It is not only the "entire Sermon on the Mount [that] is intended for a male audience"<sup>58</sup>, but the entire writing.<sup>59</sup>

In the Matthean community women were not seen as equal participants. In-Cheol Shin (2007:407) put it as follows: "Male followers are called to be disciples; female followers are called to serve. It is very possible that women were not allowed into public places in ancient times. The Gospel of Matthew's narrative world is an embodied androcentrism situation."<sup>60</sup> The Gospel of Matthew does include women and other formerly excluded people in the faith community. They even become equal recipients of the love of God. According to the Matthean narrator's point of view, women fulfilled a supportive rather than initiating role (Mt 1-2; 9:18-26; 15:21-28); double standards were applied to male and female sexuality and women's sexuality was regarded with prejudice (Mt 5:29-32; 19:2-12); and women were given the opportunity to live "authentically", but only if this "authenticity" was sanctioned by men (Mt 20:20-23; 27:38; 27:56).

The Gospel of Matthew is about how to understand and do the will of God. According to Michael P. Knowles, it is as if Matthew makes "the voice of God in Scripture his

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<sup>58</sup> "The entire Sermon on the Mount is intended for a male audience. The potential murderer is angry with a brother (5:21-22); the potential adulterer looks at a woman with lust (5:28); the potential divorcé divorces his wife (9:31-32); the potential retaliator should give not only cloak but tunic, unthinkable for a woman (9:40); and so on. The verses on prayer are no exception. Thus, the exhortations about secrecy of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting are quite countercultural. The male listener, lover of public recognition of his worth, is expected to forego that reward" (Osiek, C., 2009, "When you pray. Go into your *tameion*" (Matthew 6:6): But why?", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71(4), 723-740 (esp. p. 737). Osiek (2009:737) continues: "So Neyrey is correct in assuming that these verses are part of the radical rewriting of honor that Christian preaching entailed. The honorable place to pray is the house, not the synagogue or public square. Jesus' seeming preference for the house over public space is mirrored in the preferences given here" (cf. Neyrey, J.H., 1998, *Honor and shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 218-220. Westminster John Knox, Louisville, CT; idem 2004, *Render to God: New Testament understandings of the Divine*, pp. 65-66. Fortress, Minneapolis, MN).

<sup>59</sup> Janice Capel Anderson [1983] 2001, "Matthew: Gender and reading", in Levine, A.-J. (with M. Blickenstaff) (ed.), *A feminist companion to Matthew*, pp.25-69. The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, OH: "There is no doubt that the author of the Gospel of Matthew wrote an andocentric perspective. Whether the author was male or female, the story world embodies patriarchal assumptions. There are many examples which illustrate the pervasive androcentrism" (Anderson 2001:29).

<sup>60</sup> In-Cheol Shin 2007, "Matthew's designation of the role of women as indirectly adherent disciples", *Neotestamentica* 41(2), 399-415.

own”.<sup>61</sup> Knowles continues: “Just as Jesus has been ‘God with us’ from infancy (1.23, cf. 18.20), so he speaks throughout with the voice of God, not only echoing and appropriating God’s words from of old but definitely interpreting and even overriding that ancient voice with words of his own.”<sup>62</sup>

Inferred from the narrator’s point of view, there is reason to be concerned that Jesus’ followers will adopt the Pharisees’ idea of God’s will. In the context of the revitalization of villages after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Matthew’s community struggled to come to terms with the loss of Jerusalem and the temple. They had to define God’s presence in the environment of village communities, while they experienced conflict with synagogical authorities who resisted their acknowledgement of Jesus as the messianic “second Moses” and the one who challenged the traditional Mosaic view that the temple cult regulated the Torah.<sup>63</sup>

In such a world of “scribes and sages” a “bias against women” occurred frequently (for example *Avot* 2:7: “More flesh, more worms; more wealth, more contention: more maidservants, more lewdness; more slaves, more theft; more women, more witchcraft; more Torah, more life”; Stemberger 2008:303).<sup>64</sup> According Richard Horsley (2007:68), referring to Ben Sira’s teaching about women, the “husband-father has a special concern about being completely in control and the strict obedience of wives .... This need for security and control in the marriage and home is very likely related to scribes’ lack of control in their relations with their superiors

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<sup>61</sup> Michael P. Knowles 2008, *Plotting Jesus: Characterization, identity and the voice of God in Matthew’s gospel*, p. 123, in T.R. Hatina (ed.), *Biblical interpretation in early Christian gospels, volume 2: The Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 119-132. T&T Clark International, New York.

<sup>62</sup> Knowles 2008:131.

<sup>63</sup> See Van Aarde, A.G., 2005, “IHSOUS, the Davidic messiah, as political saviour in Matthew’s history”, in Van der Watt, J. G. (ed.), *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on soteriology*, pp. 7-32. Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 121. E.J. Brill, Leiden.

<sup>64</sup> Günther Stemberger, 2008, “Sages, scribes, and seers in Rabbinic Judaism”, in Perdue, L. G., (ed.), *Scribes, sages, and seers: The sage in the eastern Mediterranean world*, pp. 295-319. *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und neuen Testaments* 219. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.

who exercised control over them.”<sup>65</sup> And with regard to Matthew’s narrative point of view, Celia Deutsch (2001:105) bitterly remarks:

“[I]n the closing words of the Gospel, the risen Jesus bids his disciples to make disciples of all nations, ‘teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you ...’ (28.20), presumably referring to the teaching contained in the gospel and continued by the scribes of Matthew’s community. These scribes, as far as I can tell, are male. Nowhere does the evangelist offers female teachers as models of learned leadership.”<sup>66</sup>

Again, Matthew’s specific perspective, objective and message can be detected when he changes his Markan source. Mark is explicit about the male followers of Jesus having failed to understand their calling as disciples (Malbon 1983:33; Kinukawa 2001:189).<sup>67</sup> Mark uses women characters to fill the gap.<sup>68</sup> They are the followers who better understand what Jesus message is all about and nearly succeed in fulfilling his ideal. In Matthew the male followers do understand (Mt 13:51; over against Mk 4:13), but they struggle to get it right. They cannot fully adopt Jesus’ understanding of the Torah and end up being like the Pharisees who do not have insight into the righteousness that exceeds that of their scribes (Mt 5:20). By changing Mark, Matthew changes the roles of both the disciples and the women in order to be more acceptable in his Israelite-Palestinian context.

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<sup>65</sup> Richard, A. Horsley 2007, *Scribes, visionaries and the politics of the Second Temple Judea*. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, CT.

<sup>66</sup> Celia Deutsch 2001, Jesus as wisdom: A feminist reading of Matthew’s wisdom Christology, in Levine, A.-J. (with M. Blickenstaff) (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mark*, pp.88-113. *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 2.*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.

<sup>67</sup> Malbon, E.S., 1983, “Fallible followers: Women in the Gospel of mark”, *Semeia* 28, 29-48.

<sup>68</sup> Kinukawa, H., [1994] 2001, “Women disciples of Jesus (15.40-41; 15.47; 16.1)”, in Levine, A.-J. (with M. Blickenstaff) (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 171-190. *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 2.*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield: “Having studied the verbs linked with discipleship. I conclude that the ‘following’ offered to everyone entails ‘serving’ in the sense of ‘life-giving’ suffering. ‘Service to everybody’ is inclusive and life-giving, while ‘rule by power’ is exclusive and not of any life-giving value in itself. In Mark, ‘serving’ is applied only to women, from the beginning of the story (1.31) to its end (15.41). So returning to 15.40, we can only conclude that the women depicted by mark are the true disciples of Jesus in the sense that they are ready for devoting themselves to ‘life-giving’ suffering. Thus, the women disciples keep challenging those who avoid joining the struggles of the oppressed. The women disciples continue to disturb churches that seek patriarchal honor and hierarchical authority. So it should be implied that the discipleship of ‘following and serving’ has the power to regenerate a true community of faith” (Kinukawa 2001:190).

In Matthew women are clearly distinguished from the twelve disciples/apostles. Along with all the other marginalized categories of people who did not have access to the Temple, women are the receivers of Jesus' love and therefore have free access to God. Although they receive that love they are not the agents who transmit that love to others. They do not take the initiative. The positive side of Matthew's perspective on women is the message that God's love is inclusive. The negative element is that agency is the exclusive prerogative of males.

Why does Matthew go this route? It seems that he does not expect his readers to break completely with their Israelite culture. This becomes clear from the way in which he utilizes his Markan source. Should he have taken Mark's message over as is, it would have meant breaking with cultural conventions. In the Israelite world it was unthinkable to place women in such a central position as Mark does. Matthew's compromise is that he does include women in God's love, but women remain subordinate to men. The role of the women characters in the story is that, through them, it is shown whether the males fulfill their calling or not. How Matthew relegates women to being supporting characters only, can be seen in the way in which he reports on women such as Mary, the Canaanite mother and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The value of women in society was that they should help build the nation (the children of Abraham). They were bear sons. However, just bearing sons was not enough. Women also had to be acceptable, that is honorable. The sons of a dishonorable woman (such as a prostitute or an unmarried mother) did not count as children of Abraham. According to Matthew (3:9) God is able to raise up children for Abraham from stones. God does not need "holy seed" for that. This is illustrated in the life of the humble woman from Bethlehem, Mary. She is unmarried and pregnant, but Joseph is obedient to God and takes her into his home in spite of her dishonorable position. Matthew attempts to convince his readers that Mary is acceptable. He does this by including four unacceptable women in the genealogy. A marked difference between the gospels is that Joseph, the patriarch, plays the leading role in the Gospel of Matthew – God speaks to *him* – whereas Luke gives the

leading role to Mary – God speaks to *her*. In Matthew Mary quickly recedes into the background. She does not sing the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55) and she is not part of the story of the 12 year old whose wisdom supersedes that of the learned men in the temple (Lk 2:4-52). In the story of the flight to Egypt Mary which is told only in Matthew (2:13-18), Mary is not mentioned, but only Joseph (Mt 2:13). Mary is also not present among the women who witness Jesus death on the cross (Matt 27:55-56).

In the same vein Matthew changes Mark's *Syrophenician* woman (non-Israelite, person from beyond the borders) to a *Canaanite* woman (non-Israelite but within the borders of Palestine). However, Mark and Matthew differ when it comes to foreigners. Matthew brings the foreigners in. Mark and Paul go out to meet them in their own world. In Matthew Jesus focuses on the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 10:6; 15:24). The "kingdom" where Jesus reigns as the "Son of Man" is open to *all* who come from the "four corners of the earth" (Mt 24:31). This "kingdom" takes the place of "Israel" and the "Son of Man" is the king (Mt 19:28). In this "kingdom" the roles are reversed: the first are last and the last are first (Mt 19:30; 20:16). According to Matthew the disciples are the ones who are to bring all the nations (*panta ta ethne*) into the inclusive church: to baptize them, to make disciples of them and to teach them to do what Jesus had done (Mt 28:16-20).

In Matthew the first feeding of the multitude also takes place on Israelite territory (Mt 14:13-21). Jesus and the disciples step into a boat but do not cross over to the foreigners. The boat returns to Israelite territory where the second feeding of the multitude takes place (Mt 15:32-39). *All* do indeed receive bread, the multitude, the foreign woman, but they receive it in Israelite territory. The foreigners are to be brought into the fold. In Mark the disciples take the initiative to inform Jesus that the people are hungry (Mk 8:1-2). When Jesus asks them to distribute the bread they are not overly enthusiastic about the miracle, but do the job (Mk 6:30). On the other side, foreign territory, they are not concerned about the hungry people. There Jesus takes the initiative. When Jesus asks them to distribute the bread, they are unwilling (Mk 8:4). In Matthew both take place in Israelite territory. He does not change Mark's

story about who notices that the people are hungry. He does change the reaction of the disciples. Matthew's disciples simply do the job without complaining.<sup>69</sup>

After feeding the multitudes Jesus and his disciples again get into a boat. Jesus asks the disciples whether they have brought bread. They do not understand that he does not mean it literally, but is referring back to the wonder of the feeding of the multitude. Jesus warns them of the yeast of the Pharisees. Unclean yeast is a negative image. The Pharisees are also supposed to give bread, but they do it without love. They also only give to their own kind. Their bread does not nourish. It is not a wonderful gift of God. The disciples' reaction is different in Matthew. In Mark they do not understand what it is all about (Mk 8:21). According to Matthew they do understand, but they do not fully grasp the *implications*.

Matthew tells the story of the Canaanite mother so that the disciples can realize that the bread is not only meant for Israel but for *all* marginalized people – foreigners, women and children. Matthew's readers were familiar with the rabbi's exposition of the Hebrew Scriptures. The story of Ruth provided a model for how foreigners could become part of God's people.<sup>70</sup> Like Ruth, a proselyte had to pass the test three times.<sup>71</sup> Twice the proselyte was refused. Should they insist a third time that they were really serious about becoming part of Israel, they were welcomed into the Israelite community. Twice Naomi told Ruth to return to her own country and gods. Twice Jesus told the Canaanite woman that the bread was actually meant for the "lost sheep of Israel" (Mt 15:24). When she insisted a third time that she as a "dog" (gentile) could surely get the crumbs from the table, she passed the test.<sup>72</sup> The difference between Mark's and Matthew's stories is that Mark allows the woman to speak for herself, whereas Matthew tells the story himself. Yet again Matthew

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<sup>69</sup> See A.G. van Aarde 1994, "The miraculous multiplication of loaves (Mt 14:13-21 and par.): Historical criticism in perspective", in *God-with-us: The dominant perspective in Matthew's story and other essays*, pp. 180-203. HTS Supplementum Series 5. Gutenberg Publishers, Pretoria.

<sup>70</sup> See Michael S. Moore 1998, "Ruth the Moabite and the blessing of foreigners", *CBQ* 60, 203-217.

<sup>71</sup> See Glenna Jackson 2002, "*Have mercy on me*": *The story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28*, pp.126-140. Copenhagen International Seminar 10. JSTNT Supplement Series 228. Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield; Jackson, G.S., 2003, "Enemies of Israel: Ruth and the Canaanite woman", *HTS Theological Studies* 59(3), 779-792.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Bernard Bamberger 1968, *Proselytism in the Talmudic period*, p. 15. Ktav, New York.

renders the woman voiceless. Elaine Wainwright (2001:127), who gives the name which the Pseudo-Clementine Epistles gave to the Canaanite mother, namely Justa, back to her, says that “a silent voice is further silenced”.<sup>73</sup>

Another case study is the nameless mother of the “sons of Zebedee”. In Mark (10:35-40) the sons of Zebedee seek honorary positions for themselves at the right hand and left hand of Jesus. In Matthew it is *their mother* who wants these positions for her sons. A woman’s status depended on having sons and on how well their sons did in life. When Matthew changes his Markan source to turn the woman into the one seeking the honor for her sons, he reveals his attitude towards women and their place in society. He portrays the woman and mother in a negative light. In the story the mother is put in her place. She is an eyewitness (Mt 27:56) of Jesus crucifixion between two robbers who receive the “honorary positions” at his right hand and left hand side (Mt 27:38). So she is chastised: In the kingdom of God it should not be about people’s honor. Matthew is the only gospel where the mother of the sons of Zebedee is plays a role.

## 5. A PROJECTION

In his recent published commentary John Nolland remarks: “Matthew seems to have understood himself to be creating a foundational text to which people would feel the need to return again and again. And that is what the church has done with his Gospel throughout its history.”<sup>74</sup> It comes therefore as no surprise that voluminous commentaries on Matthew’s gospel are nowadays produced. Indeed, Matthew studies are at the crossroads! However, the question is: do we really experiencing a change of route, or points reality to business as usual? It seems to me that the latter could be the case, even when Matthean scholars take R.T. France’s words to heart:

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<sup>73</sup> Wainwright, E.M., 2001, “Not without my daughter: gender and demon possession in Matthew 15:21-28, in Levine, A.-J. (with M. Blickenstaff) (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 126-137. *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 2.*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.

<sup>74</sup> Nolland, J., 2005, *The Gospel of Matthew: A commentary on the Greek text*, p. 22. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.



“To “read Matthew in blissful ignorance of first-century sociopolitics is to miss his point” (France 2007:7).<sup>75</sup>

Fifteen years ago, in an appeal for “engaged hermeneutics” with regard to responsible morality in light of the postmodern shift of paradigm,<sup>76</sup> I cited Herbert Butterfield’s words that what we need is “putting on a different kind of thinking cap”.<sup>77</sup> Based on two respective citations from H. Butterfield’s (1975) *The origins of modern science: 1300-1800*, and T.S. Kuhn’s ([1957] 1979) *The Copernican revolution*,<sup>78</sup> T.R. Kopfenstein puts it as follows in an article entitled “Historical epistemology and moral progress” (pp. 47 and 57)<sup>79</sup>:

A shift of paradigm will result in “handling the same bundle of data as before, but placing them in a new system of relations with one another by giving them a different framework, all of which virtually means putting on a different kind of thinking cap”. A scientific revolution has a dual nature; it is “at once ancient and modern, conservative and radical”. To some practitioners the new paradigm will be the point of departure for previously unanticipated scientific activity; to others, however, the new paradigm will seem curiously akin to its predecessors .... Hence, each evolutionary niche of development understands the world differently, but never independently of its predecessors ... The epistemological discussion within philosophy and history of science has shown that ... (t)he reciprocity of tradition and the emancipation accounts for moral progress. At each evolutionary niche, new possibilities of being-in-the-world are opened up to human freedom. This is the meaning of a shift of paradigm in a moral context, and its possibility rests on a historical [i.e. a social constructionist – A.G. v A.] rather than essentialistic understanding of the moral law.

To me, in our present-day “global village” morality is a crucial matter which has to be deployed in the hermeneutical enterprise. Morality is a core element of the “new

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<sup>75</sup> R.T. France 2007, *The Gospel of Matthew*. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

<sup>76</sup> Van Aarde, A.G., 1994, “The epistemic status of the New Testament and the emancipatory living of the historical Jesus in engaged hermeneutics”, pp. 584-585. *Neotestamentica* 28(2), 575-596.

<sup>77</sup> Butterfield, H. 1975, *The origins of modern science: 1300-1800*. p. 1. Bell and Hyman, London.

<sup>78</sup> Kuhn, T.S. [1957] 1979, *The Copernican revolution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>79</sup> Kopfensteiner, T.R. 1992, “Historical epistemology and moral progress”. *Heythrop Journal* 33, 45-60.

framework” in terms of which existing data from the huge amount of Matthew studies are produced in the last four decades. Although ethics was not really a forgotten interpretant issue for Matthean scholars, morality however has not constituted the exegetical agenda.

There are exceptions to the rule, and we are encouraged to join them, for example Lidija Novakovic:

“In the world governed by military and political power and divided across ethnic and religious lines, Matthew’s Gospel offers a new vision of human relationships. On the one hand, it encourages the underprivileged to work for a change of conventional hierarchies that favour the privileged. It restores the lost dignity of the inferiors and calls them to engage in the creation of just relationships. It empowers the excluded by giving them hope that they can have equal share in the abundance of God’s grace. And it appeals to those in power to become attentive to the needs of the distressed and serve them as if they were serving Jesus himself. At the same time, Matthew issues a warning that those who manage to improve their conditions and find themselves in a position of power should not replicate unjust relationships.”<sup>80</sup>

In the historical-critical paradigm Matthean studies disclose an ellipse, a “square circle” that could break if the poles are stretched too far: With regard to the so-called “transparency theory” the issue of social location caused that Jerusalem in Matthew’s story world forms the one pole over against Antioch in Matthew’s narrated world. With regard to Matthew’s references to people the disciples and the crowd in the story world create the one pole and the first-century ecclesial community as the narrator’s implied audience the other pole.<sup>81</sup> Both social location and the characters in Matthew’s story constituted a “theological issue” in the interpretation of Matthew’s gospel, and that concerns the so-called particularism-universalism debate which creates a “theologoumenon” such as the question as to whether the Jesus followers were in Matthew’s eyes a “third race” (Graham Stanton) rather being either Jewish-Christians or Christian-Jews” (Anthony Saldarini//Andrew Overman). Part and parcel of this “theological issue” is the David Sim-Robert Gundry-Donald Hagner-Joel

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<sup>80</sup> Novakovic, L., 2009, “Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table”: Matthew’s gospel and economic globalisation’, *HTS Theological Studies* 65(1), Art. #321, 7 pages. DOI:10.4102/hts.v65i1.

<sup>81</sup> According to Paul Hertig the “first horizon” and the “second horizon” respectively (see Hertig, P., 199, *Matthew’s narrative use of Galilee in the multicultural and missiological journeys of Jesus*. Mellen Biblical Press Series 46. Edwin Mellen Lewiston, NY.

Willitts debate with regard to either Matthew's "anti-Paulinism" or Matthew's "gentile bias".

Today when "new" buzz words are deployed in Matthew studies, such as "intertexts", the central matter of morality needs to be made integral to our theoretical reflections. It includes also the focus on aspects such as the socio-historical context and the political contexts of the first and present readers. From recent Matthew studies one can observe how the political dimension is approached from gender, postcolonial and empire-studies perspectives. What also needs to be done is that we should take into consideration the matter of morality as well, also when we addressed exegetical and theological issues in Matthew's gospel such as

- the understanding of the destruction of the Israelite temple-state;
- the probable social location and constitution of the Matthean community;
- and apocalyptic-sectarian theories and marginalization theories.

My case study, namely Matthew's male dominated characterization of women, is an example how morality could be play a role when we discuss the usual exegetical matters – even if the hermeneutical enterprise consists of the recycling of only old insights and approaches disguised in the vocabulary of a new thesaurus.

At least, what might be appropriated in a sense of a *second naiveté*, is what Victoria Phillips (2001:234) refers to as a "process of transforming consciousness".<sup>82</sup> She points out that "[i]ntegral to that transformation is consciousness-raising". A route to this process is "the telling of stories". She quotes Beverly Wildung Harrison (1985:243):

"Conscientization involves recognition that what we have experienced in isolation and silence, a private pain is in fact a public, structural dynamic. *My* life is now perceived in a new way in light of *your* stories. Together we slowly re-vision our reality so that what happened, originally, to be an individual or

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<sup>82</sup> Victoria Phillips 2001, "The failure of the women who followed Jesus in the Gospel of Mark", in LeVive, A.-J. (with M. Blickenstaff) (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mark*, pp. 222-234. *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings 2.*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.

personalized 'problem' or even a human 'failing', is exposed as a basic systemic pattern of injustice."<sup>83</sup>

By amending Victoria Phillips' reading of the end of Mark's gospel<sup>84</sup>, I would like to apply her open-ended remarks to Matthew's entire narrative point of view – and with such an in/conclusion express my opinion about where the "last play landed"<sup>85</sup> with regard to current Matthew studies: "Exploring the dynamics that silenced the women who followed Jesus is a way to contribute to such re-visioning."

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<sup>83</sup> Harrison, B. W., 1985, "Theological reflection in the struggle for liberation: A feminist perspective", in Robb, C.S. (ed.), *Making the connections: Essays in feminist social ethics*, pp. 253-263. Beacon Press, Boston, MA.

<sup>84</sup> Phillips 2001:234.

<sup>85</sup> "The attempt to define is like a game in which you cannot possibly reach the goal from the starting point but can only close in on it by picking up each time from where the last play landed" (Harold Rosenberg 1959, *The tradition of the new*, p. 23. Horizon Press, New York)