

## GOOD NEWS FOR ALL?

# A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW<sup>1</sup>

Miranda Pillay

Department of Religion and Theology  
University of the Western Cape

### **Abstract**

*In the Gospel of Matthew the Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus preaches about is in conflict with the dominant culture which creates tension between what is and ought. Those whom society despises are pronounced ‘blessed’ (5:1-12); the inclusiveness of the kingdom is made manifest when outsiders (the despised) such as lepers, Gentiles, ‘unclean’ women, and the demon possessed are pronounced ‘clean’ (Chaps 8-9). Jesus’ vision of the basileia as symbolically presented in parables entails hearing, understanding and embodying inclusivity. Based on this premise, this article explores the question of Good news for all in Matthew. While Matthew cannot be reduced to a feminist treasure chamber for gender justice it is possible to spot certain gynocentric interruptions of the dominant androcentricity of Scripture. Based on the observation that the Gospel of Matthew exhibits a tension that both excludes and includes others, this article argues for the possibility that Matthew may be a resource to proclaim ‘good news for all’ – including women.*

**Key Words:** Matthew; Inclusivity; Feminist Perspective

### **Introductory Remarks: On ‘Good News’ for All**

The question mark in the title of this paper may trigger another question: *Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ not supposed to be Good News for all – irrespective of race, ethnicity, class and gender?* While many Christians may wish to respond unreservedly in the affirmative, both questions may also evoke memories with many South Africans for whom the oppressive interpretation of Scripture had not been good news.<sup>2</sup> The result of oppressive interpretations (perhaps manipulation) of ‘the good news’ of salvation is evident in the following argument:

Through a lack of credibility on the side of preachers and theological institutions, mainly because of repressive ways in which the Bible has been used in the past, many people seem to have lost their trust and confidence in the liberating power of the Word of God. For such people to be surprised (again) by Scripture’s transformative and liberative power, and to be persuaded by virtues such as truthfulness, authenticity and integrity (while lacking appropriate role-models), have indeed become an enormous theological challenge to Christian theology (Elna Mouton 2003:5-6).

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper “The Gospel of Matthew: Good News for All?” read at Word-and-Worship Liturgical Retreat, Maryland Convent, Hanover Park, 24 October 2012

<sup>2</sup> One can also not ignore the selective, conditional understanding of “Good News” when one considers current conversations about human sexuality in a patriarchal hetero-normative context.

What I think Mouton is calling for is serious, prayerful reflection on *what* text we read (genre), *how* (interpretive/exegetical tools) we read a particular text, and *why* we read a particular text (appropriation) because, as South Africans we have witnessed how the Bible could be used to subjugate – and also to liberate. Mouton (2011) points out that the multi-dimensional nature of text and context (of text-world and interpreter) impacts on what is understood as the ‘authority’ of Scripture. She suggests that all facets of the hermeneutical circle are to be considered to account for the authority of Scripture or for the authority a particular interpretation wishes to impose. Von Thaden notes that “the important issue is to identify what *people* do with the texts, rather than assume passive communities upon whom the texts act and ... the question, ‘who has (re)used this text, how, and for what purpose’ identifies more clearly the particular interpreters and agendas behind these reinterpretations” (2015:108). Thus, besides choosing a particular text, an interpreter also chooses (or ignores) certain interpretive tools in order to address questions which emerge from within the community of the interpreter or the social context of the interpreter in response to contemporary societal needs. Thus, the ‘ideological texture’ of both text and interpreter has a pivotal impact on the reading (and interpretive) process (see Robbins 1996; cf. Pillay 2008).

Many feminist biblical scholars have, for some time now, come to see the need to challenge the historic patriarchy of our faith which is rooted in Scripture and have experienced the Bible as a major contributor to the oppression and subjugation of women throughout the ages (see for example Schüssler Fiorenza 1983; Pippin 1992; Exum 1993; Musimbhi Kanyoro 2002; Julie Claassens 2009; Jennifer Bird 2011; Annika Thiem 2014; Pillay 2015). McKay (1996:59) argues that women in Biblical texts are suppressed by various literary devices in a context of patriarchy.<sup>3</sup> However, despite the very real problems that the Bible presents to many women in general and feminist biblical scholars in particular, some continue to find the Bible to be a source of life and liberation (Lancaster, 2002:11). Others suggest that it is our (Christian) responsibility to search for ways of reading the Bible that are transformative and liberative (see for example Mouton 2011:275-279 and 2007:44-47; Ackermann 2007:200-219; Pillay 2005:448-452; Nadar 2004:63-67; Pui-lan 1995:96-98; Claassens 2009:200-201). The point of departure for reformist Christian feminists lies at this intersection – between the life-affirming and life-degrading power the Bible has for women (Lancaster 2002:1). It is at this juncture – the space of dynamic tension and paradox – where I, personally, continue to find hope as a Christian South African woman of colour. Scripture continues to function in (South African) Christian discourse as a source of insight and hope, and thus it has the potential to influence the ethos of Christian communities in South Africa.

## Salvation as ‘Good News’

Considering the introductory remarks, it is clear that the good news of ‘salvation’ is open to interpretation. Insights based on Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics would make one suspicious of salvation that is understood only in terms of its eschatological worth. Salvation derives from the Latin *salus*, a word that refers to health/well-being. The original meaning of the Greek equivalent, *soteria*, from which we derive the doctrine of salvation could then also mean physical or ‘worldly’ well-being. This view could surprise some Christians – especially those who think of salvation as “out of this world, beyond this

<sup>3</sup> Mc Kay’s view is that women of the Hebrew Bible are maltreated literally in the New Testament (1996:59).

realm” says Cochrane, who concludes that “salvation has to do with ‘precisely’ an overcoming of the conditions that enslave, dehumanize, marginalize, and alienate us from neighbours, our self and God … Our responsibility… begins at least in an understanding of who suffers, why they suffer, and what those who suffer experience. It does so by confronting the agents and forces of suffering in the name of the comprehensive well-being of all” (Cochrane 2009:187).<sup>4</sup>

But, one might ask, “What is wrong with suffering? Are we not called to ‘suffer’ for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven”? Besides, “Has Jesus not pronounced a ‘blessing’ on those who suffer for the sake of righteousness according to Matthew” (5:10)?

Ricoeur explains that “Suffering is not defined solely by physical pain, nor even by mental pain, but by the reduction, even the destruction, of the capacity for acting, of being-able-to-act, experienced as a violation of self-integrity” (1992:318-320). In the words of Ricoeur (1992:320) suffering means “the very forms of disesteem of self, and hatred of others, in which suffering exceeds physical pain”. This, I believe, is the suffering (the Matthean) Jesus challenges and condemns – particularly in the Sermon on the Mount.

## **Matthew: A Brief Overview**

The Gospel according to Matthew occupied a special position in the early church. This is evident by the fact that Matthew appears first in all canonical lists. Its position probably reflects the early church’s belief in the gospel’s theological priority – which some ascribe to its chronological priority.<sup>5</sup> Others believe Matthew to function as a literary bridge between the first and second Testaments. In this regard the Matthean focus on the law and its characteristic reference to the Old Testament are seen to have been welcomed by Christians who sought clarity and assurance of how Jesus had fulfilled God’s promises as revealed in the Old Testament. Considering these observations, I wish to highlight two facets of this debate:

### *Mathew Displays a Clear, Systematic Structure, Considering the Five Discourses, viz.:*

- The Sermon on the Mount. Mt. 5:1 to 7:28
- The Missionary Discourse. Mt. 10:1-42
- The ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ Parables. Mt 13:1-53
- The Community Discourse. Mt 17:22 to 18:35
- The Sermon in the Temple. Mt 21:1 to 25:46

The sayings and teachings of Jesus were valuable to the young church as it provided material from which the church could teach and preach. It is obvious that these ‘teaching discourses’ in Matthew, which include the Lord’s Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount, particularly influenced and shaped Christian theology. Themes such as ‘righteousness’ (3:15; 5:6; 6:33; 5:10; 5:20; 5:21;-48; 6:1) and ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ often emerge as part of the ‘theological thrust’ of Matthew’s gospel.

<sup>4</sup> Cochrane says that this is where justice for the ethical foundation to human life is expressed in multiple cultural, religious and philosophical forms of the golden rule (2009:187). He sees mutual reciprocity as an intrinsic value of justice.

<sup>5</sup> While a large number of scholars espouse the two-source hypothesis (ascribing to Markan priority) there are those who, in terms of chronology, give priority to Matthew – according to the two-Gospel hypothesis.

Framed by Matthew's Christology, this Gospel also exhibits many Old Testament quotations and makes frequent reference to ideas/ beliefs practices inspired by the Old Testament which Matthew then reconfigures to proclaim Jesus as Messiah, viz. Jesus had truly and unexpectedly fulfilled the aspirations of the Law and the Prophets and, Jesus was indeed the culmination of Israel's hope – through God's grace which extends beyond Israel.

### *For or Against Jews?*

While it is generally agreed that the author of Matthew was a Jewish Christian and that this Gospel is a highly Jewish document, many scholars also point to its universalistic features. However, for many (in the church throughout the ages) 'universal' ironically meant 'anti-Jewish'. Therefore, when exploring the 'inclusivity' in the Gospel according to Matthew as well as hope for all through God's salvific love, grace and mercy in Jesus – one has to consider the possibility of interpreting the Gospel of Matthew as both Jewish and anti-Jewish and also that the new Christian movement includes Gentiles.

- Matthew is for the Jews
  - Matthew's Jesus is portrayed as thoroughly Jewish
  - Matthew uses typically Jewish terminology, e.g. Kingdom of heaven
  - The Matthean Jesus reflects Jewish attitudes (e.g.18:17)
  - Jesus' ministry is first to "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5; 15:24)
- Matthew is anti-Jewish
  - Jesus criticises scribes and Pharisees: They are hypocrites
  - Jewish leaders are seen to be responsible for Jesus' death
  - Jesus pronounces judgment on the Jewish nation (21:43)
  - Implied split between Jews and Christians (9:35; 10:17; 28:15)
- Matthew includes Gentiles
  - Disciples are open to 'all nations' (28:19)
  - Gentiles represented in Jesus' birth narrative (1:3;4&6)
  - Reference to 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (4:12-16)
  - Jesus heals Gentile centurion's servant (7:5-13)
  - Jesus engages a Canaanite woman in public (15:21-28)

### **Inclusivity in Matthew's Gospel?**

Based on the above observation, it may be argued that while the Gospel of Matthew is a highly Jewish document, Matthean texts also exhibit content that is 'anti-Jewish' (Wenham and Walton 2002:209-225). Secondly, although Matthew's Jesus "was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (15:24; 10:6) the Canaanite woman's ability to see and to reason (her wisdom) supersedes that of both the Pharisees who 'are blind guides' (15:14) and the disciples who 'are still dull' (15:16).

With reference to Matthew 15, one may argue that the key to understanding the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven is to hear Jesus' call to re-think righteousness. Boundaries

that serve to exclude others are to be redrawn. This would necessitate moving from righteousness as a concept which justifies exclusion, to righteousness as a concept of justice – in response to injustices resulting from racism (Jew/ Gentile), classism (clean/unclean), sexism (man/ woman), ageism (adult/child). While all these ‘isms’ may (or may not) be evident in Matthew, arguments may be made in favour of the ‘inclusivity’ of Matthew, considering the following internal evidence:

- 1:1 ... ‘the son of Abraham’ may extend the boundaries to ‘many nations’ (Gen 17:5).
- Matthew (1:3-6) includes foreign women, Rahab, Ruth and (Uriah’s wife) Bathsheba amongst the ancestors of Jesus.
- The Gentile Magi travel to Bethlehem to ‘worship’ the baby Jesus (2:11).
- Jesus is the light to the Gentiles and in Jesus’ name the Gentiles will hope (4:15-16; 12:18-21).
- The Roman centurion is praised as one having faith greater than anyone in Israel (8:10)
- Jesus performs miracles in the regions of Gadara (8:28-34) and Tyre and Sidon (15:21-39).
- The Gentiles have a place in the consummated kingdom of heaven in the parabolic material of 21:28-22:14.
- The centurion and other guards confess Jesus as the son of God (27:54).
- At the end of the Gospel the risen Jesus commands his disciples to “make disciples of all nations” (28:19).

While the above references to the ‘inclusion’ of Gentiles may be seen to echo Matthew’s negative views of the Pharisees (the hypocrites from whom the kingdom of God will be taken away) or that it supports the view that Matthew portrays Gentile characters favourably, one cannot ignore that Matthew also displays negative attitudes towards Gentiles.

Nevertheless, Matthew (23:4-12) may also be seen as wanting to depict his community (participants in the new Christian movement) as an egalitarian group. The scribes and Pharisees are denounced for their hypocrisy and love of public acclaim after which Matthew’s Jesus commands his followers not to follow their poor example. They have one master, one father and one teacher... thus, they are ‘all equal’ – albeit as ‘brothers’. In Matthew 18 (15-17) the whole (albeit masculine) community is called upon to be involved in personal disputes and also has the power to expel unrepentant offenders from its midst.

## **Exploring ‘Otherness’ in the Matthean Text World**

An investigation of Matthew as a resource for present-day inclusivity presupposes that persons and/ or groups are presumed excluded by a dominant religio-political-cultural voice in the Matthean context. Thus, identifying possible tensions in the text world would be in order. With insights gained from Elaine Wainwright (1994:636) I make the following observations about tensions created in the symbolic universe of the Gospel narrative:

- An early Christian community seeks to establish itself with a new and emerging identity (in continuity with Israel) BUT struggles with its Jewish brothers and sisters who claim a different identity and yet, the same continuity, creates tension. Through the history of the Matthean text, this has created a ‘politics of otherness’ in relation to Judaism beyond the polemic of the encoded text.

- 
- The Kingdom of Heaven which Jesus preaches is brought into conflict with the dominant culture and creates tension. Those whom society despises are pronounced ‘blessed’ (5:1-12); the inclusiveness of the *kingdom* is made manifest when outsiders (the despised) such as lepers, Gentiles, ‘unclean’ women, and the demon possessed are pronounced ‘clean’ (Chaps 8-9). Jesus’ vision of the *kingdom* as symbolically presented in the parables, entails hearing, understanding and doing the word of the *kingdom* (13:23).

Tension arises as this *kingdom* vision is embodied by Jesus who eats with tax collectors and sinners (9:10-13); touches an unclean leper (8:3); is touched by a menstruating woman (9:20); engages with a Gentile woman in public who expands his vision of God’s just purposes (15:21-28); enters Jerusalem with a band of women and men from Galilee (21:1-11; 27:55) and finally the vision is embodied as Jesus gives his very life for the sake of God’s *kingdom*.

On the one hand Jesus’ vision of inclusivity in the kingdom (which he prays to be present on earth as it is in heaven) creates a visible tension in relation to ethnicity<sup>6</sup>, while on the other hand the tension is also visible in relation to gender (Wainwright (1994:637). While I have alluded to the inclusion of women within the kingdom **vision** and **praxis** of Jesus, I agree with Wainwright that the Matthean Gospel constructs a symbolic universe that is androcentric and encodes the patriarchal constructs present in its historical socio-cultural location (1994:637).<sup>7</sup> The text creates a world in which the male norm is synonymous with being human – a presupposition which finds expression in the grammatical and narrative strategies of the text which excludes women.<sup>8</sup> For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, there are repeated instances of male exclusive terms such as *son/s, man/men, brother, father* and *he* (5:13,15,19,22,45; 6:1,16,18; 7:3-5,8,9,12,21). This exclusive reference to males reflects a narrative world from which women appear to be absent and it considers the experience of sonship, fatherhood, and brotherhood to be universal and appropriately adequate for the expression of human experience. Wainwright (1994:637-638) argues that the *history of reception* of this text has contributed further to the ‘politics of otherness’ inscribed in the text.<sup>9</sup>

Wainwright accounts for the above statement by observing that research focusing on disciples who are presumably male, tends to obscure the significant role of women

---

<sup>6</sup> It must be noted though that Matthew twice mentions a more exclusive mission on the basis of ethnicity (10:5-6; 15:24).

<sup>7</sup> Patriarchy, which in broad terms refers to male rule, male headship and androcentrism (i.e. a male-centred perspective on relationships and lived reality) is entrenched in the structures of society and the church as well as in the inner consciousness of both women and men. Generally speaking, patriarchy is a complex social structure built on the simple premise of male headship. As a social system, patriarchy is maintained and reinforced by the view that the male is the normative human being through whose perspective the world functions. This androcentric reality is constructed and sustained by (often) subtle means through symbols and sexist language—a reality experienced in many Christian churches (Pillay 2013:56).

<sup>8</sup> Here, one could note that the Greek word *anthrōpos* does not mean ‘a man’ in all literary contexts and that the term could be gender-inclusive to mean ‘a human being’. In this context *anthrōpos* is a gender-neutral word which unambiguously denotes a human being without regard to gender. However, in other contexts (for example Matt 9:32) the same Greek word is used to refer specifically to a male human being. Moreover, we should not think that every occurrence of *anthrōpos* is to be understood in a gender-inclusive sense, because for the most part the Bible records the names and actions of men, uses male examples, assumes a male audience, and in general focuses on men and their concerns (Pillay 2012).

<sup>9</sup> While the use of gender-inclusive language may seem unnecessary to some people who believe that the masculine pronouns ‘he’ and ‘his’ refer to both men and women it is a fact that English (and other modern languages) evolved through most of its history in a male-centred, patriarchal society which impacted on the way the Bible had been translated and appropriated (Pillay 2012).

characters in the text. While the Matthean inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba (wife of Uriah) in the lineage of Jesus may be used as ‘entry points’ in the search of signs of gender inclusivity, one cannot do so without recognising the fact that the early church used these texts to indicate a woman’s status as sinner (e.g. Jerome) and ‘outsider’ (e.g. Luther) says Wainwright (1994:638).<sup>10</sup> In this sense I agree with Christina Landman (2001) that women in the Bible are used as negative sources to demonstrate the lack of human dignity and visibility with which these women have been treated in their societies.

However, such a ‘hyper-suspicious hermeneutic’ can result in the reader missing some ‘genuinely gynocentric bright spots’ in biblical texts (Spencer, 2004:10; cf. Pillay 2009:229). Thus, I want to argue that while references to women in Matthean texts may not be critical of patriarchal structures, these texts do provide gynocentric interruptions of the dominant androcentricity of Scripture.<sup>11</sup> This observation calls for inquiry into the *Sitz im Leben* and lived reality of the ‘world of the text’ and the world *in front of the text*.<sup>12</sup>

Jobling’s assertion that the “historical sources of women do not reflect the historic reality of women unless the text is read in the light of the ‘*Sitz im Leben*’” (2002:10), echoes Wainwright’s observation that studies in feminist critical theory and literary theory have underscored both the historical and narrative subjectivity of women (1994:639). Similarly Reuther (1993:23) has argued that by recognising the embedded patriarchal ideology in New Testament texts, these texts could serve as a resource to claim the full humanity of females and males alike – as beings created in the image of God. The efforts of African women theologians challenge the traditional male, individualistic, hierarchical and often competitive approach to biblical interpretation. Phiri (2004:21) explains that, “African women’s theologies include men in the vision and struggle for African liberation from all forms of oppression. A partnership and mutuality with men for the exclusion of all forms of violence against women is sought”. Thus, the interpretive efforts of African women theologians have the distinctive characteristic of inclusiveness, calling for the recognition of the full humanity of both women and men. This notion of inclusivity acknowledges that both men and women must (re)read and (re)discover the liberative potential of biblical texts for all people. Teresa Okure (1993:77) states that African women’s approach to biblical interpretation “describes the efforts of women and men to interpret the scriptures as they relate to women, in a common search for new inclusive meanings.”<sup>13</sup> So too Claasens (2009:195) calls for attention to minor or muted voices in the text that are often ‘extremely subtle,’ the “women’s voices murmuring beneath the surface” that ‘gently’ reflect women’s values in the narrative worlds of the text. These voices, though small in number and subtle in nature, may play a significant role in communicating an alternative worldview or challenging and/or subverting the status quo and the way things ‘have always been’.

<sup>10</sup> The use of Biblical typology is an ancient liturgical practice intended to draw parallels between different events in order to emphasize the continuation of patterns into the present. Historically, the Christian use of typology has often functioned to the detriment of women and Jews by creating stereotypes which then serve the interests of patriarchy and anti-Judaism (Procter-Smith 1993:322).

<sup>11</sup> Besides, Seim warns that, as ancient texts, the Gospels cannot be reduced either to a feminist treasure chamber or to a chamber of horrors for women’s theology (1994:249).

<sup>12</sup> However, it is not my intention to do either in this paper.

<sup>13</sup> This is an important angle from which to explore Scripture, because in many instances it is still mainly male clergy who ‘ascend’ the pulpit to preach ‘the word of God’.

## The Gospel according to Matthew: ‘This is the Word of the Lord’

Verbal affirmation of the authority of the Bible is evident in many liturgical traditions. The “Bible as the word of God” is a basic (and very real) problem facing those who want to proclaim gender equality as good news in the gospel of Matthew (or any other Biblical) text. Procter-Smith (1993:315) notes that this affirmation in Christian liturgy functions as an authoritative statement which, as “the word of the Lord” the Scripture read is to be accepted and obeyed. As such it serves “not simply as a record of revelation, but revelation itself” (cf. Fiorenza 1984:25).

While statements of affirmation reinforce the sacred authority of the book, they also reinforce the authority of the interpreter – the preacher or homilist. This illuminates the reason why men and women are to re-read the text in ways that will mean Good News for all women, men, children and the earth. If the basic premise is that the purpose of reading scripture in worship is to build (comm)unity then this goal is not realised until the needs and interests of women (and other marginalised groups) are considered in the choice and proclamation of the text. This observation calls for revisiting and rereading the first century Gospel text with lenses that seek to shape a vision for an inclusive *basileia*.

## Concluding Remarks: The *Kingdom* re-imagined as Inclusive

In Matthew’s Gospel narrative, to be a ‘disciple’ following Jesus means to belong to a community gathered around Jesus and also to be committed to the ‘kingdom vision’ Jesus preached about. We first read that four fishermen were called to follow Jesus (Matt 4:18-22) and then subsequent references to a group called ‘disciples’. As the miracles’ stories in chapters 8 and 9 draw to a close, the four fishermen are named at the top of the list of twelve male disciples whom Jesus commissions to share in his *kingdom* message (Matt 10:1-15).<sup>14</sup> Given that the fluidity of characters is already noted in chapters 5-9, it is not clear whether these are the only disciples, whether they are the group referred to previously (5:1; 8:21, 23; 9:10, 11, 14, 19, 37), or whether this group is limited by gender. In the opening of Chapter Eleven mention is made of Jesus with his twelve disciples. Subsequently Jesus-Sophia (Wisdom of God) “calls all to come to her, take up her yoke, and to learn from her” (Matt 11:28-29) – a call not governed by gender restrictions. However, this inclusive membership of the community of Jesus-Sophia is not named as ‘disciples’ (Wainwright 1994:654). Later, membership within the patriarchal family is dramatically replaced by membership within the family of disciples gathered around Wisdom. They are the ones who live out one of the central responses to the kingdom preaching, viz. doing the will of God – symbolised as ‘Father’ (Matt 12:50). Here discipleship is inclusive – brother and sister and mother (12:46-50). Jesus speaks these words with authority and the reader can presume that discipleship of Wisdom is inclusive and that those who are given to know the secrets of the kingdom (13:11), those who have eyes that see and ears that hear (13:16, 23, 43) and also those who become scribes trained for the kingdom (13:52) include both women and men despite the androcentric language in which these passages are cast (Wainwright 1994:654). Discipleship can be read as inclusive – indicated by the imagery used to describe it and indicated by discipleship qualities exhibited by women, as well as men who have come to Jesus as supplicants who have listened to his teaching and who have followed him.

<sup>14</sup> This group also includes the tax collector Matthew, whom Jesus called during his healing ministry (Matt 9:9).

Inclusive imagery also extends to the metaphorical and symbolic designation of the preacher of the *kingdom* (Wainwright 1994:655). The Matthean Jesus is identified with Wisdom (parallel between 11:2 and 11:19) – the female *gestalt* of God within the Hebrew Scriptures. In the broader unit within which these texts occur (11:2-13:68) Jesus' teaching and deeds – healing the blind, the lame, the lepers, and the deaf; and raising the dead – are identified with personified Wisdom. Given these observations, I agree with Wainwright's conclusion that "Matthean Christology holds in tension the male symbol of the obedient son and the female divine gestalt, Sophia" (1994:655). This Christological perspective presents a way to proclaim a Matthean call for an inclusive community – an inclusive *basileia* to come on earth as it is in heaven.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackermann, D 2007. Tamar's Cry: Rereading an ancient text in the midst of an HIV/AIDS Pandemic. In: *Character Ethics and the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press, pp. 191-220.
- Bird, JG 2011. *Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to Wives*. London: T&T Clark.
- Claasens, L Juliana M 2009. "The Image of the Wailing Woman and the Task of the Feminist Theologian – with special Attention to the Role of Lament in the Book of Matthew." In Nadar S, Le Bruyns. C & Pillay M (eds), *Ragbag Theologies. Essays in honour of Denise M Ackermann, A Feminist Theologian of Praxis*, 193-204. Stellenbosch: Sun Media.
- Cochrane, James R 2009. "Reflections on the Public Face of Theology." In Nadar S, Le Bruyns. C & Pillay M (eds), *Ragbag Theologies: Essays in Honour of Denise Ackermann - A Feminist Theologian of Praxis*, 183-192. Stellenbosch: Sun Media.
- Jobling, J'annine 2002. *Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Theological Context: Restless Readings*. England: Athenaeum Press Ltd.
- Exum, JC 1993. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press.
- Kanyoro, MR 2002. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. London: Shefield Academic Press.
- Pillay, M 2015. Mighty Men, Mighty Families: A pro-family Christian Movement to (re)enforce Patriarchal Control? In Conradie, Ernst M; Pillay, Miranda (eds.) *Ecclesial Reform and Deform Movements in the South African Context*. Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 61-77.
- Lancaster, Sarah Heaner 2002. *Women and the Authority of Scripture: A Narrative Approach*. Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International.
- Landman, C 2001. "The Implementation of Hermeneutics." In Nyambura J. Njoroge & Dube Shomanah, Musa W, (eds.) *Talitha Cum: Theologies of African Women*, 83-94. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- McKay, Heather A 1996. "Only a Remnant of Them shall be saved: Women from the Hebrew Bible in New Testament Narratives." In Brenner, Athalya (ed.) *A Feminist Companion to the Hebrew Bible in the New Testament*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

- Mouton, Elna 2011. "Human Dignity as Expressions of God Images? Perspectives from in 1 Corinthians 24 and Ephesians 5." *Neotestamentica* 45.2:275-292.
- Mouton, Elna 2007. "The Reorienting Potential of Biblical Narrative for Christian Ethos." In *Character Ethics and the New Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*, by Robert, L (ed.) Brawley. Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press.
- Nadar, Sarojini 2004. "'Barak God and Die!' Women, HIV and a Theology of Suffering, in." In Dube, MW & Kanyoro, RA (eds), *Grant me Justice: HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible* 60-79. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Phiri, Isabel 2004. "African Women's Theologies in the New Millennium." *Agenda*, No 61:16-24.
- Pillay, Miranda 2007. "Christian in Public: Aims, Methodologies and Issues in Public Theology." In Hansen, LD (ed.) *Re-reading New Testament Texts: A Public-theological Resource for addressing Gender Inequality in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa*, 209-226. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.
- Pillay, Miranda 2005. "See this Woman? Toward a Theology of Gender Equality in the Context of HIV and AIDS?" *Scriptura* 2(89):441-455.
- Pillay, Miranda 2008. *Re-Thinking Stigma: A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of Luke 10:25-37 in the Context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa*. Bellville, South Africa: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: University of the Western Cape.
- Pillay, Miranda 2009. "Through the Eyes of a Mother – Re-reading Luke's Mary as a Resource for Gender Equality in the 21st Century." In Nadar S, Le Bruyns. C & Pillay M (eds), *Ragbag Theologies. Essays in Honour of Denise M Ackermann, A Feminist Theologian of Praxis*, 219-232. Stellenbosch: Sun Media.
- Pillay, M 2013. The Anglican Church and Feminism: Challenging the 'Patriarchy of our faith'. *Journal of Gender and Religion in Southern Africa*, 19(2):53-71.
- Pippin, T 1992. *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.
- Pui-lan, Kwok 1995. "Women & Theology." In Mary Ann and Kaminski, Phyllis H Hinsdale, *Emerging Feminist Theology from Asia*. New York: Maryknoll.
- Ricoeur, P 1992. *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Robbins, Vernon K 1996b. *Exploring the Texture of Text: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford 1993. *Sexism and Godtalk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Seim, TK 1994. *Patterns of Gender in Luke and Acts*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Spencer, F Scott 2004. *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies and Women of the Cloth: The Women in Jesus' Life*. New York: Continuum.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, E 1983. *In Memory of Her*. New York: SCM Press.
- Thiem, A, 2014. The Art of Queer Rejections: The Everyday Life of Biblical Discourse. *Neotestamentica*, 48(1):33-56.
- Wainwright, EM 1998. *Shall We Look for Another? A Feminist Re-reading of the Matthean Jesus*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

- Wainwright, Elaine 1994. Only to the Lost Sheep or to all the Nations: Social Location  
Constructing Elites and Marginals in the Matthean Gospel.  
[www.wsrt.asn.au/web\\_images/wainwright.pdf](http://www.wsrt.asn.au/web_images/wainwright.pdf). Accessed 1 October 2012.
- Von Thader Jr. RH 2015. Digging Down and Reaching Out: A Story of Biblical  
Scholarship in the Twenty-First Century. *Expositions Online*, 9(1):106-113.
- Weigel, G 1992. *The Final Revolution: The Resistance of Church and the Collapse of  
Communism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wenham, David & Walton, Steve 2001. *Exploring the New Testament: Gospels and Acts*.  
London: SPCK.