

**REVISITING THE CANAANITE
WOMAN IN MATTHEW 15:21-28
FROM A “FOFOA I VAOESE”
PERSPECTIVE**

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Malua Theological College

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Theology

by

Kereveta Tiumalu

July 2021

Consent Form for the Retention and use of the Thesis

I, **Kereveta Tiumalu**

agree that the thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Malua College Librarian for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ (month and year)

Declaration of Authorship of Thesis

I, **Kereveta Tiimalu**

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ (month and year)

Abstract

The importance of the role of women in Samoan society can sometimes be overlooked. As is often stated women are the backbone of Samoan society, whether within their own families or that of their spouses. Often facing the brunt of expectation both within and without the family unit, they are nevertheless “the glue” that binds the family unit – both nuclear and extended, as well as on the local and national scale through their roles in the village and churches. Women as such are often willing to endure immense suffering and hardship to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the family unit. This can be seen not only in Samoan society, but also in the narrative of the Canaanite Woman as told in the Gospel of Matthew. A woman who came from outside the defined space of Jewish society, willing to face the insults hurled at her in order to be save. A woman who had faith in Jesus to cure her daughter from afar, despite coming from the periphery, the “outside” so to speak of the Jewish world at the time. This thesis will examine her role in the text, not only in the local context of Jesus and his disciples but also from the wider context of coming from “outside”, but yet knowing the truth of the salvation through faith in Jesus. This narrative will be viewed through the lens of a *“fofoa-i-vao-ese”* hermeneutic which will seek to find a new view of the Canaanite Woman within a decidedly Samoan framework. It is also hoped that this will allow a new reading of the text which incorporates both the old and the new to find a new space from which to understand the role of women, the ministry of Jesus and the mission to the Kingdom of God.

Declaration

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late sister, Mele Liko Sio, who passed away after our interview by the Board of Malua to affirm the beginning of our journey in Malua Theological College in 2018.

Table of Contents

Consent Form for the Retention and use of the Thesis	ii
Declaration of Authorship of Thesis	iii
Abstract	iv
Declaration	v
Dedication	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
List of Abbreviations	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Reading Approach and Reading Method	3
1. Reading Approach	3
1.1 Reading approach as contextual reading approach	3
1.2 The hermeneutic: <i>fofoa-i-vaoese</i> and its use in the study	4
1.3 Reading Method – Narrative Criticism	7
1.4 Conclusion	7
Chapter 2 Literature Review of Matt 15:21-28	9
Introduction:	9
2. Literary Identity: Unnamed and Unknown Woman:	9
2.1 The literary identity of the Canaanite Woman	9
2.2 Ethnic Identity: Canaanite Woman	12
2.3 Social Identity: Single Mother	14
2.4 History of Interpretation	15
Chapter 3 Exegesis	16
Introduction:	16
3.1 Characters	16
3.2 Setting	21
3.3 Rhetoric: Literary Device	22
3.4 Analysis	27
3.5 Placement of the text as a story told in <i>vaoese</i>	27
3.6 Conclusion	28

Chapter 4 Conclusion	30
Glossary	32
Bibliography	33

Acknowledgments

“To God, be all the Honor, Glory, and Praise now and forevermore....” There are way too many people to thank for this great accomplishment in my career, but here is a valiant attempt.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Rev. Dr. Vaitusi Nofoaiga, who is also the Principal of Malua Theological College for the tremendous help in and throughout the completion of this thesis. Thank you for your guidance and advice, also your patience with me in the development and shaping of this paper in order to achieve the best outcome possible. Thank you for your kind words of encouragement, keeping me motivated and moving forward throughout this whole process.

I would like to thank my spiritual parents, Rev. Apela and Foketi Ah-Him, for the love and support in our time within the white gates.

I would also like to thank all the staff members of Malua Theological College who have offered many insights to help with the completion of this paper during the thesis seminars.

I would like to thank Rev. Dr Imoa Setefano, for his editing or proof-reading attempts and his thoughts in shaping this material. I would also like to thank Dr Honiara Salanoa for her help in more proof-reading attempts and especially in a short notice. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the huge support given by my dear friend Senetenari Autagavaia, and my friend Challis Suiki Pupi. Thank also to Dominic Taelipu for his professional IT support.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all my churches for all their prayers and support, Rev Elder Mataafa and Senerita Mataafa and Southwest Brisbane EFKS, Rev

Muao Fagaisua and Tauvela and Vaitele-Uta EFKS and Rev Dr Paulo Koria and Uputuu and Faatoia EFKS.

Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone-families and friends near and far for all your support and prayers throughout the process. I am who I am today, because of all the people I have met and encountered during our journey.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my beautiful wife Faana'itua Lafaialii Tiumalu and my lovely kids, Fefiloi Athena Niusina Tiumalu, Foma'i Dominic Tigilau Tiumalu and Sine-Rita Tapuitea Tiumalu. None of this would have been possible without your support and love.

To end my many thanks, I would like to thank my parents. Toeolesulusulu Liko Tiumalu and Fefiloi Matafeo Tiumalu also late Rev Fomai Lafaialii and Fausagafou Lafaialii. God knows how much you have sacrificed, in order to build who, we are today. God will bless all you do. To God be the Glory.

List of Abbreviations

CCCS Congregational Christian Church of Samoa

CE Common Error

EFKS Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa

Introduction

I have witnessed the importance of roles and responsibilities played by women in our families such as *nofo-tane* (woman married into our family). Their roles are sometimes overlooked by many. Moreover, the way they are treated by society and in our homes, is heart breaking to see. For example, while growing up in my mother's family, we lived together as an extended family. On one occasion, I witnessed my uncle brutally abusing his wife, beating her up like she was a 'nobody'. Unbelievably, she had the courage to stay with him without a word and focused instead on raising their kids. In actuality, no one wants their daughter to be treated this way, especially when Samoa, like other countries in the world, upholds and advocates respect and reverence for '*tamaitai*' (women). Samoans refer to *tamaitai* as the '*feagaiga*' (covenant), the one who holds together any family, village and the society.¹ Although, the status of the '*feagaiga*' (covenant) changes when the '*tamaitai*' (women) moves family from her own, to her husbands' family; she will never lose her values to her family and her status uprise as her husband becomes the chiefly title holder of his family. This shift, as she moves from place to place never changes her value of importance in the Samoan society.² Therefore, the respect for women in the Samoan context never changes no matter the situation they are in. Also, Samoa is a Christian nation that is founded on God, so naturally God bless women as his gift of life to the world.³

¹ Tutoatasi Toalima, *Feagaiga and Taxation: A Historical Critique of the Debate between the CCCS and the Samoan Government Concerning Taxation of Church Minister* (Master of Theology, Pacific Theological College Suva, 2019), 42-43.

² Latu Latai, "From Open Fale to Mission Houses: Negotiating the Boundaries of "Domesticity" in Samoa" in *Divine Domesticities Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Hyaweol Choi and Margret Jolly (Australia: ANU Press, 2014), 303-306

³ Gen. 1:28, 3:20.

In this research, according to the Gospel recorded by Matthew, the unnamed woman is a Canaanite, while Mark on the other hand recognises her as a Syrophoenician woman. Interestingly, the three Evangelist writers of Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the same story, which indicates that they all valued the contribution of this unnamed, unknown woman. The term Syrophoenician woman used by Mark is a more of a historical approach, while Matthew's title Canaanite woman is reflective of a biblical view as suggested by Kara J.⁴ The recommendation by Matthew, draws the connection with his use of the narration of the lost sheep of Israel. Thus, I have chosen to use the account of Matthew's gospel in this study, given his comprehensive and detailed approach to the story.

This thesis therefore aims to explore the importance of women such as the Gentile and foreign women in Jesus' ministry. An approach I will use is to explore the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 from the perspective of '*fofoa-i-vaoese*'. Her refusal to leave Jesus despite the words that she received showed that she was a brave woman – especially when she successfully forced Jesus to reconsider her request, regardless of her status as a *fafine*-ese (Gentile woman).

To put this study into context, Chapter One focusses on the methodology of narrative criticism, with specific attention given to *fofoa-i-vaoese* as the Samoan hermeneutic approach. Chapter 2 follows, which provides a literature review, delineating the history of interpretation of the chosen text: Matthew 15:21-28. The exegesis is explored in Chapter 3, connecting the key findings in the data, followed by the Conclusion in Chapter 4, which draws together the strands of the arguments.

⁴ Kara J. Lyons-Pardue, "A Syrophoenician Becomes a Canaanite: Jesus Exegetes the Canaanite Woman in Matthew", *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2019): 238-239

Chapter 1

Reading Approach and Reading Method

This Chapter deals with the reading approach and reading method used in this thesis. This reading approach underscores the location of the reader, where an experience of the issue raised is utilised as a hermeneutical perspective to guide an exploration of the selected text (Matt 15:21-28). In this respect, the reading method is the interpretational tool used to explore the text guided by the proposed hermeneutical perspective. A conclusion ends the Chapter.

1. Reading Approach

1.1 Reading approach as contextual reading approach

The use of the reader's experience or understanding of an issue in a community or society as a departure point in the process of exploring a text in the Bible is growing. For example, in the last 15 years this approach has been used by the biblical scholars from the Pacific, namely scholars from Samoa as an on-going attempt of a Bible-reader to understand connotations and inferences of the Bible that are pertinent and applicable in the Samoan context. While it is considered as a contextual reading of the Bible, the attention currently paid in the explanation of how contextual reading is carried out is much more limited. One explanation brings the reader's location or situation into the process of interpretation as an imposition of the reader's own context/s and understanding of the text. Alternatively, contextual reading is where the reader negotiates the rhetorical world encoded in the text with the sociohistorical world of the first century CE in a way that allows today's reader's situation as a guide to lead the

examination of a text – constructing questions to find answers in the text. How to use this approach as an example of reading the Bible from a Samoan context is shown in a recent essay by Vaitusi Nofoaiga:

“...the function of my reader’s situation in the process is not to impose my situation or context on the text, but only to raise questions that guide the exploration of the selected texts. In this way, signifying my location as a reader provides the lenses to see and approach the text....”¹

Equally, my understanding of the importance of women in our Samoan community raises questions about the Canaanite Woman as a gentile woman (*fafine ese*). This is perceived as a blessing to the people who had witnessed the gentile’s woman’s encounter with Jesus. In exploring the text, *fofoa-i-vaoese* is emphasised to authenticate the importance of women in the Samoan context.

1.2 The hermeneutic: *fofoa-i-vaoese* and its use in the study

Fofoa-i-vaoese derives from – the story of Salamasina and her marriage to Tapumanaia, the son of Tonumaipē’a of Savaii – which is the central part of the story regardless of its many versions and adaptations. For example, Melani Anae in her study of a journey of a Samoan with a Samoan identity uses this story to express how she feels as a Samoan, where her Samoan parents and family live in New Zealand – which is looked upon as a foreign land.² According to Anae, *fofoa-i-vao-ese* was a name that Queen Salamasina gave to her daughter when she was born, as she was conceived in a forest during a pigeon-catching expedition. Anae wrote that Salamasina did not stop an arranged marriage between her and Tapumanaia, a high chief from Savaii, although she

¹ Vaitusi Nofoaiga, “Enacting Sociohistorical Interpretation in the Island Nation of Samoa in Oceania,” in *Welcoming the Nations: International Sociohistorical Explorations*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Roy R. Jeal (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 57-70.

² Melani Anae, *Fofoa-i-vao-ese: The Identity Journeys Of NZ-Born Samoans* (PhD Thesis. University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, 1998), 1

was pregnant with her first child. Tapumanaia knew about Salamasina's pregnancy but that did not bother him. The marriage still took place. Tapumanaia raised *fofoa-i-vaoese* as his own child. Anae from the context of that story defines the word *fofoa-i-vaoese* as follows: *fofoa* means conceive, *i* means in, *vao* means forest or bush, and *ese* means foreign. Thus, the name *Fofoa-i-vaoese* was translated as "conceived in the foreign forest". For Anae, *vao* as forest, which is a source of food and nourishment found outside of the village. Thus, *vao* metaphorically refers to the countries outside of Samoa considered by some of people such as Australia, America and New Zealand as the source of material blessings for future generations. Anae added it was one of the reasons why many Samoans migrated overseas.³ Anae speaks of how countries outside of Samoa help the Samoans. It is important also to emphasise how the people as *fofoa-i-vaoese* are considered blessings to the so-called *vaoese*. Augustin Kraemer, a German naturalist and ethnographer who studied Samoa extensively, re-tells the same story and added *fofoa-i-vaoese*'s marriage to Tuiaana.⁴

Rev. Setu Faaniniva of the Samoan Methodist Church in his two-volume book named *Fofoa-i-vaoese*, also develops a meaning for the term *Fofoa-i-vaoese* as one of "nurturing new churches of the Methodist church in foreign lands" like Brisbane in Australia.⁵ Faaniniva uses the term to record the growth of the church, explicating *fofoa-i-vaoese* as new life and land for the Methodist Church. Contrastingly, Salevao Leone similarly in his recent thesis of 'Revisiting the Grace of God from *Fofoa-i-*

³ Anae, "Fofoa-i-vao-'ese," 1998.

⁴ Augustin Kramer, *The Samoa Island*, Volume 1, Translated by Theodore Verhaaren, (Polynesian Press, Samoa House, Auckland New Zealand, 1994): 125&224.

⁵ Faaniniva Setu, *Fofoa-i-vaoese*, Volume 1 (Perfection Press, Ipswich, Australia, 2000): 1.

vaoese’ speaks about the blessings he experienced in a foreign land.⁶ Both Faaniniva and Leone emphasise how the foreign lands as *vaoese* have become blessings for the church and the Samoan families. It is important as well to consider the blessings the *Fofoa-i-vaoese* people bestow upon the *vaoese*. Thus, blessings go both ways. It is this emphasis of *Fofoa-i-vaoese* that will be used as the main element of my use of *Fofoa-i-vaoese* as a hermeneutical perspective to read Matt 15:21-28. Therefore, the primary research question in this thesis is: “How does *Fofoa-i-vaoese* become a blessing or blessings for the *vaoese*?”

It is my view, that the meaning of *fofoa-i-vaoese* also reflects the importance of a *nofotane* – a foreign woman who is married into their husband’s family. Despite her being an ‘outside’ woman, she is a well-respected woman with a certain role and status in her own family. In this way, I can restate again that Samoa is one of the countries in the world that grants tremendous amount of respect for *tamaitai*, because as *tamaitai* they are the *feagaiga* or the one that holds together any family, village and the society. Ultimately, as a Christian nation founded on God, our people believe that God blessed women to become the way of his gift of life to the world. Thus, a woman as *fofoa-i-vaoese* could also be considered as blessings to a *vaoese* or a foreign place. This research will seek to find answers to these questions in Matt 15:21-28.

⁶ Salevao Leone. *The Grace of God and Fofoa-i-vaoese: Towards a Theology from a Samoan Migrant in New Zealand Perspective* (A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Malua Theological College Apia in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Theology), 2020:8-16

1.3 Reading Method – Narrative Criticism

Narrative criticism deals with what the story says in the text. In other words, narrative criticism explores what the story is, as told and shown in the text.⁷ It looks at the characters, the event, and the movements of the characters and their relationship to each other shown in the text and the world encoded in the language of the text. From the point of the hermeneutical perspective of *fofoa-i-vaoese*, the exploration of the text will find if there is *vaoese* in the text. Therefore, one of the questions that will follow is: “Are there any one *fofoa* in that *vaoese*? Then the next questions will be: “Is the one *fofoa-i-vaoese* a blessing on the *vaoese*? If he or she is a blessing: How do, they manifest or show that they are a blessing? These questions will guide the exploration of Matt 15:21-28 as a story from the proposed hermeneutic. The following Chapters will answer that question. Before the exegesis of the selected text using the above-mentioned hermeneutic, I will complete in the next chapter a literature review of Matthean Scholars’ interpretations of Matt 15:21-28, leading to the direction that will be emphasised in my exploration of the text.

1.4 Conclusion

This Chapter explicitly describes both the Reading Approach and Method and how this methodology will be used to examine meaning from the selected text. The Reading Approach takes into account the world of the reader, which in the context of this research is the recognition of women in Samoa as *feagaiga*. As such, having joined their husband’s family as a *nofotane* may well be considered as a blessing to that family

⁷ Mark Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 239. See also, Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean,* in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, eds. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 23-49.

– a blessing of *fofoa-i-vaoese*. The following chapters will investigate if this indeed is the case.

Chapter 2

Literature Review of Matt 15:21-28

Introduction:

The following chapter will provide a brief review of literature, highlighting those scholars and writings that focus on the various characteristic traits of the Canaanite Woman. This will help to provide an overall picture of who, what, and how she is perceived in order to display the remarkable contribution that this unnamed, unknown, female character provides within the Jesus narrative of the Gospel for all. The chapter will be divided into sub-headings to illustrate who the Canaanite woman is and how she is perceived in Biblical literature: Literary Identity: Unnamed and Unknown Woman; Ethnic Identity: Canaanite; and Social Identity: Single Mother. The chapter concludes with an overall look at the historical interpretation of the Canaanite woman in history.

2. Literary Identity: Unnamed and Unknown Woman:

2.1 The literary identity of the Canaanite Woman

The story/narrative of Jesus and the Canaanite Woman in the Gospel of Matthew is blunt in its references to the difference between the Jewish people and those who are not part of God's "chosen" people. This text with its clash between the exclusive nature of the "chosen people" and the subsequent acceptance by Jesus of the Canaanite Woman and her daughter – reflects a change of direction from a focus on the local and the exclusion of "others", to an inclusive mission embracing "others". Broadly speaking this encounter reflects a crossing of boundaries from Judaea/Israel to the world

at large. This is a reflection of Matthew's emphasis on salvation of those who follow/believe Jesus as founded on faith and not ethnicity.¹

Though he is seeking respite, Jesus finds none. Immediately upon his arrival, he is confronted by a desperate and determined woman. A mother who describes her daughter as subject to demonic possession, a mother who is a gentile, specifically identified by Matthew as a Canaanite. This reference to the woman as a Canaanite already gives the reader a clue as to her identity and how she should be viewed in this text. Jesus' first response to the Canaanite woman is silence, as befits cultural norms: she is a gentile woman and he a Jewish man. Jesus defines his mission as not including this woman who is crying out to him: "I was sent only to the lost house of Israel" (v. 24). Yet the woman continues her heartfelt appeal by kneeling and again addressing Jesus as "Lord" (v.25). Nadine Ellsworth-Morgan describes the Canaanite woman as a woman willing to fight cultural barriers and place great reliance on her faith for the wellbeing of her daughter.²

Scholars note Jesus' remarks about the centurion (Matt 8:5-13) and the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21-28) as examples of great faith. Matthew's dramatic portrayal of the Gentile centurion and other guards confessing, at the foot of the cross, that "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Matt 27:54). At face value, it is easy to conclude that Matthew's Jesus is not only pro-Gentile but also inaugurates the Gentile mission.³ Indeed Daniel N. Gullotta takes the view, that the Canaanite woman is an example of how great faith can open mission to the inclusion of "others".

¹ W.D Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 320-321

² Nadine Ellsworth-Moran, "Between Text and Sermon Mathew 12:21-28" *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 7 (2017): 313-315.

³ Daniel N. Gullotta, "Among Dogs and Disciples: "An Examination of the Story of the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21-28) and the Question of the Gentile Mission within the Matthean Community" *Neotestamentica* 48.2 (2014): 325-340.

Other scholars have posited that the Canaanite woman acts are an example of how women were viewed in Jewish society at the time of the Gospel of Matthew – such as Amy Jill Levine and Elaine Mary Wainwright. Levine highlights that the models of exclusivity as outlined in the narrative paints the picture of the exclusivity of Jewish society – a society which does not brook easily the breach of its “social boundaries” by an external force – or in this case the Canaanite woman.⁴ Wainwright advocates that the action of the Canaanite woman suggests a “...legitimation of women’s active role in liturgy, their participation in the community’s theological reflection on the life and ministry of Jesus in the light of their scriptures and their leadership role”.⁵ The difference though with Wainwright’s study is that she tries to merge a single female role model from the different women in Matthew’s Gospel, whereas this study will be focused solely on the Canaanite woman.

This focus on the Canaanite woman’s role in Matthew also brings to light the issue of gender. Janice Capel Anderson discusses how gender in the New Testament relegates women’s roles to that of “...foils for various character groups”.⁶ In doing so Anderson limits the role of women in the New Testament as she describes the Canaanite woman as being “doubly marginal as a gentile and as a woman”.⁷ Indeed the limited role of the Canaanite woman can be seen in that she is not credited with a further role in the Gospel of Matthew, nor does she become a disciple – a privileged position held by males in Matthew’s narrative”.⁸

⁴ Amy Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History* (New York: E. Mellen Press: 1988), 44

⁵ Elaine Mary Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel of Matthew* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter 1991), 244

⁶ Janice Capel Anderson, “Matthew: Gender and Reading” in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, eds., Amy Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 33

⁷ Anderson, “Matthew: Gender and Reading,” 33

⁸ Anderson, “Matthew: Gender and Reading,” 33

In contrast, Dennis R. MacDonald emphasises the importance of taking a wider reading of the role of the Canaanite woman, as this would open a larger narrative approach compared to a limited view which would reflect the reality of the period.⁹ As Elizabeth Fiorenza states, "...the biblical tradition is not a doctrinal or exegetical tradition, but a living tradition of the community of faith..."¹⁰

2.2 Ethnic Identity: Canaanite Woman

The dramatic import of this encounter in the borderlands is heightened as we recall its historical and textual background. "Show them no mercy," Moses had said to the people of Israel (Deut. 7:2). This call of mercy in Deuteronomy by Moses is reflected when the Canaanite woman pleads to Jesus to "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David". Within Jewish society of the time Canaanites were seen of as the historical enemies to the Israelites, as evident in the ethnic and religious clashes in the 60s CE between the two peoples.¹¹ Canaanites were described within the Old Testament as being "bad" people. Indeed "Canaanites" become synonymous with the term "opponents, and led to their exclusion from Jewish community, to being placed on the margins or the borders and the periphery of Jewish society".¹²

The change of the woman's ethnicity from Syro-Phoenician in Mark's account to Canaanite in Matthew's, highlights a shifting of stress between Mark and Matthew. The stress changes from that of a Jewish centralised identity to that of the "other" – revealing a concern for those non-Jewish subjects within the Kingdom of Israel. The

⁹ Dennis R. MacDonald, *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (Harrisburg: PA Trinity Press International, 2001), 2-3

¹⁰ Elizabeth Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1988), 20

¹¹ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the margins: A socio-political and religious reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 320-321

¹² E. Cornelius, "A remarkable woman-the Canaanite woman in Matthew," *Journal of Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 93(1):34-41.

reference to the ethnicity of the woman as being Canaanite implies, she is unclean and pagan.¹³

The differences between the two peoples can also be seen in the ideological divides which some academics have said mirrors this crossing of boundaries, of inclusion and exclusion, acceptability and unacceptability.¹⁴ This can be said to reflect this idea/theme of “purity” as a way of talking of what is deemed to be the right/proper way to behave/act in a certain time and place.¹⁵ “Purity” is about margins, both inside and outside and is the general cultural map of social time and space – arrangements within a defined space. Conversely, the “unclean” can be seen as that which does not fit a defined space, causing an anomaly/confusion in a socially accepted map and understanding.¹⁶

This definition of Canaanites as being “wicked”, “unclean” and “impure” is then merged with the definition that of being a gentile. Gentiles were considered to be “outside” normal Jewish society.¹⁷ Matthew’s Jesus acceptance of the Canaanite woman challenged this belief – as he accepted the Canaanite woman and her daughter – an unclean marginalised woman with a demon possessed daughter.¹⁸

¹³ J. Willitts “The friendship of Matthew and Paul: A response to the recent trend in the interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 65(1), Art. #151, 8 pages. (2009): 6.

¹⁴ D.A. DeSilva, *Honour, patronage, kinship & purity: Unlocking New Testament culture* (Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 154-155

¹⁵ J.J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Biblical social values and their meaning: A handbook* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 151

¹⁶ Pilch and Malina, *Biblical social values*,” 123-124

¹⁷ I-C Shin. “Women’s stories implying aspects of anti-Judaism with Christological depiction in Matthew,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70(1) (2014) Art. #2704:9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2704>

¹⁸ Cornelius, “A remarkable woman,” 34-41.

2.3 Social Identity: Single Mother

The Canaanite woman's sensitive pleas for her daughter are based on an instinct of love that is as maternal as it is universal. She pleads on behalf of her daughter, who cannot speak for herself. Well aware of his people's position and privilege as "chosen," Jesus initially reasserts the exclusiveness of his mission. But in the end, he welcomes the woman, and she receives what she had sought with passion, courage, and determination.¹⁹

Ben Witherington III in his book "Women in the Ministry of Jesus" talks about the cultural norms of the Jews, how these norms related to their neighbours and Jesus' ministry. The Canaanite economy was an agrarian based one whereby all land was owned by the state, temples and private owners. Women were largely seen as second-class citizens, often depersonalised. It is against this backdrop that the narrative of the Canaanite woman is viewed because of the language between Jesus and the Canaanite woman.

The term of "dog" as used by Jesus in regard to the Canaanite woman was generally one of contempt (1 Sam 17:43; 24:15; 2 Sam 9:8; 16:9; Ps 22:20; Prov 26:11). The use of the term "dogs" by the Israelites was more a term of disparagement, of enemies/adversaries who fit in with the general view of Canaanites and their history with Israel as the defeated opponents of Israel's spoils of war and conquest. Gentiles and the Canaanites were both thought of as "unworthy" and in negative terms: Jesus' command, "Do not give to dogs what is holy" in Matthew 7:6 shows it is used to reflect the opposite of sacred. It also indicates that the Canaanites and gentiles were not welcome in the same space as the Israelites – the Canaanite woman admits that she and

¹⁹ Daniel S Schipani, "Transformation in the borderlands A study of Matthew 15:21-28," *Journal of Vision Fall* (2001): 19-21

her daughter are “out of space/place/sync” because they are not members of God’s chosen people.²⁰ But for the love of her daughter, the Canaanite woman was willing to suffer - to cross the great divide of social inequities to plea for Jesus’ blessings.

2.4 History of Interpretation

The act of crossing boundaries by the Canaanite woman, her willingness to suffer to beg Jesus to bless her daughter, highlights a love and willingness to endure for the greater good. The clash between Jesus and the Canaanite woman and her victory in getting Jesus’ to include her in his mission of healing to spread the Word of God, highlights the many issues prevalent in this narrative. Issues of inclusion and exclusion, of crossing borders (both real and social) abound in this narrative. These issues can be read into today’s context as the issue to spread the Word of God to all the world is a perennial one. I propose that to easily place/locate this understanding of the Canaanite woman within a frame of reference that can highlight contemporary issues, I will use a *fofoa-i-vao-ese* hermeneutic for the purposes of interpretation. This will be explained in a later chapter and then utilised to read/frame discussion of women’s role in the CCCS.

²⁰ Melanie S. Baffes, “Jesus and the Canaanite Woman: A Story of Reversal,” *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 35, no. 2 (2011): 14.

Chapter 3

Exegesis

Introduction:

Chapter three focuses on the exegesis of the chosen text; Matthew 15:21-28, looking at reading out of the text/the narrative the meaning of the text. I will begin by looking at the characters, the setting, the plot and the worlds within the text, then expanding the reading to explore if there is a *vaoese* that can be revealed in the text. I will examine the text with the use of some rhetoric devices to further the exegesis of the text. The chapter will end with the analysis and the placement of the text.

3.1 Characters

3.1.1 Woman (*Un-named/Un-known*):

The use of the motif of the un-named or un-known woman in the Gospel of Matthew is not new. The author first employed this tactic four times before the narrative of the Canaanite woman. Firstly, in Matthew 8:14-17, with the reference to the mother-in-law of Peter, a disciple of Jesus; secondly in Matthew 9:18 – 19:23-26 with the rulers' daughter; thirdly in the story of the woman who was suffering from haemorrhages in Matthew 9:20-22, inverted into the middle of the account of the rulers' daughter; and lastly in the story of Herodias and the un-named daughter in Matthew 14:1-12. Every time the un-named or unknown woman character appears in the narrative, she highlights the differences in the understanding of the role of women within Jewish society and how her aggressiveness challenges the societal norms of the period. Alex Woloch in his book 'The One vs. the Many' highlights the importance of a minor character's role within the narrative she appears in. Woloch's understanding of

characterisation, posits those minor characters are indispensable within the wider narrative, together with other characters within the text, they create a single narrative totality essential to the holistic unity of the narratives themes¹. Melanie S. Baffes in her article ‘Jesus and the Canaanite Woman: A story of Reversal’ proposes the representation of women by the author in the Gospel of Matthew sends a strong message to encourage women as a whole (Jewish and Gentile) who were often marginalised within society, to challenge the popular conceptions of women of this period. It is interesting to note that despite the popular perceptions of women in Jewish society they played an important part in the spreading of the gospel in the first century.²

According to the text, the Canaanite woman’s movements and motives, not only shadow Jesus’ own movements, but by the end of the narrative, overtake Jesus’s own narrative. Instead of being a narrative of Jesus miraculous healing of the Canaanite woman’s daughter, it becomes a narrative of the Canaanite woman faith and belief – her love for her child, which ends up controlling the narrative.

The text started with Jesus clearly landing in the foreign land of Tyre and Sidon (v 21), the focus of the narrative sharply shifts to the Canaanite woman and how she came out of Tyre and Sidon and shouted to Jesus (v22). The meeting between the two occurs in a foreign land, in a land not clearly described: Jesus has landed in a foreign land on his way to Tyre and Sidon; the Canaanite woman has come from Tyre and Sidon. Thus, both Jesus and the Canaanite woman are meeting in a land foreign to both, in a liminal space, “in between” – a *vaoese*.

¹ Alex Woloch, *The One Vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13-14

² Melanie S. Baffes, “Jesus and the Canaanite Woman: A Story of Reversal,” *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 35, no. 2 (2011): 14.

The introduction of the Canaanite woman is interesting in that she is described as “coming out/coming from” the region of Tyre and Sidon when they initially meet:

“Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting...”³

This term ἐξέρχουαι is translated by Glenna Jackson as “come out of/come from” with the implication of leaving behind or departing – in this text the Canaanite woman has left Tyre and Sidon behind. This connotation of “leaving behind” in regard to the word ἐξέρχουαι can be seen to also mean “leaving the past behind”, “to leave a congregation” as in 1 Jn 2 v 19. The wider connotation is not only the physical leaving behind but also the cutting of ties, as in a change of religion and context. Some scholars have stated the word and its synonyms within the Bible reflect/imply a person who has left his past behind, not just in one aspect but a total change/conversion from the past – in other words a change of religion as well as physical landscape and distance⁴.

Rev. Dr Seumaninoa in his doctoral dissertation entitled “Beyond Universalism: Unravelling the Anonymous Minor Characters in Matthew 15:21-28”, stated the physical distance between Galilee and Tyre and Sidon as hundreds of miles apart.⁵ When Jesus and the Canaanite woman meet, they do so at the Jewish border – placing themselves in a space foreign to both. Despite Jesus seeking respite in foreign land that he once ordered his disciples not to cross (Matt.10:5-15), entry into the land becomes the only hope for the Canaanite woman regarding the life of her daughter, as she realises that Jesus is the only hope in this foreign land this *vaoese*.

Upon arriving in the “district of Tyre and Sidon” Jesus is faced by voice and will of a strong Canaanite woman. By labelling her a “Canaanite” the woman is immediately

³ NRSV Bible is used for all biblical quotations in this thesis.

⁴ Glenna S. Jackson, *Have Mercy on Me* (Sheffield Academic Press, New York, 2002), 105.

⁵ Seumaninoa Puaina. *Beyond universalism: Unravelling the anonymous minor characters in Matthew 15:21-28* (Doctor of Philosophy Berkeley, California March 2016), 116.

identified as not only an outsider, but the most extreme of the outsiders who were often in conflict with the people of Israel. The use of the term “Canaanite” has led to much scholarly debate over the years: firstly “Canaanite” was commonly used to refer to the oldest of Israel’s enemies, which reflected a deeply embedded enmity towards the people known as the “Canaanites⁶”. This enmity can be seen in that “...Canaanites were allowed no entry to the Jewish community nor permitted to intermarry with them.”⁷

In recent years, scholarly debate has seen a shift from the use of “Canaanite” to refer to a defined group of people, to now being generally used to refer to anyone who was seen as an opponent/enemy of Israel. It has also become seen as an all-inclusive term of reference for any foreigner to Judaism or outsider⁸. The fact it is this Canaanite woman who challenges Jesus and begs for his healing hands on her daughter, hints that this woman is not a simple outsider or enemy of Israel – she is a vehicle for his healing power to manifest itself. Her status as an outsider/enemy is to be used to further highlight the miraculous power of Jesus in that it is an outsider that Jesus listens to, answers and despite his language – miraculously heals her loved one, illustrating the power of Jesus is not specific but universal.

The demeanour of the Canaanite woman sets her apart from the other women in the Gospel of Matthew. According to Keener, the Canaanite woman is described as a woman who would not take no for an answer. She is often portrayed as powerless woman who was determined and persistent in her dogged attempts to beg Jesus to heal her daughter.⁹ Although Jackson recommends her action as a normal formular by

⁶ Jackson, *Have Mercy on Me*, 71

⁷ Niels Peter Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land* (JSOTSup Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 160.

⁸ David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws* (Toronto Studies in Theology, 14; New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 60.

⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 415

Matthew adopting the Old Testament idea as it is in the book of Ruth that one must go through a four-time request before acceptance.¹⁰ It is apparent she was more than that – she was a woman who was willing to play her role as a single parent, but also as a strong woman in a context which not only fulfilled the cultural norms but also allowed her to challenge the same norms when it came to the love of her daughter.

3.1.2 *Jesus:*

When the narrative begins Jesus has left Gennesaret and is journeying to the district of Tyre and Sidon. He went in search for the lost sheep of Israel (v24), and before reaching his destination he encounters this woman that is unknown to him – a woman who challenges him. Leticia A. Guadiola-Sa'enz in her article 'Borderless Women and Borderless Texts: A Cultural Reading of Matthew 15:21-28' claims that the Canaanite woman accosted Jesus in this borderless space, using the language of protest in the narrative.¹¹ And at first, she approaches humbly asking requesting that he uses his healing powers towards her daughter. Initially he rejects her – but also outright stating that he was only sent to help the lost sheep of Israel. Not only does he reject her, but he also implies that she is an outsider. Her status as a foreigner is implied by the lack of reference to her by name or title.

The fact she is not recognised as a person is further enforced with Jesus second rejection and use of the term “dog” regarding the Canaanite woman. The language used here has often been a bone of contention for many theologians and people when reading this text – how could the Son of David refer to another human being as a “dog”?

¹⁰ Jackson, *Have Mercy on Me*, 126-137.

¹¹ Leticia A. Guadiola-Sa'enz, “BORDERLESS WOMEN AND BODERLESS TEXT: A CULTURAL READING OF MATHEW 15:21-28” *Semeia* 78(1997): 69

The negative inference meaning commonly associated with Jesus' comment to the Canaanite woman has often been problematic in that it conjures an image of Jesus disparate with the Jesus who is the healer, the Son of David. "Dogs" in the Old Testament was commonly used as figurative language to describe "outcasts" in Jewish society. The term for dog in Hebrew "כלב" had a wide range of meaning –from "slave", "term of abuse" to "faithful servant of God"¹². I would state that the use of "dogs" is appropriate in terms of the space they are in – a land foreign to both, space outside of their normal lives – thus allowing for this indefinite interaction.

3.2 Setting

The narrative places the setting somewhere out of Tyre and Sidon, where both met in the liminal space, in between has been referenced earlier in this thesis. The Canaanite woman was heading out of her land and heading to Galilee in the hope to find Jesus. The setting in this land foreign to both, in an outside space poses something of a puzzle, but allows for a wide range of meanings to be allocated to this text/narrative. Indeed Daniel S. Schipani refers to this unknown unnamed setting as a puzzling ambiguity¹³. This puzzling ambiguity can be said to be a *vaoese* where they are free in a liquid space to be more than Jewish, more than a Canaanite.

¹² D. Winton Thomas, "KELEBH "Dog": Its Origin and Some Usages of It in the Old Testament", VT10 (1960): 410-27-(414-15).

¹³ Daniel S Schipani, "Transformation in the borderlands A study of Matthew 15:21-28," *Vision Fall* (2001):14

3.3 Rhetoric: Literary Device

3.3.1 Beginning:(vs21) Explains Jesus destination.

It is clear in the next verse where Jesus is heading – to the territory near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. The reference to this city brings to mind this city state and its reference as a centre for the production of precious purple dye. It is also an interesting city within the context of Jesus and his travels with his disciples, as it is a city, he banned his disciples from travelling to (Matt. 10:5-6). One then speculates as to why he goes to a city he had previously forbade his own disciples from entering?

The verse itself (Matt. 15:22) begins with the shouting exhortation of the Greek word καὶ ἰδοὺ meaning look or pay attention. The use of the conjunction καὶ ἰδοὺ tells the reader that something is being stressed. The shouting of the Canaanite woman seems to stress that someone is challenging Jesus or seeking to bring him out. This also seems to indicate this narrative, or the events are happening in public, where the Canaanite woman can force him to see her, to deal with her and to interact with her.

3.3.2 Middle: (vs 22-27a) Jesus's encounter on the road to his destination

This sense of challenge or being forced to deal with an uncomfortable situation can be seen again with the use of the conjunction καὶ ἰδοὺ. There is the stark introduction from the beginning of the next verse of the Canaanite woman, who shouts to Jesus, begs and pleads with him to “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon”. Continuing with this theme of challenge, the Canaanite woman called him out in public. This was something different – a woman challenging Jesus – not only was she a gentile but she was a woman who dared to call him out! She is begging with Jesus to help her daughter who is possessed by a demon.

But unlike the disciples she not only calls him out, but she calls him the “Son of David” in public before everyone.

This woman astounded Jesus with her desire and the faith in Jesus despite being a gentile – to seek His power to heal her daughter. Now the word shouted in the Greek text, ἔκραζεν which means to “cry out”. Once again gives an indication that she is desperate and this was her cry for help, as she is someone in great pain and need for a miracle.

It is interesting to note that when the Canaanite woman first shouts to Jesus, he is silent in his response. The disciples want to send her away and he does nothing. Yet she continues and shouts out for his grace as he is the “Son of David”. A gentile woman calls him “Son of David” recognising who he is and illustrating that she is ready to move further /to transform/ to cross social, physical and social boundaries to ensure her daughter is saved. It is also during this narrative that the Canaanite woman refers to Jesus as Lord twice – again a sign that the Canaanite woman knew exactly who Jesus was. This in itself was an interesting sign as at the time she was accepting of Jesus as the “Son of David” Jesus was being questioned as to his identity by his own people.

The woman kneels before Jesus, willing to supplicate herself to gain Jesus blessing for her daughter. This image reinforces the woman as a servant and Jesus as the master. In verse 23 the Greek word for knelt, προσελθόντες also can refer to worship. This can be applied to the disciples and their worship of Jesus, and being a verb aorist participle, it is a worship which is continual being carried forward. But it is a faith that needs to be tested, its mettle put under the hammer to see if it is true faith. It is this test that can be seen with the Canaanite woman and her pleas to Jesus to save her daughter. When Jesus does reply, he is to the point and marked in his response. He tells her that he was sent “only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt 15:24) – a reply that only confirmed

the local restricted reading of his mission in that it was for the liberation of the people of Israel and reinforce the centrality of Israel in God's plan of salvation for his people. This is followed by what is probably the most controversial of phrases within this narrative, one which often raises the question as to the true nature of Jesus, in which he calls the Canaanite woman a "dog".

Many have asked why Jesus would make such a statement, and why would he use "dogs" to describe the Canaanite woman? The word "dogs" in the Old Testament has negative connotations as a synonym for "outcasts":

"It has happened to them according to the true proverb, the dog turns back to its own vomit," (2 Pet. 2.22; cf Prov. 26.11)

The use of the term "dogs" in the text was to enforce the difference between the people of Israel and the Canaanites – who were seen as their mortal enemies and opponents. It was also a term of contempt to show the disrespect with which they were held by the people of Israel at this time. However, others have said that Jesus was testing the Canaanite woman to see he could test this woman.

This idea of the Canaanite woman being an outsider akin to a "dog" is also reflected in the use of bread as a metaphor. In Jewish culture, bread is a symbol for the blessings by God, as when God provided sustenance/bread/mana/life in the wilderness (Exodus 16). Bread was a staple food for any Jewish dinner table and was also a symbol of inclusion and welcome. Jesus statement that "it is not good to take poor people's food and give it to the gentiles" shows how the inverse of the use of food could be a rejection of another. Indeed, the fact that the Canaanite woman is not seated at the same table as Jesus shows how alienated she is from the Jewish people.

But then the Canaanite woman retorts with an almost pithy response which could be said to shock Jesus: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." She accepts that she is not worthy to sit at the same table as Jesus and

more than willing to accept the leftovers/scraps if that will save her daughter. It almost seems that the Canaanite woman realises something that others (including the disciples) could not fathom – that there was more than enough of Jesus power/his “bread”/his mana to share with one and all, even the “dogs”.

This is reminiscent of the prodigal son (Luke 15) who is content with accepting a lesser role, if it will mean that she will be heard, and her daughter will be saved. This would seem to intimate that God’s power is more than the disciples and indeed the Jewish people can understand or accept. It is a power which transcends life death and the boundaries that are associated with life.

The interaction between the Canaanite woman and Jesus, was not only a chance for the woman to show Jesus her faith, but also for Jesus to test his own disciples. The Greek word for “Master” in verse 27 is *κυριων*. This was a chance for the woman to find a place at her “Master’s” table. Anyone who has a place at that table will be blessed beyond measure by the grace of Jesus and his healing love.

3.3.3 End: (vs27b to 28) The conclusion – Jesus reaches his destination.

Now in this last sentence, we reach the climax of the narrative in that Jesus accepts her plea, her cry for help her acquiescence to Jesus as her “Master”. At the same time Jesus accepts her, he does so not only as a gentile but also as a woman:

“He concedes her point – and she is a woman and a Gentile! The woman’s humility is striking. She willingly admits to and accepts her secondary status to the Jews and shows a perfect willingness to partake of the “crumbs” left over from Jewish pre-eminence in the kingdom.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Grant R Osborne, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Matthew*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 29.

The persistence of the Canaanite woman, her acceptance of Jesus as the “Son of David” gives her an insight into the power of Jesus which is not obvious to the disciples at this time. It also allows Jesus the ability to enforce his bona fides as a mission to not only save Israel but also to expand to a salvific embrace of God’s people as a whole¹⁵.

By the end of the narrative there is a shift, a fluid movement from Jesus and his disciples travelling to find the “lost sheep of Israel” to now embracing any who would follow, who would believe. The Canaanite woman who was shown sharp rebuke and silent consternation by Jesus, is now an example of the ever-expanding love of Jesus for his people, his followers. It is a reminder that God’s church can and will reach beyond the margins, in which Jesus’ followers will embody His message of faith and grace, as revealed in Matt. 28:19. As Luz submits, the writer of Matthew is “concerned with reassurance of identity” and “from an ethical perspective” is concerned to activate his community on the “path to justice.”¹⁶ This story may have served as a reminder to the early church about the danger of living in self restrictive space of self righteousness, religious pride and spiritual entitlement. Just as the Pharisees were blind to Jesus unfolding vision, the disciples in this narrative forgot about their mission, the discernment of God’s will and the spread of His Church in a mission that embraces diversity and inclusion. This can only be achieved in a space in which God’s love can meet the will of his people in a *vaoese*, only then can we meet with God’s expectations and seek the love that He has unconditionally given to all as showered upon all and sundry with the resurrection of His only begotten Son.

¹⁵ Daniel S. Schipani, "Transformation in the Borderlands," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, Fall (2001): 20.

¹⁶ Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), 35.

3.4 Analysis

The narrative of the un-named Canaanite woman who was moved by her demonic un-named daughter's situation to move with all faith persistence and endurance with completely motherly love to a *vaoese*; a foreign place, space and a world of only hope for the life of her family. Meanwhile, Jesus with his blinded disciples moved into the *vaoese*, a foreign place, space and a world of God's love, became a provision of life that connects them all. The strong surge by the Canaanite woman who played her motherly role for her family became a blessing for the *vaoese*, a foreign place and space and as a result she became the key to unlock God's blessings not only for her and her family but the whole world. Thus, the *vaoese*/foreign place, as clearly now enlightened by the exegetical work above, was blessed by the roles played by the un-named Canaanite/*Fofoa-i-vaoese* whom Jesus recognized her great faith. The Canaanite woman who humbled herself in this place and space of *vaoese*, became a blessing for not only her family, the disciple and the rest of the world.

3.5 Placement of the text as a story told in *vaoese*

The narrative of the unnamed Canaanite woman in the account of Matthew sits in the middle of Jesus teaching about 'Things that Defile (Matt.15:10-20) and 'Jesus Cures many People (Matt.15:29-31)'. Moreover, the story of 'Feeding the Five Thousand (Matt.14:13-21) comes before the narrative of the Canaanite woman, followed by the account of 'Feeding the Four Thousand (Matt.15:32-39). Thus, illustrates the ideal that the author places the account of the Canaanite Woman as a door to show that Jesus' ministry is for all. This considering the Feeding of the Five thousand with twelve baskets left, meaning that the narrative was about Jesus' ministry dwelling in Israel. And after the Canaanite woman narrative portrayed of how anyone can have the right to

Jesus' ministry, the door was then unlock for all nation as the Feeding of the four thousand with seven baskets of left over represents the ministry of Jesus then for all. R.T. France on his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew records the feeding of the four thousand as a deliberate extension of Jesus ministry as a privilege to the Gentiles.¹⁷ Herbert W. Bassar with Marsha B. Cohen in their Relevance-based Commentary entitled 'The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions' had a similar view of the centrality of the Canaanite woman's narrative in the mist of healing and abundance accounts as she deserves the rights to the left-over bread. And as leftovers are enough to meet the needs of Gentiles after meetings the needs of Israel.¹⁸ Furthermore, the account of Matthew concludes with what now known as the great commission as in the last chapter; "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matt.28:19).

3.6 Conclusion

The exegesis has shown the importance of the Canaanite woman as a woman in this story. She as a gentile woman in the public place, in a space she is not allowed to enter in her society, makes her a woman in a *vaoese*. But as the exegesis has shown, that being-ness in a foreign space makes her becomingness a key person unlocking the pouring in of blessings not only for her and her daughter but for anyone who will hear this story. The exegesis also shows that there are people who become foreigners in their own lands and homes which they consider to have a close sense of belonging to. For example, are the disciples of Jesus. It was their response to the woman that made them

¹⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), 540.

¹⁸ Herbert W. Bassar and Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 359-360.

foreigners in their own worlds. It shows that a sense of belonging to a place called home also includes acceptance of outsiders into our homes.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Having deliberated the Canaanite woman narrative in Matthew 15:21-28, it clearly enlightens the important roles of a *fafine*-ese (Gentile woman) in Jesus' ministry. The prominence of women in Jesus' ministry is arguably the most influential, having changed and guided the development of the ministry and the chronicle of the Gospel of Matthew. The unnamed Canaanite woman in the centre of the account of Matthew became the turning point or the key that unlocked the enlargement of Jesus' ministry according to the narrative. The Canaanite woman with all persistence and faith who took no return for her journey to a *vao*-ese (foreign place) and or space to kneel before the Lord, Son of David employed as a crucial aspect to Jesus' ministry to take a turn to all ends of the world.

Moreover, using the hermeneutic *fofoaivaoese*; informs and complements the exploration and meaning of the text in the narrative of the Canaanite unnamed woman in Matthew's account. Her place of meeting with Jesus and his disciples constitutes a *vaoese*; the understanding of a foreign place and space for her that meets her needs as a mother. A foreign place and space that provides all her needs in order to gain life, and at the same time gave birth to a new precious life that became a blessing to all. And this was determined by all the commitment she endured as a mother; her persistence, courage, audacious in faith and weathering all the difficulties she faced in that special meeting place; all of which were recognised by Jesus as a 'Great Faith'.

So many lessons are learned from this study from my perspective as a male in our Samoan Christian world. The courage of the Canaanite woman to deal with men in a space (public space) she is not supposed to be in makes her a very brave woman. As the

exegesis has shown, she had no choice and she also had no one to go to for help. It was the role of a husband in that society to find help for any sick member of the family. The story does not show where the man was. Instead, the story speaks of what the Canaanite woman does so that her daughter is healed. She is shown doing the role of men and she does it without fear or could be said she does it better than men. If men were told to eat from food dropped from the table, fights would occur. But for this woman, that will not do any good for her and her family for the most important thing is for her daughter to be cured. This woman has shown the commitment of a woman to her roles and duties which is the commitment that goes beyond boundaries – where they are prepared to face and encounter any pain and suffering for one thing. That is to fulfil their roles as women or as mothers. If this is the commitment and loyalty that any woman offers to look after and to take care of her family, we wonder how much more better work they would do for God if they are given the opportunity by the society to do so. The Canaanite woman could be a *nofotane*, a woman from another family living in the husband family on a land foreign to her. Her being a stranger to a new land did not stop her from doing what she thinks is right to help her own family and other living in a similar situation as her. Thus, a *nofotane* in our Samoan social and cultural world must be recognised as a woman who has courage, needs, rights, and great abilities to help and to live life happily in her new family if she is given the opportunity and be looked after.

This is also the message that the Church needs to look into. The Church has seen the abuse of *nofotane* by the families they live in. They are families from our churches. If Jesus has recognised their faith and their ability, is not time for the churches to consider giving that recognition to these women from the level of the church?

Glossary

<i>Fafine-ese</i>	foreign woman
<i>Feagaiga</i>	covenant
<i>Fofoa-i-vaoese</i>	conceived in the foreign forest
<i>Nofotane</i>	woman married into their husband's family
<i>Tamaitai</i>	women
<i>Vao-ese</i>	foreign place

Bibliography

- Alex, Woloch. *The One Vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Anderson, Janice Capel. "Matthew: Gender and Reading." Pages 32-34 in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*. Edited by Amy Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- Augustin, Dr Kramer. *The Samoa Island*. Vol. 1, Translated by Theodore Verhaaren. Polynesian Press, Samoa House, Auckland New Zealand, 1994.
- Baffes, Melanie S. "Jesus and the Canaanite Woman: A Story of Reversal," *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 35, no. 2 (2011): 14-20.
- Basser Herbert W. and Marsha B. Cohen. *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions*. Boston, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 46, 2015.
- D.A. DeSilva. *Honour, patronage, kinship & purity: Unlocking New Testament culture*. Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Davies. W.D and Dale C. Allison Jr. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991.
- E. Cornelius. "A remarkable woman-the Canaanite woman in Matthew." *Journal of Ekklesiastikos Pharos*. (2011) 93(1): 34-40
- Ellsworth-Moran, Nadine. "Between Text and Sermon Mathew 12:21-28" Interpretation." *A Journal of Bible and Theology* 7 (2017): 313-320
- Fiorenza. E. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroads, 1988.
- France RT. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, 2007.
- Grant R. Osborne. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Matthew*. Vol. 1, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Guadiola-Sa'enz, Leticia A. "BORDERLESS WOMEN AND BODERLESS TEXT: A CULTURAL READING OF MATHEW 15:21-28" *Semeia* 78(1997): Vanderbilt University: 69-70
- Gullotta, Daniel N. "Among Dogs and Disciples: "An Examination of the Story of the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21-28) and the Question of the Gentile Mission within the Matthean Community" *Neotestamentica* 48.2 (2014): 325-340
- I-C. Shin, "Women's stories implying aspects of anti-Judaism with Christological depiction in Matthew". *HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* (2014) 70(1), Art. #2704:9. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i1.2704>

- J, Willitts. "The friendship of Matthew and Paul: A response to the recent trend in the interpretation of Matthew's Gospel". HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 65(1), Art. #151, 8 pages. (2009): 6-10
- J.J. Pilch, and Malina, B.J., eds. *Biblical social values and their meaning: A handbook*. Peabody. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993.
- Jackson, Glenna S. *Have Mercy on Me*. Sheffield Academic Press, New York, 2002.
- Keener, Craig S. *THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Cambridge, U.K. 2009.
- Latai, Latu. "From Open Fale to Mission Houses: Negotiating the Boundaries of "Domesticity" in Samoa." Pages 303-310 in *Divine Domesticities Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*. Edited by Hyaeweol Choi and Margret Jolly Australia: ANU Press, 2014.
- Leone, Salevao. THE GRACE OF GOD AND FOFOA-I-VAO-ESE: TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF MIGRATION FROM A SAMOAN MIGRANT IN NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE. A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Malua Theological College Apia in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Theology, 2020.
- Levine, Amy Jill. *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History*. New York: E. Mellen Press: 1988.
- Luz, Ulrich. *Studies in Matthew*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Cambridge, UK, 2005.
- Lyons-Pardue, Kara J. "A Syrophoenician Becomes a Canaanite: Jesus Exegetes the Canaanite Woman in Matthew", *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2019): 238-240
- MacDonald, Dennis R., ed. *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*. Harrisburg. PA Trinity Press International, 2001.
- Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean." Pages 23-49 in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Edited by Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Melani, Anae. *Fofoa-i-vao- 'ese: The Identity Journeys Of NZ-Born Samoans*. PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, 1998.
- Nofoaiga, Vaitusi. "Enacting Socio-rhetorical Interpretation in the Island Nation of Samoa in Oceania." Pages 57-70 in *Welcoming the Nations: International Socio-rhetorical Explorations*. Edited by Vernon K. Robbins and Roy R. Jeal. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020.
- Novak, David. *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws*. Toronto Studies in Theology, 14; New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983.

- Peter. Lemche, Niels. *The Canaanites and Their Land*. JSOTSup, 110; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Fortress Press, Minneapolis. 1990
- Puaina, Seumaninoa. *Beyond universalism: Unravelling the anonymous minor characters in Matthew 15:21-28*. Doctor of Philosophy Berkeley, California March 2016.
- Schipani, Daniel S “Transformation in the borderlands A study of Matthew 15:21-28” *Journal of Vision Fall* (2001): 14-20
- Setu, Faaniniva. *Fofofa-i-vao-ese*. Perfection Press, Ipswich, Australia, 2000.
- Tutoatasi, Toalima. *Feagaiga And Taxation: A historical critique of the Debate Between The CCCS and the Samoan Government concerning Taxation of Church Minister*. Master of Theology, Pacific Theological College Suva, 2019.
- W, Carter. *Matthew and the margins: A socio-political and religious reading*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Wainwright, Elaine Mary. *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel of Matthew*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter 1991.
- Winton Thomas, D. “KELEBH "Dog": Its Origin and Some Usages of It in the Old Testament”, VT10 (1960): 410-27-(414-15).