

Theology for the Dogs?

An intersectional and contextual analysis of interpretations of
Matthew 15:21-28 “The Canaanite Woman” in
Luthersk Kirketidende and Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad

Stine Kiil Saga

Veileder/supervisor: Dr. Theol Marianne Bjelland Kartzow



Yes, who is this Canaanite woman?

She is the woman down on the dirty road of Calcutta.

She is the mother of a political prisoner in Seoul.

She is the old garment factory worker in Hong Kong.

She is the mother whose daughter is a prostitute in Jakarta, Taipei or Chiang Mai.

She is also this survivor from Hiroshima.

The woman is the poorest among the poorest,

The oppressed among the oppressed,

She is at every corner in Asia.

And she fills the Third world.

- Kwok Pui-Lan in *Worshipping with Asian women*

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Preface

For years I've been involved in issues of poverty and justice and in my theological training this interest has resulted in a special concern for how power-relations and context affect the way we view ourselves, others and our interpretations. Thanks to the School of Religion and Theology (SoRaT) at University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN), I have adopted the tools I needed to articulate and address these concerns, for which I'm very grateful. South Africa is an inspiring place to be and by staying here I've constantly been challenged and reminded of perspectives I had never reflected on before. One of the most significant features by living here is that everything is colour and gendered coded. My previously invisible whiteness in a Norwegian context has suddenly started to exist as a colour. My privilege as a Norwegian woman makes me able to circumvent the gender-coded violence because I have the means to protect myself. These and many other experiences of staying here in Pietermaritzburg is a constant reminder to "ask the other question" and challenge my perceptions and perspectives.

This thesis could not have been written without the help and support of many people. First I want to thank my excellent supervisor Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, who is an inspiration to me. She has challenged, supported and encouraged my work and is a role model in the scholarly field of biblical studies and theology. I feel very lucky to have her as my supervisor. Second, I want to thank my friends at the Faculty of Theology, UiO and SoRaT, UKZN. They have asked those difficult, but indispensable questions about whose interest are being served by our theological work, and have shared both academic and social moments. Special thanks to Dr. Sarojini Nadar for suggesting the title, Anders Martinsen who read my work and made valuable comments, Kari Zakariassen who helped me with some last minute problems from Oslo and Gaute Granlund for stimulating discussions during our years of studying together. Finally I want to thank my family for always supporting me. Especially my father who has proof read my work, and my boyfriend Jabulani which has endured both the frustration and excitement during this process and tried to make me feel like "I got this".

Pietermaritzburg, 23rd November 2009

1. Introduction

“We should notice the way the woman convinces Jesus, by giving him right in his judgement of her. She accepts that she is like a dog [...]”¹

“She is a dispossessed woman who has awoken from her position as oppressed, and now is coming to confront the empire and demand the right to be treated as human.”²

As illustrated in the quotes above and in Kwok Pui-Lan’s words on the front page, the history of interpretation of the narrative of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28³ is marked by diverse and contested interpretations. Some detest perceiving the Canaanite woman as a dog, and for others this is a natural characterisation. I’ve chosen to call this thesis “Theology for The Dogs?” because I wanted to explore the interpretation of Matt. 15:21-28 in a Norwegian context and ask questions about the consequences of these interpretations and which interest they serve. In the Church of Norway, this text is in the lectionary and is therefore subject to interpretation and preaching every second year. This means that what ministers say about this text is communicated to thousands of church attendants in Norway. This applies for both those who come to Church regularly, but also the broader audience which comes for baptisms which are held almost every Sunday and attract many people. I will in this thesis do;

An intersectional and contextual analysis of the interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28 The Canaanite woman in *Luthersk Kirketidende* and *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*⁴. How do the analytical tools and the findings of the analysis challenge biblical interpretation in the Norwegian context?

¹ Morland, Kjell Arne, “Søndagsteksten 2.søndag i faste: 11. mars 2001”. *Luthersk Kirketidende*, no.4, (2001), 87.

“Vi bør også merke oss måten kvinnen overtaler Jesus på, ved å gi han rett i hans dom. Hun aksepterer at hun er som en hund [...]”.

² Leticia A. Guardiola-Sàenz, “Borderless Women and Borderless Texts: A Cultural Reading of Matthew 13:21-28”, *Semeia*, 78, 1997, 79.

³ Herby referred to as Matt 15:21-28.

⁴ Herby referred to as LK and NNK, except for headlines.

In the first part of the thesis I will give an account of the context of my research material before I delineate the analytical tools of intersectionality and contextual perspectives on theology which create the background for the analysis of LK and NNK. After presenting the analysis of ten articles from the two journals, I will discuss some of the issues coming from the analysis and bring in interpretations from other contexts which operate within an intersectional, contextual, as well as a feminist-postcolonial framework. Finally, we'll look into some challenges to a Norwegian context which emerges from the findings of the analysis. They will be discussed in relation to larger debates of the accountability of interpretation and interpreting texts in a particular and universal context.

I have chosen to include the Norwegian quotes in the footnotes because much of the language used in the articles is a very theologically laden language. Many of the expressions and words contain and connote references and meaning that an English translation does not preserve. In addition this language would also in many cases be alien to people that are 'outside' theological or Christian milieus in Norway.

1.1 The purpose of the thesis

Since the Bible is a sacred text for the Church; "interpretations of the Bible always matter."⁵ The Bible has played and still plays a key role in both women and men's oppression and liberation.⁶ This is the starting point for this thesis. The two journals that are objects of my analysis are prevalently read by ministers and often employed in their preparations for sermons. Their influence makes a critical investigation both interesting and important and to my knowledge there has not been a similar analysis before. The South African biblical Scholar, Jonathan A. Draper argues that the way the faith community understands biblical texts; "has a major impact on the wider community of which it is constituent, and therefore its interpretation is a matter of general social concern."⁷ Even though we don't have access

⁵ Jonathan A. Draper, "Old Scores and New Notes: Where and What is Contextual Exegesis in the New South Africa?" in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology- Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, edited by McGlory T. Speckman and Larry T. Kaufmann, 148-168. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, 153.

⁶ Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza *Sharing her word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998, 23.

⁷ Draper in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2001, 155.

to how ministers actually apply these articles⁸ they represent a public space for articulating theology and show us how the Bible is used over a period of ten years in a Norwegian context. The purpose of the thesis is therefore not only to analyse, but seek to be a contribution to how biblical interpretation and theology is done in Norway.

1.2 Methods and limitations

During my studies in South Africa I have adopted the term *doing theology* as a goal for my work. According to the Kenyan feminist theological scholar Musimbi Kanyoro, *doing theology* is “a conscious statement which describes the method of action-reflection out of which the theological reflections arise, rather than simply applying existing theological insights into present situations.”⁹ The notion of doing theology has its starting point in experiences, as liberation and feminist theologies have advocated for years. African feminist theology has for many years believed that theology is an expression of faith in response to experience.¹⁰ In the core of *doing theology* we find experiences, reflection and action which will continue in a spiral that never ends. In my case, my experiences of reading works by theological scholars which seems to have appeared in a “political vacuum”,¹¹ made me realise that this must change. Therefore I’ve chosen to analyse interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28 in Norwegian homiletically commentaries. I will not perform an exegesis on the text in Matthew because my aim is not to find out what the text “really” means, but to analyse the interpretations and look at what they construct. But by analysing the interpretations in LK and NNK and choosing to use specific analytic tools and bringing in other voices in chapter 5, I am not a neutral observer. Intersectionality is one of the primary tools to feminist and anti-racist theorist and contextual theology is one of the most important contributions from the south to the global north in the last 20-30 years. By asking the questions I’ve asked and because I am interested in the perspectives I’ve chosen, I want to make a contribution to the

⁸ That would be another research project.

⁹ Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, 1.

¹⁰ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Woman’s Theologies*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, 22.

¹¹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The ethics of biblical interpretation: Decentring biblical scholarship”. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107, (1988), 9.

way the narrative is interpreted. In the thesis I'm not just interested in the articles as texts, but also in the Norwegian discourse on how Biblical texts are used in this context.

1.3 My own position

As a white, young, privileged theological trained female from Norway, I am fully aware that my context influences the choices I make, the questions I ask and my perspectives. The Swedish theological scholar Sigurd Bergman defines context as “[...] the particular social, cultural and ecological situation within which a course of events take place.”¹² Contrary to how we often perceive culture, context is dynamic and mutable in its characteristics. It varies from place to place, but also within a specific geographic context: “In a single context are many people, experiences, regulations, institutions, sub-cultures, ideas and things. All the uncountable components of a context have roles they play in shaping people, society, friends, history, cultures and ideas.”¹³ This certainly also applies for philosophy, religious thoughts and beliefs of which is the context for this thesis. Social categories like our gender, ethnicity, religion and class mean that a black poor woman has a different context than a wealthy white man even though they share the same context as South Africans. Bergman argues that insights from sociology, makes it impossible to disregard the fact that each human means of expression and behaviour arises in social and cultural context.¹⁴ However, the two South African theological scholars Tinyiko Sam Malukeke and Sarojini Nadar asserts in their critique of the traditional intellectual that it's not necessarily enough to list our attributes, thinking that we're “off the hook”.

White and male intellectuals must do more than just declare their race and gender, they must elaborate on the precise and particular implications of their identity to the discourse including the reparative actions invoked thereby.¹⁵

¹² Sigurd Bergmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, 2.

¹³ Ngoetjana cited in M. P. Moila, “A critique of contextual theology” in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, edited by edited by McGlory T. Speckman and Larry T. Kaufmann, 87-105. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, 95.

¹⁴ Bergmann, *God in Context*, 2003, 9.

¹⁵ Tinyiko Sam Malukeke & Sarojini Nadar, “Alien fraudsters in the white academy: Agency in Gendered colour”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 120, (2004), 16.

Historically there might be reasons to stress the white male intellectuals to perform this task, but I would argue that this task is equally important for any intellectual; black, white, Indian, Norwegian or South African. For me, being educated at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo is one central context for my work. But at the same time I would probably never have chosen the perspectives I have chosen if I hadn't studied at University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. This makes me critical of my own tradition, and has given me resources to see things I wouldn't be able to see otherwise. At the same time I realise that we are often "implicated in that which one opposes".¹⁶ In this sense my identity is plural with the limitations and resources this contains. Obviously I cannot foresee all the ways of how my context will affect my work and I'm painfully aware of Judith Butlers question of; "how do we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose?"¹⁷ This is a difficult but crucial question to raise. Certainly we cannot circumvent our context because we are both consciously and unconsciously conditioned by it. The goal is not a total separation from one's preconditions, but to use this awareness constructively in order not to reproduce or enforce oppressive interpretations.

¹⁶ Theresa J. Hornsby, "The Annoying Woman: Biblical Scholarship after Judith Butler". *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, edited by Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St.Ville. 71-89. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 71.

¹⁷ Butler cited in Hornsby in St.Ville & Armour (ed.) *Bodily Citations*, 2006, 72.

2. The context of my research material

2.1 *The context of the articles*

The narrative of the Canaanite woman in Matt. 15:11-28 is a part of lectionary in the Church of Norway and ministers working there are bound to preach over this text every second year. However, there are years when one of the other reading texts substitutes Matt. 15:21-28 as a sermon text. That is why I do not have any articles from 2007.¹⁸ The writers of the articles in LK and NNK are mostly ministers in The Church of Norway. In LK there are four¹⁹ congregational ministers and one assistant professor. The writers in NNK are all ministers in The Church of Norway. In LK there are two male and three female writers, while NNK has three female and two male. In general the articles blend homiletic interests and exegetical work. Both journals provide assistance and inspiration to ministers. At the same time they're closely connected to academic institutions. The South African theologian Gerald West distinguishes between *trained readers* and *ordinary readers*.²⁰ If we consider the profile of the articles, we can describe the writers as trained readers but in a middle position between scholars and ordinary readers. The ambiguous position between two genres, academic and practical theology, is also reflected in the difference between LK and NNK. While LK tends to be more exegetical in its form, NNK is more poetic and narrative. This influences the interpretations; it is easier to find specific themes in LK since texts in NNK are more fluid and slippery in their form. This can be seen in the diagram below, where I've found more main themes in LK than NNK. Finally I would characterize the interpretations in LK and NNK as privileged biblical interpretation. The fact that they are written in Norway, which has been on first place in seven of the ten last years of UNs Human Development Index rapport, makes them theology from a privileged position.²¹ The interpreters have all received a minimum of six years of theological training at university level and all the articles are written

¹⁸ Den Norske kirke, "Gudstjenestereformens historikk". <http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=9241> (accessed 27.20.09). The lectionary is however changing due to the large reform in services currently going on in The Church of Norway.

¹⁹ There is no information in LK about where the author who wrote in 1999 worked at that time.

²⁰ Gerald West, *The academy of the poor*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003, x; 73.

What I refer to as "trained readers" (p.73), West also uses the terms "socially engaged biblical scholar" (p.x) and "organic intellectuals" (p.19).

²¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) "Human Development Reports", <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/> (accessed 19.10.09).

by what one in Norway would typically call *ethnic Norwegians*.²² In addition they all belong to the majority religion and confession in Norway. To give account of all these features of the articles and their writers is not an attempt to disqualify them from interpreting Matt. 15:21-28 because they are privileged. But it gives us some clues where they're "coming from" and later in the analysis we'll look at if we find a reflection on how this context affects the interpretations.

2.2 The context and history of *Luthersk Kirketidende* and *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*

The two journals LK and NNK originate from two different and sometimes opposing traditions and therefore have different profiles. LK was established in 1863 by Gisle Johnson, who took over as editor and changed the name of the journal from *Norsk Kirketidende* to *Luthersk Kirketidende* in order to emphasise the Lutheran aspect of the journal.²³ While Johnson was advocating an orthodox Lutheranism, he was also at the same time enforcing pietistic ideas.²⁴ Due to later arguments on the profile of the journal which led to a split in 1877 and brought forth *Luthersk Ugeskrift*, LK was supported by the organisation *Det Norske Lutherske Indremisjonsselskap* which is an organisation with roots in the pietistic tradition in Norway.²⁵ LK is published by *Luther Forlag* and with around 22 issues annually it is the larger journal of the two. It was distributed to 1470 subscribers in 2009, of which most are ministers in The Church of Norway.²⁶ Even though the editors are independent, most of them have connections to Norwegian School of Theology²⁷. Amongst the content one can find job advertisements, a range of theological articles, exegetical articles, book reviews and sermon inputs.

²² Knut Olav Åmås, "Negeren og Nordmannen", *Aftenposten*, <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kommentatorer/aamaas/article1520971.ece> (accessed 19.10.09). I realise that this is a highly problematic term, but it is a term that is used in Norway by the Norwegian Language Council as "a Norwegian living in Norway and belonging to the group of Norwegians which traditionally has lived in Norway".

²³ Haanes, Vidar L. *Hvad skal da dette blive for prester? Presteutdannelsen i spenningen mellom universitet og kirke, med vekt på modernitetens gjennombrudd i Norge, KIFO perspektiv no.5*. Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 1998, 220. *Norsk Kirketidende* was published first time in 1856

²⁴ Haanes, *Hvad skal da dette blive for prester?* 1998, 220.

²⁵ Haanes, *Hvad skal da dette blive for prester?* 1998, 221-222.

²⁶ Eyolf Berg, e-mail message to author, 06.11.2009.

²⁷ Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultet. Herby referred to as MF.

NNK is the journal of Det Praktisk-Teologisk Seminar²⁸ at The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo and was established in 1973. Before changed name to *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad* in the late 90s, it was called *Theology for the congregation*.²⁹ This was also when PTS took over the responsibility of publishing the journal. Before that, the journal had been published by volunteers and had its office at the Student Christian Federation.³⁰ NNK arose from groups in connection with the Student Christian Federation, which is known to be a left wing organisation and supportive of liberation movements. NNK is a much smaller journal with 500 subscribers and 8 issues per year.³¹ The editorial committee consists of people working at PTS and of theologians in the Oslo area and the editor are today normally employed at PTS.³² The content range from texts on theological topic to articles which aim to give “impulses to quality work with the Sunday service and creative handling of the sermon texts.”³³ They also have debates on church related material and book reviews.

2.3 Why Luthersk Kirketidende and Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad?

There are several reasons for why LK and NNK are relevant sources for this kind of analysis. Having in mind that LK and NNK have approximately 2000 subscribers in total, and that there are around 1300 ministers in the Church of Norway, we can assume that the two journals are being read and maybe used prevalent by many ministers in their sermon preparations.³⁴ This means that the articles have a wide reach amongst ministers. Since LK and NNK are two journals in close connection with people working in the Church of Norway, they represent Norwegian homiletic commentaries and should be a relevant place to find how the bible is interpreted in Norway. Considering that each issue of LK and NNK contains articles on the different sermon texts, they will tell us how the interpreters attempt to make the bible relevant.

²⁸ Det Praktisk-Teologiske seminar, “Lærested mellom universitet og kirke”. <http://www.tf.uio.no/praktikum/> (accessed 20.09.09). Det praktisk-teologiske seminar (PTS) is a free-standing educational institution for the church which is located under the Ministry of Culture and Church in Norway. Herby referred to as PTS.

²⁹ Marit Bunkholt, e-mail message to author, 05.10.2009. *Teologi for menigheten*

³⁰ Marit Bunkholt, e-mail message to author, 05.10.2009.

³¹ Det Praktisk-Teologiske seminar, “Nytt norsk kirkeblad”, <http://www.tf.uio.no/praktikum/publikasjoner/nnk.html> (accessed 20.09.09).

³² Marit Bunkholt, e-mail message to author, 05.10.2009.

³³ Det Praktisk-Teologiske seminar <http://www.tf.uio.no/praktikum/publikasjoner/nnk.html> (accessed 20.09.09).

³⁴ There are of course others than ministers in The Church of Norway who subscribe, but the majority comes from this group.

2.4 Why Matt. 15:21-28?

There are several reasons for why I chose the narrative of the Canaanite woman in Matthew as object for my enquiry;

- It is a puzzling story which intrigues me. Its reception history is problematic and this made me want to look at the text and its interpretations in my own context because interpretations of the Bible has and still shapes our society.
- The text touches onto many social categories like gender, religion, ethnicity, health and geography/nationality. The complexity of this text has many connotations to our contemporary context and needs a tool for dealing with this complexity. Intersectionality is a tool for dealing with the complexity of the society and can therefore, as I argue below, help us to discover the text's "destabilizing potential."³⁵
- Matt. 15:21-28 is one of the sermon-texts in the Church of Norway. Because what preachers and ministers say about this text is passed on to thousands of Norwegians, the interpretations of this text are important to investigate further.

³⁵ Hornsby in *Bodily Citations*, 2006, 83.

3. Analytical tools

I now turn to the analytical tools I will use in my investigation. These tools serve to make the foundation for the analysis of LK and NNK and determine the questions I'll be asking. They are chosen because their perspectives help us to sharpen our analysis by asking questions about how we use Matt. 15:21-28 in a Norwegian context. And as the analysis shows, they also reveal neglected areas of discussion.

3.1 Intersectionality

“Gender is never only gender, just as class never is only class. Our starting point is that gender transforms and is transformed when meeting class, ‘race’ and sexuality.”³⁶

Matt. 15:21-28 is a text which touches upon many social categories such as gender, ethnicity, religion and health. In analysing the interpretations of this text, we need a tool which will enable us to focus on how these categories are dealt with, constructed and interrelated. Feminist theology recognizes that what counts as the criteria for humanness was drawn exclusively from male experience in the Bible, but also in Biblical theology and in the Church.³⁷ In the same way white, western women have been challenged by Afro-American *womanists*, South American *mujeristas* and African and Asian female theologians to recognise that different forms of oppression are closely linked. Hence, relating categories as gender, ethnicity, race, class etc. is not new, but has been done by postcolonial theorists and feminist scholars for many years.³⁸ Still, looking at *intersectionality* as a separate critical tool can be useful in many ways.

³⁶ Paulina de los Reyes, & Diana Mulinari, *Interseksjonalitet: Kritiska reflektioner över(o)jämlighetens landskap*. Lund: Liber, 2005, 99.

³⁷ Susan Rakoczy, *In her name: Women doing theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004, 4.

³⁸ For example the postcolonial theologians R.S Sugirthajah and Fernando F. Segovia, postcolonial, African and Asian feminist theologians Musa W. Dube, and Kwok Pui-Lan, and writing from a north-American context the womanist Delores Williams and mujerista Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz.

3.1.1 What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality as a term was probably first introduced by Kimberlè Crenshaw and has led feminist scholars to suggest that “intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution of women’s studies so far.”³⁹ The Swedish professor Nina Lykke defines intersectionality as;

[...] a way of analyzing how socio-cultural hierarchies and power-relations interact and creates inclusion/exclusion around discursive and institutional constructed categories as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, nationality etc.⁴⁰

In her article “The complexity of intersectionality” Leslie McCall employs intersectionality to show how it’s not possible to understand black woman’s experiences from previous gender and race studies “because the former focused on white women and the latter on black men.”⁴¹ A way of analysing the complex nature of oppression and identity formation has been missing, and intersectionality aims to close that gap by making the intersections between and across the categories itself, the object of analysis. The focus on how categories interact instead of being in danger of putting one category above the rest can help us to understand the complexity of how they are constructed and influence each other. There are however different approaches to how categories relate. Lykke argues that we should use the term *intra-action* instead of *inter-action*, arguing that while *inter-action* describes something that happens between delimited categories, *intra-action* has to do with reciprocation between non-delimited phenomena’s which impregnates each other and transforms each other during the interaction.⁴² The approach of *intra-action* shows how intersectionality is not just about taking several categories into account, but about how they affect each other. As the feminist scholars Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama argue, intersectionality is relational:

³⁹ Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30, no.3, (2005), 1771.

⁴⁰ Nina Lykke, “Nye perspektiver på interseksjonalitet: Problemer och möjligheter”, *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, 2–3, (2005), 8.

⁴¹ McCall, *Signs*, 2005, 1780.

⁴² Lykke, *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, 2005, 8.

It foregrounds a richer and more complex ontology than approaches that attempt to reduce people to one category at a time. It also points to the need for multiple epistemologies. In particular, it indicates that fruitful knowledge production must treat social positions as relational.⁴³

3.1.2 The relationality of intersectionality

To view social positions as relational, mirrors and responds to the complex social reality which we are part of. And intersectionality has led to new insight in the hybrid, complex plurality that characterises the formation of subjects in contemporary society by linking social positions together.⁴⁴ On the basis of how feminist and anti-racist movements has been essentialist and ignored experiences of marginalised voices, Jennifer Nash says that “For intersectional theorists, marginalized subjects have an epistemic advantage, a particular perspective that scholars should consider, if not adapt, when crafting a normative vision of a just society.”⁴⁵ However, the relationality of social categories is not only valid for marginalised positions and it does not mean that marginalised subjects are the only ones who have an intersectional identity. In discussing the question of *who is intersectional?* Nash argues that;

[...] While intersectionality purports to describe multiple marginalizations (i.e. the spectre of the multiply-marginalized black woman that haunts intersectionality) and multiple privileges (i.e. the spectre of the (heterosexual) white man that haunts intersectionality), it neglects to describe the ways in which privilege and oppression intersect, informing each subject’s experiences.⁴⁶

I think Nash points to something important in her article, namely that by excluding the examination of identities that are privileged in different ways, we fail to take the intersectionality of oppression seriously. Like the analysis of the articles will show, categories as for instance gender and ethnicity affect the interpretations of the narrative of the Canaanite woman, but are not necessarily seen in relation to each other. In line with feminist theory in general Lykke further sees feminist theorizing, as we see in intersectionality, as a discursive process where “hegemonic discourses on gender and its

⁴³ Pamela Pattynama & Ann Phoenix, “Editorial: Intersectionality” in *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13, no. 3, (2006), 187.

⁴⁴ Lykke, *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, 2005, 14.

⁴⁵ Jennifer C. Nash, *Feminist Review*, 2008, 3.

⁴⁶ Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality" in *Feminist Review*, 89, (2008), 12.

intersection with social categories such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality etc, is renegotiated and theorised in new ways.”⁴⁷

3.1.3 The “destabilisation potential” of intersectionality and theological hermeneutics

Finally, intersectionality can also force us to disclose how we create and reproduce representations of others and ourselves. This brings us to the “destabilisation potential” of intersectionality as a way to “ask the other question”.⁴⁸ To ask the other question is always to challenge our questions and perspectives and ideally “forces us to see the reality with new eyes and so to ask questions to given knowledge about the social in the world we live in.”⁴⁹ We see similarities with Judith Butlers “queer politics” where she seeks to destabilise “the normative, hegemonic discourses and conceptions [...]”⁵⁰ By making aspects of socially acceptable practices appearing strange and unfamiliar, “queering” is a concept or action that opens possibilities rather than closing them.⁵¹ In the same way, intersectionality destabilise the social categories and how we view them. As the feminist Scholars de Los Reyes and Mulinari, points out;

[Intersectionality] asks questions about how power and difference is weaved into how we perceive whiteness, maleness, gender, heterosexuality and class, through re/producing new markers that makes the division between “us ” and “them” to social codes.⁵²

Intersectionality is in this way a deconstructive project. But at the same time it is reconstructive, because by enabling us to understand and analyse our complex reality it “can contribute to the development of new social and cultural strategies that turns against marginalisation, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia etc.”⁵³ In this way intersectionality is not only contributing to change the discourse on social categories and their intersection, but

⁴⁷ Lykke, *Kvinnvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 2005, 12.

⁴⁸ Mari Matsude cited in Nash, *Feminist Review*, 2008, 12.

⁴⁹ De Los Reyes & Mulinari *Interseksjonalitet*, 2005, 23.

⁵⁰ Todd Penner & Carloline Vander Stichele, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking beyond Thecla*. New York: T & T Clark, 2009, 23.

⁵¹ Penner & Stichele, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse*, 2009, 23.

⁵² De Los Reyes & Mulinari, *Interseksjonalitet*, 2005, 9.

⁵³ Lykke, *Kvinnvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 2005, 14.

also how they are constructed and taken for granted in production of knowledge. Even though the theory of intersectionality is not originally a theological concept, I would argue that it can be a useful tool in theological hermeneutics. By hermeneutics I mean “the process of conscious reflection on how interpretation is done and who does it.”⁵⁴ Hermeneutics is about analysing and removing obstacles of understanding and to reflect critically on ones own strategies to do this. And in analysing the interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28, intersectionality provides a way of looking at our strategies of dealing with social categories. Because of its relational approach to these categories, but also because of the destabilisation potential, intersectionality challenges our hermeneutical strategies.

3.1.4 Three approaches to intersectionality

In the analysis of LK and NNK, I ask how the articles deal with the social categories in their interpretation of Matt. 15:21-28. In her article, McCall distinguishes between three possible approaches within intersectionality based on their stance towards categories. The first approach is an *anticategorical approach* which seeks to deconstruct analytical categories because categories are too simplistic to capture the complexity of social life.⁵⁵ The second approach is called the *intracategorical approach* which tends to focus on particular neglected groups with marginalised identities.⁵⁶ Using marginalised subjects’ experiences, they want to demonstrate the inadequacy and dangers of categorisation but do not necessarily reject them.⁵⁷ The third approach is an *intercategorical approach* which seeks to “adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions.”⁵⁸ The starting point is the existing inequality among groups in the society and the *intercategorical approach* wants to use categories strategically in displaying the linkage between categories and inequality.⁵⁹ As McCall, I favour this methodological approach and find it most useful in my analysis of the Norwegian commentaries because different

⁵⁴ Claudia V. Camp, “Feminist Theological Hermeneutics: Canon and Christian Identity” in *Searching the Scriptures*, edited by Elisabeth Shcüssler Fiorenza, 154-171. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997, 154.

⁵⁵ Nash, *Feminist Review*, 89, 2008, 5.

⁵⁶ McCall, *Signs*, 2005, 1774; Nash, *Feminist Review*, 2008, 5.

⁵⁷ Nash, *Feminist Review*, 2008, 5.

⁵⁸ McCall, *The complexity of intersectionality*, 2005, 1773.

⁵⁹ Nash, *Feminist Review*, 2008, 6.

categories already are used in the articles. At the same time I recognize the importance of the *anticategorical* and *intracategorical* approaches. They both contribute to challenging how we construct reality and points to the inadequacy of categorisation which we must take into consideration.

3.2 Contextual theology

When investigating how the narrative of Matt. 15:21-28 is interpreted in a Norwegian context, the paradigm of *The birth of the reader*⁶⁰ creates a background for understanding how reading and interpreting was no longer seen as an objective activity where meaning exist in a social, political and geographical vacuum. In literary theory and in theological hermeneutics there has been a shift towards the relationship between the text and the reader. In his overview of what he calls “the interpretive crisis in hermeneutics”, South African biblical scholar Gerald West see how the reader is no longer seen as a passive acceptor of the text but as an active, even creative contributor in the interpretive process.⁶¹ But the interpretive crisis in biblical hermeneutics does not have to stop at a post modern nihilism, he argues. West maintains that the influence of pragmatism, which is more interested in the reading effects than finding the right meaning, has contributed to how the whole notion of hermeneutics has undergone revision and expansion as we will see in contextual theology.⁶² With the arising of several liberation hermeneutics, new ways of reading biblical texts has emerged. One of the questions relating to the headline is then; the birth of *which* reader?

⁶⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a meaning in this text? The bible, the reader and the morality of literary knowledge*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998, 27. *The birth of the reader* is also referred to as the *Reader's Liberation Movement, the Reader's Revolt* etc.

⁶¹ Gerald West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of liberation*. 2nd edition. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1994, 23.

⁶² West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of liberation*, 1994, 61.

3.2.1 All theology is contextual theology

In her observations about the discipline of Biblical theology, North-American Biblical scholar Phyllis Trible asserts that the guardians of the discipline have been “white, Christian males of Europe or North-American extraction, educated in seminaries, divinity schools, or theological faculties.”⁶³ This is also supported by German feminist scholar Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza in asserting that biblical scholarship and studies appears to have developed in a “political vacuum”.⁶⁴ She points to how:

Liberation theologies and critical theorists have made us aware of that all discourse represent political interests. Meaning is always politically constructed insofar as interpretation is located in social networks of power/knowledge relations that shape society.⁶⁵

The recognition of how all meanings, texts and interpretations emerge in places where existing power-relations both explicit and implicit condition the discourse is crucial in contextual theology as well as feminist and postcolonial theology. And this is exactly the point for contextual theology; all theology is contextual theology. As the Swedish theological scholar Per Frostin points out; the difference is whether one is conscious about how context influences different interpretations of the Christian faith or not.⁶⁶ There is no universal theology that operates independent of its context, and the contextual theology is very vocal in its critic of what Bergman calls “theology of eternity”.⁶⁷ By that he means a theology that claims validity at all places and at all times. He proposes that “The question could simply be whether modern theologians have worked as if there were no contexts with woman, the poor, nature, clouds, streets and children.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Phyllis Trible, “Five loads and two fishes: Feminist hermeneutics and Biblical theology”, *Theological Studies*, 50, (1989), 285.

⁶⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The ethics of biblical interpretation: Decentering biblical scholarship”. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107, (1988), 9.

⁶⁵ Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston, Mass: Beacon, 1992, 3.

⁶⁶ Frostin cited in Bergmann, *God in context*, 2003, 5.

⁶⁷ Bergmann, *God in Context* 2003, 4-5.

⁶⁸ Bergmann, *God in Context*, 2003, 5.

3.2.2 The question of key interlocutors

In rethinking contextual theology in South-Africa, James Cochrane states that *contextual theology* must be something more than asserting that all theology is contextual theology. He asks “What then specifies the meaning of *contextual theology*?”⁶⁹ When we discuss contextual theology, it can be useful to differentiate between *local theology* and *contextual theology*. To state that all theology is contextual theology is to recognise the interpretations of the Christian faith which occurs in a particular place. *Contextual theology*, then, is being conscious of the importance of context, as explained above.⁷⁰ In answering his own question above, Cochrane concludes that *contextual theology* is to problematise the question of key interlocutors.⁷¹ He then introduces the “other” as a central term and asserts that *contextual theology* at least must be that it is the “others” context, as much as one’s own, that counts.⁷² While who is the “other” may be changing, Cochrane emphasises that there will always be someone’s voice that is not been heard; [...] it will point to those people in society who are not in power, who do not wield its wealth, whose interests are suppressed, who are oppressed – in some senses, the “other” par excellence.”⁷³ This change in epistemology, as a new way of dealing with questions related to the origin, structure, methods and validity of knowledge, comes from the different liberation movements such as liberation theology in Latin America, Black theology in the United States and South Africa and the different facets of feminist theology and so-called third world theology.⁷⁴ As West points out, this new methodology is different from traditional Western theology because the experience of oppression and the struggle for liberation is fundamental.⁷⁵ Consequently, this epistemological choice has consequences for the perception of the social reality because it really turns the key interlocutors of theology upside down. The experience of how the story of the powerful has dominated in theological scholarship enforces the claim that “European scholars tended to replicate their own political and cultural identity through their scholarship, particularly by focusing on historical males in their connections to

⁶⁹ Cochrane, James R. “Questioning Contextual Theology.” In *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology- Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, edited by McGlory T. Speckman and Larry T. Kaufmann, 67-86. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, 73. (Authors italics).

⁷⁰ Schreiter cited in Bergmann, *God in context*, 2003, 5.

⁷¹ Cochrane in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2006, 74.

⁷² Cochrane in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2006, 74.

⁷³ Cochrane in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2006, 74-75.

⁷⁴ West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 1994, 84.

⁷⁵ West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 1994, 85.

institutions.”⁷⁶ The question of key interlocutors then becomes a question of the task of problem-formulation so that the problems of the “other” and the marginalised becomes the problem for academic study; “too many academic theologians answer questions no one has put.”⁷⁷ This brings us back to the task of *doing theology* where the theological reflections arise from a method of action-reflection.⁷⁸ Theology and its hermeneutics must be grounded in experiences and reflection around those experiences.

3.2.3 Contextual theology and the analysis

Speaking from the South African apartheid context, West shows how experiences of oppression and daily life have consequences for the theological task.

The category of struggle becomes an important hermeneutical factor not only in one’s reading of his or her history and culture but also in one’s own understanding of the history, nature, ideology, and agenda of the biblical texts. In other words, a biblical hermeneutics of liberation requires accountability to and solidarity with the present black struggle for liberation.⁷⁹

Accountability to and solidarity with “the Other” is an indispensable for contextual theology. This is the reason why we will investigate which themes that are the main focus of the articles when they read the narrative of the Canaanite woman. Assessing that everyone speaks from their particular context and perspectives, North-American feminist biblical scholar Mary Ann Tolbert, reminds us that; “What differentiates these perspectives is that in particular cultural and historical period some ‘ingredients’ are deemed more worthy of trust, power, and prestige than others.”⁸⁰ Some ingredients are deemed more worthy and people who embody any of these valued traits are privileged. Some examples are white, male, wealthy, first world, healthy, heterosexual, Christian, middle- to upper class. Because of the privileged of some people over others, I would argue that interpretations from a privileged position need to begin with a reflection on one’s own experiences and “socio-political

⁷⁶ Penner & Stichele, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse*, 2009, 13.

⁷⁷ Asian theologian Kosuke Koyama cited in Bergmann, *God in Context*, 2003, 70.

⁷⁸ Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics*, 2002, 1.

⁷⁹ West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 1994, 91.

⁸⁰ Tolbert, Mary Ann, “The Politics and Poetics of Location.” In *Reading from this place. Vol 2. Social location and biblical interpretation in global perspectives*, edited by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, 305-317. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, 312.

religious location”.⁸¹ In the words of Shüssler Fiorenza; “Intellectual neutrality is not possible in a world of historical exploitation and oppression.”⁸² And because the articles are written in a privileged context, we also need to investigate if they reflect on their own context and role in the task of interpretation.

3.4 The questions used in the analysis

Building on these analytical tools I will ask the following questions in my investigation of LK and NNK.

- What are the main focuses in the articles?
- How do the articles deal with social categories?
- How do the articles apply the text to contemporary context and do they reflect on how their context influences their interpretations?

⁸¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing her word*, 1998, 77.

⁸² Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing her word*, 1998, 78.

4. Analysis of *Luthersk Kirketidende* and *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*

Looking at a possible change or development in the interpretations over the years, I didn't find any substantial difference in the interpretations from the first article in 1999 to the latest in 2009. This may probably have more to do with the theological profile of the writers rather than the year which the article is written. I would claim that the fact that there are no significant developments in this time span is alarming. It is no secret that the world has experienced some major changes and developments the last ten years which have influenced our local and global context immensely. Some examples are events like 9/11 with a subsequent war on terror, the increasingly scepticism towards Muslims and the challenge of climate change. In the Norwegian context we are of course influenced by the issues concerning the rest of the world, but we also have our own issues. Such as a growing support to parties with xenophobic tendencies and an increasing number of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers to mention a few. How can it be that when reading the articles, it seems like the world has stood still for a decade? Bearing this in mind, I will not focus on the time of writing in this analysis. In the analysis I have investigated the themes that were prevalently addressed and will therefore not deal with all the perspectives in the articles. The themes are chosen because half or more of the articles address them. The social categories are chosen because they are addressed by the articles, in one way or the other.

Above I argued that we cannot separate our interpretations, whether public or private, from our reading strategies and intentional applications. A close study revealed that this is a valid statement regarding our articles. The public and private merge, making the analysis of the articles complex. On the one hand this complicates my analysis because it makes hard to discern where their exegetical work ends and their contemporary motives start and vice versa. On the other hand, this simply reinforces my argument. Our exegetical work will always be affected by our context. Because of the dynamics between the historical and the contemporary, I have chosen to separate how the categories are dealt with in the historical

context when I look at the interpreter's context in section 4.2 on social categories. The division is a way to help us to identify if and how the categories are treated differently in the historical and contemporary context. In section 4.1 on themes, I did not find such a distinction relevant because the aim is to look at the themes as a whole. I will however point to their differences if I find it relevant.

4.1 What are the main focuses in the articles?

<u>Themes</u>	<u>LK</u>	<u>NNK</u>
Mission	2009, 2005, 2003, 2001, 1999	2001
Faith	2009, 2005, 2001, 1999	2001, 1999
Struggle	2005, 2001, 1999	2009, 2005, 2003, 1999
Prayer	2009, 2003, 2001, 1999	1999

4.1.1 Mission

A central theme in the interpretations of LK is mission, which is being discussed in all of the articles in LK and one out of five in NNK.⁸³ There are different ways in which the theme is treated and it's addressed both in the historical context and in the contemporary context. Firstly the text is used as the start and reason for mission and especially mission to Israel in the historical context.⁸⁴ "Jesus came foremost to save his own people. First after the ascension, the gospel should be spread to all people."⁸⁵ The articles also focus on how the separation between Jews and gentiles is repealed after the resurrection and The Great Commission.⁸⁶ "The distinction between Jews and Gentiles is repealed after the resurrection when the disciples are given the task to make disciples of all nations."⁸⁷ The text, then, is placed in a setting of Gods redemptive plan. Finally, some of the articles view the woman as

⁸³ LK 2009; LK 2005; LK 2003; LK 2001; LK 1999; NNK 2001. In the following I will only refer to the journals as LK and NNK in the notes, except for quotes, where I'll give a full reference.

⁸⁴ LK 2005, 64; LK 2003, 84; LK 2001, 86; LK 1999, 61.

⁸⁵ Birgit Agnete Lockertsen, "Søndagsteksten 2.søndag i faste: 16. mars 2003". *Luthersk Kirketidende*, no.4, (2003), 84. "Jesus kom i første rekke for å frelse sitt eget folk. Først etter himmelfarten, skulle evangeliet spres ut til alle folkeslag."

⁸⁶ LK 2009, 48; LK 2005, 64; LK 2003, 84; LK 1999, 61.

⁸⁷ Frode Granerud, "Søndagsteksten 2.søndag i faste: 8.mars 2009". *Luthersk Kirketidende*, no.2, (2009), 48. "Skillet mellom jøder og hedninger blir opphevet etter Jesu oppstandelse; da gir han disiplene I oppdrag å gjøre alle folkeslag til disipler."

a tool or a testing project, used to prepare mission to all the people;⁸⁸ “It is interesting that Jesus on his own initiative comes into the land of gentiles. Is it a ‘testing project’ and anticipation on his universal task?”⁸⁹ Matt. 15:21-28 is also perceived as a text which informs the current context to ground the unique position of Israel. “Our text gives us a bold perspective on salvation history. It can ground both the mission to Israel and mission to the gentiles.”⁹⁰ In the analysis I find a correlation between the articles that address mission as a theme and those who are uncritical of Jesus characterizing of the woman as a dog.⁹¹ Maybe being critical towards Jesus, makes it difficult to use the text to ground mission? If we criticise Jesus, we indirectly criticise other aspects in the text such as the exclusivity of the Jews and the ideology of mission. The strong focus on mission often rules out any other theme that might be relevant in the passage. When mission is addressed, it often silences categories like ethnicity, religion, gender and the woman’s marginalisation that are present in the text in order to legitimise mission.

4.1.2 Faith

Four of five interpreters in LK and two in NNK, point to faith as central theme in our text.⁹² The woman as a role model for faith is the main focus when they write about faith; “The Canaanite woman is a role model. Not just because she had guts and go-ahead spirit to struggle with God and humans and win, but because of her belief in Jesus` divine power.”⁹³ As in this quote, some interpret this as a sign religious piety.⁹⁴ Others acknowledge her as someone who never gives up and therefore is a role model for a great and struggling faith.⁹⁵ One article that presents the woman as a role model, specifies that this is a faith that does not settle for less and a faith which is more than dogmatic sentences; “Faith is action, trying,

⁸⁸ LK 2005, 63, 65; LK 2001, 86.

⁸⁹ Martin Synnes, “Søndagsteksten 2.søndag i faste: 20. februar”. *Luthersk Kirketidende*, no.3, (2005), 63. “Det er påfallende at Jesu på eget initiativ beveger seg et godt stykke inn i hedensk landområde. Et overlatt ”prøveprosjekt” og en foregripelse av hans universelle oppdrag?”

⁹⁰ Synnes, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2005, 64. “Vår tekst gir oss et dristig frelseshistorisk perspektiv på tingene. Den kan begrunne både Israelsmisjonen og misjonen til folkene.”

⁹¹ LK 2009; LK 2005; LK 2003; LK 1999, NNK 2001.

⁹² LK 2009; LK 2005; LK 2001; LK 1999; NNK 2001; NNK 1999.

⁹³ Gry Friis Eriksen, “2.søndag i faste, 16.mars 2003”. *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, no.1, (2001), 35. “Den kanaaneiske kvinnen blir et forbilde. Ikke bare fordi hun hadde guts og pågangsmot for å kjempe Gud og menneske og vinne, men fordi hennes tro på Jesu guddommelig makt [...]”

⁹⁴ LK 2001, 35, LK 1999, 61.

⁹⁵ LK 2005, 65; LK 2001, 85, 87; NNK 2001, 35.

wishing and dreaming.”⁹⁶ The articles also emphasises Jesus’ acknowledgment of her faith as a gentile and that he finds great faith outside of Israel.⁹⁷ I wish to further investigate if the emphasis on the woman’s faith circumvents Jesus’ harsh response in the text and thus neglects or avoids the more troubling aspects of the text. For example; ”On my part, my opinion is that Jesus tests the woman to give her the possibility to use her faith.”⁹⁸ It seems like it’s difficult for many articles to face that Jesus calls the woman a dog because this complicates the traditional image of him. In addition, I would argue that the focus on the woman’s faith does not take her life into account because they theologise her marginalisation by focusing on her faith and by ignoring aspects like sexism and discrimination.

4.1.3 Struggle

Many of the articles discuss how the woman in particular and human beings` in general, struggle with life and with God; ”We struggle with our life, and therefore we also struggle with God.”⁹⁹ This is a theme in seven of the articles¹⁰⁰, and it’s often linked to the struggle of believing. ”This struggle with life, which is believing, is not a battle between those who gets chaos and darkness to close and the God who is eternal and omnipotence [...] No, God is so close to chaos that he lets himself be affected and changed by it.”¹⁰¹ As we see in this quote and in other articles, the struggle has to do with our images of God.¹⁰² The articles question both the role of Jesus, but also how God is portrayed in the text. For example

⁹⁶ Marit Bunkholt, ”9 Spørsmål og 1 sannhet: 2. Søndag i faste, 28. februar”. *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, no. 1, (1999), 27. ”Tro er handling, forsøk, ønsker og drømmer.”

⁹⁷ LK 2009, 48; LK 2005, 63-65; LK 2001, 87, 85.

⁹⁸ Granerud, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2009, 48. ”For min del oppfatter jeg det slik at Jesus stiller kvinnen på prøve, for å gi henne en mulighet til å ta troen sin i bruk.”

⁹⁹ Tor B. Jørgensen, ”Kom i hu din barmhjertighet: 2.søndag i faste, 20.februar 2005”. *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, no.1, (2005), 37. ”Vi kjemper med livet, derfor kjemper vi også med Gud.”

¹⁰⁰ LK 2006; LK 2001; LK 1999; NNK 2009; NNK 2005; NNK 2003; NNK 1999.

¹⁰¹ Hans Kristian Solbu, ”2.søndag i faste, 16.mars 2003”. *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, no.1, (2003), 43. ”Den livskamp det er å tru, er ikkje ein kamp mellom den eller dei som av og til får kaos og mørke litt for tett innpå seg og ein gud som er den evige og uforanderlege [...] Nei, Gud er sjølv så tett innpå kaos at han lar seg prege og forandre av det.”

¹⁰² LK 2003, 93; NNK 2005, 37; NNK 2003, 43; NNK 1999, 28.

“[...] In this text we meet an experience of God and human beings that we do not recognize. God is troublesome and difficult. Humans get what they want. What we know best, is the good God and the human being that faces resistance and does not get what she wants.”¹⁰³

4.1.4 Prayer

The issue of prayer is a theme in five articles;¹⁰⁴ “The other theme of this text is faith and prayer. A person, even a woman and a gentile, is kept as a role model for faith (trust) and endurance in prayer, who doesn’t give up and is answered.”¹⁰⁵ Several articles stress the issue of how to deal with unanswered prayers.¹⁰⁶ Here it seems important for the interpreters to enhance that God is with us even if it does not feel like it; “For a child of God, God is never far away. It can seem like he is far away, but he is never absent.”¹⁰⁷ They also request endurance in prayer. “The woman teaches us firstly to always look for Gods yes where there seems to be a no.”¹⁰⁸ As in the theme of the woman’s faith, she is also here seen as a role model because she does not give up asking Jesus. One article addresses the issue of a theology of prosperity and criticise this theology by stating that being a Christian does not solve all our problems.¹⁰⁹ This can be an important reminder in a society where many are relatively prosperous. Because when we deal with the issue of prayers, we need to reflect over the fact that for many people around the world it must seem like we’ve had all our prayers answered. We also know that different prosperity theologies are growing fast in many third-world countries and to use this text uncritical, claiming that it was the Canaanite woman’s faith that gave her the help she needed, can be problematic in this context.

¹⁰³ Bunkholt, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 1999, 28. “Vi møter både en Gud og en menneskelig erfaring som er ukjent for oss i denne teksten. Gud er vrang og vanskelig. Mennesket får det det ønsker seg. Vi kjenner vel best til den gode Gud og menneske som møter motgang og ikke får det det ønsker seg.”

¹⁰⁴ LK 2009; LK 2003; LK 2001; LK 1999; NNK 1999.

¹⁰⁵ Gunnvor J. Hovland, “Søndagsteksten 2.søndag i faste: 28. februar 1999”. *Luthersk Kirketidende*, no. 3, (1999), 61. “Det andre temaet er tro og bønn. En person – ja endog til en kvinne, en hedning – blir holdt fram som forbilde på tro (tillit) og utholdende bønn, som ikke gir opp, og til slutt blir bønnhørt.”

¹⁰⁶ LK 2009, 49; LK 2003, 86.

¹⁰⁷ Granerud, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2009, 49. “For en som er Guds barn, er Gud aldri langt borte. Han kan virke langt borte, men han er aldri langt borte.”

¹⁰⁸ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2001, 87. “Kvinnen lærer oss for det første å alltid se etter Guds ja bak det som ser ut som et nei.”

¹⁰⁹ LK 2001, 85.

4.2 How do the articles deal with social categories?

	Gender		Ethniscity		Religion		Health	
	LK	NNK	LK	NNK	LK	NNK	LK	NKK
2009		x	X	X	x	x		
2005			X	X	x	x	x	x
2003	x		X		x		x	
2001	x	x		X	x	x		
1999	x	x	X		x		x	

In addition to the themes in section 4.1, I want to use social categories as an analytical tool to analyse how the articles deal with social categories, both in the historical and contemporary context. When I analyse the categories in the articles, I recognise that there are many other categories than those listed here that one could investigate such as sexual orientation, class and age/generation, to mention a few. The categories investigated here however are the categories I found in LK and NNK. Even though intersectionality is not a social category in itself, it is placed here because it deals with the intersection of the categories.

4.2.1 Theorizing modern concepts of categories in ancient texts

When looking at social categories such as ethnicity and religion, Denise K. Buell reminds us to be careful in applying our modern concepts on early Christian society and conceptualisation.

We have failed to recognise the importance and functions of ethnic reasoning in early Christian self-definition largely because of the way dominant *modern* ideas about race inform our approaches to and presuppositions about the meanings of race, ethnicity, and religion (including their possible relationships).¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Denise Kimber Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition", *Harvard Theological Review* 94, 4, (2001), 450.

In her argument, Buell shows that contrary to what many scholars has claimed, ethnicity and race have in fact been central to formulations of early Christian self-definition in several ways.¹¹¹ Firstly ancient ideas about race and ethnicity were valuable for Christians in defining what being Christian was by using ethnical reasoning.¹¹² Secondly, Buell asserts that modern ideas of race, ethnicity and religion have shaped our understandings of “early Christian self-definition”, but that this has led to the belief that Christians looked at race as irrelevant and something to be transcended.¹¹³ Contrary to modern notions of race as biological and natural, race was in the Roman-period characterised by religious practice. Race/ethnicity was seen as a mutable and dynamic category which one could change by for example becoming Christian.¹¹⁴ I recognize the challenges in using modern concepts of social categories, especially ethnicity and religion as Buell addresses. One consequence of Buell’s recognition is the distinction I’ve made between the historical context and interpreter’s context. Even though race/ethnicity was characterised by religious practise in early Christianity, so that it would not necessarily give any meaning in treating them separately, I’ve chosen to separate them as two analytical categories in my analysis. Firstly, because I consider them as separated categories today and secondly because the articles use both the terms “Canaanite” and “Gentile”.

4.2.2 Ethnicity

The ethnicity of the woman is addressed by eight of the articles and is a predominant factor in the interpretations.

The historical context:

Several of the articles mention the associations to the Old Testament given by the woman being a Canaanite. In fact, her ethnicity as a Canaanite is used as the most important reason for why Jesus is reluctant to heal her daughter. It is even used in pointing out the woman as a role model in accepting Gods judgement; “”We should notice the way the woman convinces Jesus, by giving him right in his judgement of her. She accepts that she is like a dog

¹¹¹ Buell, *HTR*, 2001, 449.

¹¹² Buell, *HTR*, 2001, 449.

¹¹³ Buell, *HTR*, 2001, 449.

¹¹⁴ Buell, *HTR*, 2001, 467.

[...]“¹¹⁵ What kind of judgement is the interpreter writing about? It seems like the judgement is that she has the wrong ethnicity, and the interpreter suggests that the Canaanite woman accepts that she should be discriminated against. The tendency in the articles is that discrimination based on ethnicity is legitimised because of a greater good, namely mission to Jews and later to the gentiles.

The contemporary context:

Ethnicity in the interpreter’s context is found in three of the articles. Two articles criticises the ethnocentrism in Christianity and the Church in their articles¹¹⁶, stating that “a congregation is not built on the basis of ethnicity, but on the basis of our faith.”¹¹⁷ Another links it to how Jesus is a role model because he overcomes ethnic boundaries and challenges us to do the same in our context.¹¹⁸ Apart from this article, the articles do not address how texts like this can be used to legitimise discrimination or ethnic discrimination today. Neither do they address issues like ethnic discrimination, the multicultural Norway or the growth of right-wing xenophobic parties in Europe. I would argue that they’re not conscious of ethnicity as a contemporary issue and limit their critique of ethnocentrism to the Church.

4.2.3 Religion

Religion is also a prevalent category in eight articles.¹¹⁹ By religion the articles are more concerned with religious feelings and experiences than religion as a social phenomenon.

The historical context:

Manny articles use her religion as explanation for why she is not given help.¹²⁰ One example is the article which argues that Jesus answer “I am not sent to...” marks an important boundary and is “[...] a negative rejection to the woman, but a positive confirmation of Gods

¹¹⁵ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2001, 86. “Vi bør også merke oss måten kvinnen overtaler Jesus på, ved å gi han rett i hans dom.”

¹¹⁶ NNK 2009, 11; NNK 2001, 36.

¹¹⁷ Eriksen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2001, 36. “Menighet bygges ikke ut fra etnisk tilhørighet, men ut fra tro.”

¹¹⁸ LK 2003, 84-85.

¹¹⁹ LK 2009; LK 2005; LK 2003; LK 2001; LK 1999; NNK 2009; NNK 2005; NNK 2001.

¹²⁰ LK 2009, 48; LK 2005, 64; LK 2003, 84; LK 1999, 61.

faithfulness to Israel.”¹²¹ Two articles emphasises how the woman as a gentile asking Jesus for help, makes it an even bigger accomplishment; “Firstly, she as a gentile must dare to open the door to one of the most mentioned leaders of the Jews.”¹²² Just as the case of ethnicity, the tendency is that discrimination based on the woman’s religion is legitimised for the sake of Jesus ministry to the Jews. However, some points to how this forces Jesus to acknowledge faith outside Israel¹²³ and criticising him of rejecting the woman; “It looks like he is himself a victim of the same theories of purity that he just wanted to do away with. Because he does not want to relate to *the gentiles, the others, the outsiders.*”¹²⁴

The contemporary context:

Relatively many of the articles address religion in the current context. One article focuses especially on mission and that we should follow the example of the Canaanite woman. “Imagine if all those who feel like they’re outside the Christian fellowship could dare to follow her.”¹²⁵ “To let go of Gods people, Israel, would mean to lay a great deal of our salvation history in the bible in the dark. Jesus` testing project in our passage has gone further, also in our country and our municipality! What does Jesus as Gods Messiah mean in out life situations?”¹²⁶ We don’t see any reference to other religions or the multi-religious society and world we live in. One article do touch upon the new religious movements; “She crosses a religious border when she sees a religious leader in an other religion [...] Very many members in the church of Norway has got ‘their own faith’ and would probably not have any difficulties in seeking a religious person in another setting for the sake of their sick child.”¹²⁷ Similar to the way ethnicity is treated in the contemporary context, aspects like other

¹²¹ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2005, 64. “Jeg er sendt til....” [...] betyr negativ avisning til kvinnen, men positiv bekreftelse av Guds trofasthet til Israel.”

¹²² Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende* 2001, 85. “For det første må hun som er hedning våge å åpne døren inn til en av jødernes mest omtalte ledere.”; LK 1999.

¹²³ NNK 2009, 11.

¹²⁴ Jørgensen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2005, 37. “Det ser ut som han selv er offer for de samme renhetsteoriene som han nettopp har tatt et oppgjør med. For han vil ikke forhold seg til *hedningene, de andre, de utenfor.*”

¹²⁵ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2001, 85. “Tenk om alle som i dag føler seg utenfor den gode kristne krets kunne våge å følge henne [den kanaaneiske kvinnen]!”

¹²⁶ Synnes, *Luthersk Kirketidende* 2005, 65.

“Å gi slipp på Guds folk Israel vil bety å mørklegge en betydelig del av frelseshistorien i vår bibel. Jesu ‘prøveprosjekt’ i vår tekst har imidlertid gått videre, også i vårt land og i vår kommune. Hva innebærer Jesu sendelse som Guds Messias i vår livssituasjon?”

¹²⁷ Hovland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 1999, 60. “Hun bryter en religiøs grense når hun oppsøker en religiøs leder i en annen religion [...]. Svært mange som tilhører De Den norske kirke har “sin egen tro” og ville antakeligvis heller ikke opplevd det så vanskelig å oppsøke en religiøs personlighet i et annen sammenheng for sitt barns skyld.”

religions, religion dialog and conflict, anti-Semitism and anti-Islam movements are not discussed. When we address religion, we should also be careful not to make stereotypical portraits of Jews, which the Chinese theologian Kwok-Pui Lan points out in an Asian context; "Missionaries highlighted Jesus care for woman in need. This can be anti-Jewish when Jesus attitudes toward woman, is contrasted with Judaism."¹²⁸ Statements like "The woman and her daughter had from the start wrong gender, wrong, nationality, wrong religion, wrong decease, to be included. All off this makes them impure for a Jewish man."¹²⁹, could be read as a stereotypical portrait of Jews.

4.2.4 Gender

When it comes to gender, it is not mentioned as a category by more than six articles, three in LK and three in NNK.¹³⁰ But there are big differences in how it's addressed in the different articles.

The historical context:

Gender is used in some of the articles as a way of identifying with the woman from the interpreters point of view. Statements like "It is easy to identify with the Canaanite woman. As a mother I would go far to help my sick child"¹³¹ or identifying her as "The struggling mother"¹³² illustrates this; the woman is very quickly identified as a mother. If the main character was a man, would he be identified as a father? Many of the articles mention the Roman centurion in Matt. 8:5-13 which got his servant healed and was in a similar position as the Canaanite woman, but none seems to suggest that gender could be a factor of importance in why his servant got healed right away.¹³³ Other articles points to the women's position in 1st century Palestine and makes it relevant in the historical context.¹³⁴ "Secondly,

¹²⁸ Kwok Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the non-biblical world*. Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1995, 78.

¹²⁹ Hovland, *Luthersk Kirketidende* 1999 p.60 "Kvinnen og datteren hadde i utgangspunktet feil kjønn, feil nasjonalitet, feil religion, feil sykdom for å være med i det gode selskap. Alt dette gjør dem urene for en jødisk mann."

¹³⁰ LK 2003; LK 2001; LK 1999; NNK 2009; NNK 2001; NNK 1999.

I do not consider using the phrase "the Canaanite woman" as touching upon gender as a category.

¹³¹ Hovland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 1999, 60. "Det er forholdsvis lett å identifisere seg med den kanaaneiske kvinnen. Som mor ville jeg gå langt for å hjelpe mitt eget syke barn."

¹³² Jørgensen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2005, 37. "En kjempende mor."

¹³³ LK 2009, 48; LK 2005, 64; LK 2001, 85; LK 1999, 61.

¹³⁴ LK 2003, 84; LK 2001, 85.

she as an anonymous woman had to approach a distinguished man with her problem. She didn't even have a son to pray for, just a daughter."¹³⁵ But what if the woman was a widow? Or she was a slave? From what we know about how families or households were constructed along gender and power imbued lines in the Greek-roman world of 1st century Palestine,¹³⁶ where there could be many factors which would make the woman and her daughter extremely marginal.

The contemporary context:

The article which has gender issues as the main theme is concerned why it is only legitimate to talk about gender issues on the women's day at 8th of March; "Why is it only on this day which it is legitimate and easy to talk about women's experiences, gender and equality? These themes can and should be on the agenda each Sunday when we have a service, and shouldn't be separated on the days with special themes."¹³⁷ The interpreter asks why we often view the text about the Canaanite woman as a text that tells us about how it is to be a woman. In contrary we talk about how it is to be human in general when we have texts about men.¹³⁸ In the two other articles, gender is treated as one of several themes. The text is interpreted as a challenge to us because it reminds of the groups and people who have been excluded in the history of our Church; "Also in this field, the history of many women contains a lot of struggle and many ignored cries."¹³⁹ We also find a more essentialist understanding of gender; "A sermon about this, about the strong, believing and persevering women will always be a hit!"¹⁴⁰ It seems like most of the articles consider gender as a relevant factor in the historical context, but not today. "Luckily today, gender does not make

¹³⁵ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2001, 85. "For det andre må hun som anonym kvinne våge seg inn til en ansett mann med sitt problem. Hun hadde ikke engang en sønn å be for, bare en datter."

¹³⁶ Jeremy Punt, "All in the family? The social location of New Testament households and Christian claims on 'traditional family values'", 2009, 8.

¹³⁷ Valborg Orset Stene, "Kvinnetekst på kvinnedagen: 2. søndag i faste, 8.mars 2009". *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad, no.2*, (2009), 9. "Hvorfor er det bare på denne dagen det er legitimt/lettest å snakke om kvinneerfaringer, kjønn og likeverd? Disse temaene bør være på dagsorden hver søndag vi feirer gudstjeneste, det bør ikke være atskilt til de spesielle temamessene."

¹³⁸ Stene, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2009, 8. "Finally it is going to be about how it is to be a woman. (Contrary to reading other bible texts that normally is about men, then we usually talk about how it is to be a human being.); "Endelig skal det handle om hvordan det er å være kvinne. (I motsetning til når vi leser andre bibeltekster som stort sett handler om menn, da bruker vi å snakke generelt om hvordan det er å være menneske.)".

¹³⁹ Jørgensen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2005, 38. "Også her bærer kvinnenens historie med seg mye kamp og mange overhørte rop."

¹⁴⁰ Eriksen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2001, 35. "En preken om dette, om de sterke, troende og utholdende kvinnene vil vel alltid være en innertier!"

a big difference, but there are still many of those who feels small and like they have little worth when they compare themselves with others.¹⁴¹

4.2.5 Health

Health seems to be a small factor in the articles, with four of the articles addressing it.¹⁴²

The historical context:

Two of the articles which mention the daughters illness, argue that the possessed daughter, together with her ethnicity makes her unclean.¹⁴³ “The woman that in all her despair does not leave Jesus and his followers alone is impure. Tipple impure. She is a foreigner. She is a Canaanite. And she had a possessed daughter in her house.”¹⁴⁴ One article does address the illness directly to the Canaanite woman, but explains how the gospels operate with a division between illness and possession.¹⁴⁵

The contemporary context:

The illness of her daughter is also seen in a contemporary light, discussing how the language of “evil spirits” is strange in the Norwegian context, but that we still can relate to it: “Maybe we can understand some of her [the woman’s] despair when we talk to parents who have children that have become seriously psychic sick.”¹⁴⁶ One could ask why this only has relevance for psychical illness and not other types. Another interpreter makes the comparison on how a theology of impurity is no longer very present in our church, but that some of the same patterns of reaction can be seen in how the society and the church had related to gay and lesbians. “If we think about it, we also have some of the same patterns of

¹⁴¹ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende* 2003, 86. “I dag utgjør heldigvis ikke kjønn en så stor forskjell, men det er allikevel nok av dem som føler seg små og lite verd når de sammenligner seg med andre.”

¹⁴² LK 2005; LK 2003; LK 1999; NNK 2005.

¹⁴³ LK 1999, 60; NNK 2005, 37.

¹⁴⁴ Jørgensen, *Nytt Norsk Kikreblad*, 2005, 37. “Kvinnen som i all sin fortvilelse ikke lar Jesus og hans følge være i fred er uren. Tredobbelt uren. Hun er fremmed kvinne. Hun er kanaaneer. Og hun har en besatt datter i huset.”

¹⁴⁵ LK 2005, 64.

¹⁴⁶ Lockertsen, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2003, 85. “Kanskje kan vi skjønne noe av hennes fortvilelse når vi snakker med foreldrene til barn som plutselig er blitt alvorlig psykisk syke.”

reactions when it comes to taboos in our own culture, without seeing them so clearly [...] The story of gays and lesbians tells us a lot about this, to use one example.”¹⁴⁷

4.2.6 Intersectional reflections

As we have seen, most of the articles mention several categories like gender, ethnicity, religion and health. A category which is paid very little attention to is social status or class.¹⁴⁸ That may be because this is a category that involves intersectional thinking. Social status is more than just class, gender, religion etc. and often a combination of several or all. Generally speaking, an intersectional perspective is absent in almost all of the interpretation of the text, which is very interesting since most of them are concerned with the categories. Obviously, I do not expect the articles to use intersectionality as a theoretical concept, but I'm interested in whether they have any reflection on the intersectionality of this story or perceive the categories as interrelated.

The historical context:

Except for two articles, there is not much reflection on how the different categories are constructed and work together in the historical context. In NNK 2005 the interpreter point to how the woman is triply unclean by being a foreign woman, a Canaanite and having a possessed daughter in her house.¹⁴⁹ Here the interpreter places the story in a paradigm of social and religious impurity and points to the fact that we also today carry many of the same patterns of reaction concerning taboos in our own culture.¹⁵⁰ This is an important recognition of how several categories interact and contributes to a paradigm like impurity. LK 1999 also makes the connection to impurity; “The woman and her daughter had from the start wrong gender, wrong, nationality, wrong religion, wrong deacease, to be included. All of

¹⁴⁷ Jørgensen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2005, 37. “Tenker vi etter bærer vi nok med oss en del tilsvarende reaksjonsmønstre overfor tabuer i vår egen kultur, uten at vi ser dem så tydelig. [...] De homofiles historie forteller oss mye om det, for å bruke ett eksempel.”

¹⁴⁸ Jørgensen, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2005, 37. Only NNK 2005 makes a reference to what we may call social status in recognising how being a woman, a Canaanite and having a possessed daughter makes her triple unclean

¹⁴⁹ NNK 2005, 37.

¹⁵⁰ NNK 2005, 36.

this makes her impure for a Jewish man.”¹⁵¹ This is a good recognition in an intersectional perspective, but it does not seem to have any consequences other than an explanation for why she is impure for a Jewish man. Therefore it reduces the story to the debate on whether gentiles could be Christian or not.

The contemporary context:

We don't see a lot of intersectional approaches in the interpreter's context either. In two of the articles, there are attempts of acknowledging how social categories intersect and shape our reality. One emphasises the gospels significance for inclusion: "The gospel; a renewed hope, a renewed faith, a renewed love, is for all human beings. No matter which gender, ethnical background, sexual orientation, affiliation or background."¹⁵² The other article, points to our responsibility in dealing with people in the outskirts of our own society.

The fact that Jesus breaks conventions, when it comes to gender, ethnicity/religion and social relations, must have consequences for us. We have a responsibility to hear those who cry for help and to care for those who are far from us both physically, socially and religiously.¹⁵³

But even though we see a concern for categories, especially in the historical context, they are not so much dealing with how they intersect and affect each other.

4.3 How do the articles apply the text to contemporary context and do they reflect on how their context influences their interpretations?

When I analyse how the context influences the interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28 there are some issues I need to clarify. Firstly I can only make general comments on how the interpreters are influenced by their social location because I do not know them and their background more than what I learn in the articles. Secondly I do not know what particular context they're working in if they do not write about it and therefore I can only generalise

¹⁵¹ Hovland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 1999, 60. "Kvinnen og datteren hadde i utgangspunktet feil kjønn, feil nasjonalitet, feil religion, feil sykdom for å være med i det gode selskap."

¹⁵² Stene, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2009, 11. "Evangeliet, er fornyet håp, en fornyet tro, en fornyet kjærlighet, gjelder for alle mennesker. Uansett kjønn, etnisk bakgrunn, legning, tilhørighet og bakgrunn."

¹⁵³ Lockertsen, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2003, 84. "At Jesus bryter konvensjoner både når det gjelder kjønn, etnisitet/religion og rammer for sosial omgang må dette få konsekvenser for oss. Vi har ett ansvar for å høre de som roper om hjelp, og bry oss om også de som er lengst unna oss både fysisk, sosialt og religiøst."

about the Norwegian context. But because I also see the articles as part of the Norwegian discourse, I would argue that there are some features in being a theologian in a Norwegian context or a minister in the Church of Norway that one can discuss.

4.3.1 Appropriation and contextualisation

Building on a model of *scriptural criticism*, South African theologian, Jonathan Draper together with other of his colleges applies what they call a *tri-polar exegetical model*.¹⁵⁴ Even though I am not doing a contextual exegesis of a Bible text, I am applying insights from this model in my analysis. An important part of the analysis is to look at how the articles apply Matt. 15:21-28 in their own context and to analyse the way in which they reflect around how the contexts influence their interpretations. Hence I will now look at how two of the three stages in this model is useful in analysing LK and NNK articles. After the first stage of *distantiation*¹⁵⁵, which I will not elaborate on here, the second stage is *contextualisation* which asks the question about who we are in the conversation with the text.¹⁵⁶ Draper states that “all of the analysis we undertake at this stage will be aimed at understanding ourselves as historical beings rooted in a specific time and place, confronted by a historical text rooted in a specific time and place.”¹⁵⁷ While we in many settings would use the term *contextualisation* as a way of applying or making the text relevant to a certain context, this is a confusing term when we at the same time want to look at how the writers reflect around their own context. The third and final stage is *appropriation*. This is the stage where the text is appropriated in the context of the readers and where one tries to find “the meaning of the text today”.¹⁵⁸ Even though the articles in LK and NNK are not following the steps of

¹⁵⁴ Draper in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2001, 153.

The model Draper refers to is *Scriptural criticism* posed by Daniel Patte and Christina Grenholm (2000) is a model which highlights the nature of the Bible as a sacred text that matters for Christians. Therefore the interpretations of this sacred text matters and will determine their behaviour in important matters. This model is according to Draper a *contextual exegesis* which points to how “the interpretation of the Bible and the theology we formulate are fundamentally determined by our social, economic and political context as readers.” Draper uses this model together with his colleges Pat Bruce and Gerald West.

¹⁵⁵ The first stage of the tri-polar model is *distantiation*, which is acknowledging that the text was intended for others. But still one want to allow the text “to speak for itself by creating a space or critical distance between themselves and the text” by using traditional exegetical tools.

¹⁵⁶ Draper in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2001, 156-157.

¹⁵⁷ Draper in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology*, 2001, 157.

¹⁵⁸ Patricia Frances Bruce, “Biblical studies: From text to context”. *Journal of Constructive Theology* 14, no.2, 15, no.1, (2009), 97. In contextual exegesis, the appropriation ideally leads to a new consciousness which should be leading to a new praxis because appropriation implies praxis.

contextual exegesis as explained by Draper, the analysis will show us that nine out of ten articles makes an explicit appropriation to a Norwegian context. Since we are interested in how they reflect on their own context, the distinction between *contextualisation* and *appropriation* is useful.

4.3.2 Appropriation of the text

	LK	NNK
Appropriation– Norwegian context	2009, 2005, 2003, 2001, 1999	2009, 2005, 2003, 1999
Appropriation – Global context	2003	2009

As a continuation of how the articles deal with the social categories in the interpreter's context, I find it necessary to look at the appropriation of Matt 15:21-28. on its own. The appropriation of the social categories does alone explain the totality of how the writers find meaning in the story of the Canaanite woman today.

The Norwegian context:

Nine out of ten articles makes an explicit contextualisation of the text in a Norwegian context.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that it is essential for the interpreters to relate the text to their context to make it relevant. In my analysis I identify two main areas of contextualisation; first they relate to the context of the congregation and its members. Here the questions of faith, prayer and having community with Christians are brought into the contextualisation. How can we as Christians deal with the fact that God does not answer our prayers? How can we keep our faith? Secondly, the articles address contemporary issues in Norway, mostly expressed as a kind of critique of our society.¹⁶⁰ In criticising certain elements of the Norwegian society, it rapidly turns into a matter of faith as this quote illustrates;

¹⁵⁹ LK 2009; LK 2005; LK 2003; LK 2001; LK, 1999; NNK 2009; NNK 2005; NNK 2003; NNK 1999.

¹⁶⁰ LK 2005, 65; LK 2001, 85.

I fear that the motivation for the struggle, which is so precious and really can give our life a new anchor point, will disappear in a society which is so much based on pleasure. Do we only want new advantages and new safeguarding or do we want to get to know Jesus and follow him?¹⁶¹

Drawing on the insights from contextual theology, we must ask: What kind of Church and what kind of Norway is portrayed? My analysis has shown that the commentators in general ignore the complexity concerning the power relations when it comes to categories present in the text. As a consequence they fail to relate the social categories to a Norwegian context. Even though the articles make reference to the Norwegian context, it is a Norwegian context where factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, health and discrimination/marginalisation are invisible and left out of the discourse. An exception is the article that reminds us about the people we forget in the successful Norwegian society. "There are people we easily forget in the successful Norway. People who cries on behalf of their children and themselves."¹⁶² However, the tendency is clear; the interpretations promote an individual, pious reading of Matt. 15:21-28. Whereas our focus have been on how social categories constitute power and to employ this insight as a critical examination of Jesus and his actions, the journals take on an apologetic approach to Jesus and at times become slightly absurd and fails to recognize the ideological institutions these interpretations support. We will return to this issue in chapter 5 and section 6.1.

The global context:

While almost all interpreters apply the text to a Norwegian context, only two articles make the connection to a global context.¹⁶³

Crumbs from the masters table. For a large part of the world's population we, Norwegians are the masters/rich/wealthy. There are many who want to eat the crumbs off our table. We are constantly at the table, enjoying our master's meal.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Synnes, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2005, 65. "Jeg frykter at i et samfunn hvor vi er så nytelsesbasert forsvinner motivasjonen for den kamp som er kostbar, men som virkelig kan gi vårt liv et nytt feste. Går vi for bare nye fordeler og ny sikring, eller går vi for å bli kjent med Jesus og følge ham?"

¹⁶² Lockertsen, *Luthersk Kirketidende* 2003, 83. "Det finnes mennesker det er så lett å glemme i vellykkede Norge. Mennesker som både roper på vegne av sine barn og seg selv."

¹⁶³ LK 2003; NNK 2009.

¹⁶⁴ Lockertsen, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2003, 85. "Smuler fra de rikes bord. For en stor del av verdens befolkning er vi i Norge de rike. Det er mange som gjerne vil, om ikke annet så spise smuler under bordet vårt. Vi sitter konstant rundt bordet og nyter vårt herremåltid."

These two articles also reflect on how social location and context influences our interpretations as we'll see in the next section. This signals that we are not affected by the global world and that what happens there is not relevant. The fact that very few of the articles make a global contextualisation of some kind portrays Norway and the Church of Norway as an isolated unit which is not part of the world.

4.3.3 Contextualisation

In general the texts do not show a critical awareness on how their readings of Matt 15:21-28 are shaped or influenced by their contemporary context. Even though it seems important for the articles to have a contextual perspective, this does not lead to a self-critical reflection. There are only two interpretations that have some reflection on this.¹⁶⁵ The first article is reflecting around the Norwegian context of wealth and consumption;

Most of us have everything, we buy what we lack and fill up our basements and lofts to keep up with neighbours and friends. Most of us do not live in a crisis. Therefore we also have a lot of laziness in us when we, in the service, shout out our cry of crisis to God. Lord, have mercy on us!¹⁶⁶

By making this observation, the interpreter acknowledges to a certain extent how the story of the Canaanite woman has a different echo in the Norwegian context than in those contexts that is different from ours. The other article emphasises the hermeneutical challenges that this text gives us;

Who experience to be rejected with their cries for life in our world? Who do we reject? What is the reason for our rejection? Does it have to do with how we view ourselves and 'the Other'? How can the gospel be a critical mirror for us?¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ LK 2003; NNK 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Lockertsen, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2003, 83. "De fleste av oss har alt, vi kjøper det vi mangler og fyller opp loft og kjeller, for å holde tritt med naboer og venner. Vi lever ikke i krise de fleste av oss. Derfor er det ofte passe mye sløvheter i oss, når vi i gudstjenesten roper ut kriserøpet til Gud. *Herre miskunn deg!*"

¹⁶⁷ Stene, *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*, 2009, 11. "Hvem opplever å bli avvist med sine rop om liv i vår verden? Hvem er det vi avviser? Hva er grunnen til at vi avviser? Handler det om synet på oss og "de andre"? Hvordan kan evangeliet i dag bli et kritisk speil for oss?"

Even though I cannot judge whether most of the writers in LK and NNK view themselves as neutral or objective, it appears in the analysis that there is very little evidence which contests their neutrality in the articles.

4.4 Differences between LK and NNK

Even though the differences between LK and NNK are not my concern in this thesis, I will point to some of the biggest differences between them since they come from different theological traditions. Generally there is a mix of themes and focus in both LK and NNK, but I have found some differences between them. As mentioned in the context of the articles, I've found more evident themes in LK than NNK, and this has led to a very clear overweight of LK articles when we look at which journals address the themes of *mission, faith and prayer*. One could speculate on if this has to do with the different contexts of which the journals come from. In dealing with social categories, there are not any major differences except for the way NNK 2009 addresses gender. The article stands out as the only article which deals extensively with gender issues in a contemporary context. In addition to the lack of appropriation in a global context in both the journals, neither of them have much reflection on how their context influence their interpretations.

5. Common features emerging from the analysis

When discussing some of the issues emerging from the analysis, I will draw interpretations and reflections on Matt. 15:21-28 from other contexts which can be placed within the framework of intersectional and contextual approaches, as well as a feminist-postcolonial. As we'll see, their insights to how the narrative of the Canaanite woman has been and still is used in oppressive ways, makes them relevant dialogue partners with the Norwegian interpretations which in large ignores such aspect of the text.

5.1 *When everything becomes theology*

One of the common features of the interpretations is how “everything becomes theology”. Because in the articles the Canaanite woman’s life and her challenges often disappear into theological arguments. To put it bluntly one could say that that *what is bodies in the antique becomes theology today*. This becomes evident when we look back at how the issues of *faith* and *mission* are addressed in the articles. When it comes to *mission*, one could ask if the articles neglect to question the ideology of mission because it serves them. In an article by Sarojini Nadar she examines the possibilities of using the bible in mission, through a contextual bible study of the parallel story of the *Syrophoenician* woman in Mark 7:24-30. And in doing that she challenges the Church to use the story of the Canaanite woman to re-think mission. Her reflections emerge from the experience of how a pastor used her uncle’s funeral to preach repentance to the Hindu and Muslim who was present.¹⁶⁸

“Firstly, to think of mission holistically – not just as physical sustenance – but healing, physical and otherwise. Secondly, the story invites us to re-evaluate whether food/development is simply for survival or “abundant life” [...]. Thirdly, the story calls us to understand the inter-linking of oppressions [...]. Fourthly, now more than ever the story challenges us to develop a critical consciousness around

¹⁶⁸ Nadar “The Bible *in and for* Mission”, to be published in *Missionalia*, 2009, (no page number available since the paper is yet to be published).

issues of mission and education. Finally, [...] the story challenges our understanding of mission – not just to reach out to other faiths, to ‘kick them into heaven’ [...].”¹⁶⁹

By doing this she rejects the oppressive ways this text is used and proposes new ways of thinking about mission. For me this is an example of how we can interpret and re-think traditional themes in the light of contemporary issues when reading Matt. 15:21-28.

The articles tend to ignore the issues of discrimination and marginalisation completely because it becomes inferior to the issue of *mission* or *faith* as this quote illustrates; “On my part, my opinion is that Jesus tests the woman to give her the possibility to use her faith.”¹⁷⁰

By justifying or explaining away what I and others would characterise as Jesus’ religious-ethnic prejudice and exclusivity, they minimize the woman’s situation. One other example which illustrates how everything becomes theology is how *bread* is interpreted symbolically in one of the articles; “The bread can symbolise the blessings of the kingdom of God.”¹⁷¹

Just as *bread* often is interpreted spiritually, such as in the Lords prayer, so is *bread* in this story. In her reading of Matt. 15:21-28 where she uses the traditional method of divination, used by many Southern African ethnic groups, Motswanian theological scholar Musa W. Dube observes that when the woman requests *health*, Jesus refers to it as *bread*.¹⁷² For her that means that health is as important as food to sustain life. She further argues that before the symptoms of the daughter are attended to, the social relationships between Canaanites and Israelites are addressed. Hence, health is also healthy relationships with others.¹⁷³ Here Dube reflects an approach to theology which has the whole life as context. And because both intersectionality and contextual theology starts with people’s experiences, and especially the experiences of the other which is often neglected, we can argue that there is no theology besides outside of life. Like this reading of Matt. 15:21-28 in a Tanzanian HIV/AIDS context which asks, what seems to be some obvious questions about the

¹⁶⁹ Nadar “The Bible *in and for* Mission”, 2009, (no page number available since the paper is yet to be published).

¹⁷⁰ Granerud, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2009, 48. “For min del oppfatter jeg det slik at Jesus stiller kvinnen på prøve, for å gi henne en mulighet til å ta troen sin i bruk.”

¹⁷¹ Hovland, *Luthersk Kirketidende* 1999, 61. “Brødet’ kan stå som symbol på gudsrikets velsignelse.”

¹⁷² Musa W. Dube “Divining Texts for International Relations.” in *Transformative encounters: Jesus and women re-Viewed*, edited by Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, 315-328. Leiden: Brill, 2000, 316-321, 328. Motswana is a person coming from Botswana. Divination is a practice of throwing bones, pieces of wood, sea shells and other pieces done by a healer to diagnose the circumstances surrounding the relationships of a person where the problems are identified to find a remedy. There is a holistic understanding of health and ill-health is seen as a disconnection or unhealthy relationships.

¹⁷³ Dube in *Transformative Encounters*, 2000, 328.

Canaanite woman; "Why does she run around with her sick child all by herself? Why did her husband not accompany her? Where was he? Where are the relatives, friends and neighbours? Where is the community?"¹⁷⁴

5.2 The intersectionality of oppression

From the analysis, we see how the social categories neither is challenged nor applied to a contemporary context in the interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28. We also find very few reflections on how the categories transform each other during their interaction. Hence, I would argue that the articles in LK and NNK fail to see the intersectionality of oppression. In her article referred to above, Nadar emphasises exactly this;

The Syrophoenician woman's story invites us to consider the interconnectedness of oppressions – racism is sexism is classism is homophobia. The Syrophoenician woman is oppressed because of her gender, her ethnicity, her religion, and a host of other multiple factors.¹⁷⁵

Nadar further argues that by excluding the Canaanite/Syrophoenician woman on the basis of her gender, it easily allows us to exclude people on the basis of their ethnicity, sexual orientation etc. An intersectional approach is also advocated by other scholars such as Pui-Lan Kwok and Dube.¹⁷⁶ In her postcolonial feminist reading, of white, western feminist interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28, Dube points to how relations between gender, mission and empire often takes the shape of "doubly colonized" by both patriarchy and imperialism.¹⁷⁷ Why is it that what seems so obvious to other interpreters, is by large ignored in the interpretations from the Norwegian context? I think Dube has identified one of the challenges facing scholars in a privileged context. It is not enough to recognize the intersection of categories, but we also need to look at how they are constructed.

¹⁷⁴ Boniface-Malle, Anastasia. "Allow Me to Cry Out: Reading of Matthew 15:21-28 in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania" in *Grant Me Justice! HI/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible*, edited by Musa W. Dube and Musimbi Kanyoro, 169-185. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004, 177.

¹⁷⁵ Nadar "The Bible *in and for* Mission", 2009, (no page number available since the paper is yet to be published).

¹⁷⁶ Kwok Pui-Lan *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, 1995 p.79, "we must adopt a multiaxial frame of reference and examine the story from a multidimensional perspective."

¹⁷⁷ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St.Louis: Chalice Press, 2000, 112.

Although white, Western biblical feminists have now adopted the new theories of analysis that regard patriarchal oppression as a complex network of such factors as gender, race, class, religion, or culture, on the issue of race, and subsequently culture, it seems there is no acknowledgment that those groups that are usually categorized as belonging to “privileged races” were not born privileged. Rather, these are groups that acquired their identities through constructing themselves as superior to other races in order to validate their colonial projects at some point in their histories or foundational mythologies.¹⁷⁸

Just as Nash argues for taking into account the intersection of privileged positions in intersectionality, Dube maintain that we need to examine the intersection of our privileged positions and how they are connected to marginalised positions. She suggests that it is the gender, race and class privileged of the scholars she analyses that accounts for their lack of interest in challenging the power relations inscribed in the text.¹⁷⁹ Although some of our articles look at the intersection between the categories in a historical context, I would suggest that we see some of the same mechanisms in the Norwegian journals as Dube observes in her analysis. Because they fail to reflect on how their privileged identity are constructed, they might also fail to address the power relations in the text, as we see through the themes they address and their dealing with social categories. This brings us to the final feature which will be discussed in this chapter, namely how the articles deal with social categories in the historical and the contemporary context.

5.3 Social categories then and now

As we’ve seen clearly in our analysis, the articles fail in general to address the social categories in a contemporary context. The tendency is that the articles are more aware of how the categories affect the historical context than the contemporary. The same tendency is observed by the sociologist Ruth Frankenberg when she did research on the particular experiences of white women in a racially hierarchical society in U.S.A. during the 80s. She observes that one of her interview objects

[...] was much more sharply aware of racial oppression shaping Black experience than of race privilege in her own life. Thus Beth [one of the women interviewed] could be alert to the realities of economic

¹⁷⁸ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 2000, 183.

¹⁷⁹ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 2000, 169.

discrimination against Black communities while still conceptualizing her own life as racially neutral – nonracialized, non-political.¹⁸⁰

Even though her observation had to do with co-existing contemporary issues, the similarity with the articles is for me striking. They both fail to see the function of categories which affect themselves and I would argue that this is very problematic. By not discussing how texts like Matt 15:21-28 can be used today, we silence or even worse, reproduce structures of discrimination and exclusion. The way the articles justify discrimination on the basis of categories like ethnicity and religion, illustrates this. They also portray their own context as an ethnic, gender and religion neutral setting. A relevant example is how xenophobia and racism in Christian settings were criticised by bishop in the Church of Norway, Tor B. Jørgensen in October 2009. But his plea for debating racism from the pulpit was rejected by the secretary general of The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) Kjetil Aano and the leading bishop Olav Skjevesland.¹⁸¹ By rejecting a racism debate in the church, they do as the articles in the journals, which do not address how social categories create inclusion/exclusion and superiority/inferiority in a contemporary context, both local and global. And by not doing that, I would argue that the articles (and the Church) fail to recognize that social categories affect the lives of people both in Norway and in the rest of the world. There are many examples showing us that race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class etc. matters. Research done by the *United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice* in the United States of America, shows how hazardous waste sites are located in areas inhabited by a great minority percentage of the population.¹⁸² They also showed that population of colour were 47 % more likely to live near these sites than whites.¹⁸³ They call it environmental apartheid. The caste-system in India is another example of how some groups of the population get privileges because of their caste within a country that have enormous class distinctions and some of the largest slums in the world. When the interpretations, as an example, accept the woman as a dog without questioning this; what does that say about this type of oppression in relation to those who are oppressed, marginalised and judged because of one or several

¹⁸⁰ Ruth Frankenberg, *Social construction of whiteness: White woman, race matters*. London: Routledge, 1993, 49. (Authors italics).

¹⁸¹ Færaas, Arild. "Biskop Jørgensen vil ta rasismedebatt fra prekestolen", *Vårt Land*, <http://www.vl.no/samfunn/article4639791.ece>, (accessed 21.11.09).

¹⁸² Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth community: Earth ethics*, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, 75.

¹⁸³ Rasmussen, *Earth community: Earth ethics*, 1996, 77.

of the categories like the Canaanite woman or other categories today? I would argue that this does not take into account the history the text has made and still can make. Where is the accountability of the interpreter? When we now turn to chapter six of the thesis, this question is one of the issues I will discuss.

6. Challenges to Norwegian theology after analysing the Norwegian homiletical commentaries

In this part of the thesis, I want to explore some of the challenges to Norwegian theology, which I see emerging from the analysis of LK and NNK. Both intersectionality and contextual theology argues that marginalised subjects and voices have an epistemic advantage,¹⁸⁴ but what does that mean in a privileged Norwegian discourse? By discussing the analysis of LK and NNK in the light of larger debates on *the ethics of interpretation* and *a universal versus a particular hermeneutics*, I imply that these debates should be a part of the Norwegian discourse if it wants to have credibility and relevance in both the local and global context.

6.1 *The ethics of interpretation*

6.1.1 Ethics of accountability

As the analysis has shown, the articles apply Matt 15:21-28 in a limited Norwegian context and have little concern for the global context. They also have a tendency to ignore the function of social categories in a contemporary context. These features make it relevant to turn to the *ethics of interpretation* because it challenges us to rethink our responsibility as interpreters of the bible. In her address to Society of Biblical Literature in 1988, Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza advocates an “ethics of accountability”.¹⁸⁵ She argues that Biblical scholars are not only responsible for the choice of methods, but also for the ethical consequences of the biblical text and meanings;¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, 1994, 86-87; Nash, *Feminist Review*, 2008, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Shüssler Fiorenza, *JBL*, 107, 1988, 14-15.

¹⁸⁶ Shüssler Fiorenza, *JBL*, 107, 1988, 14-15.

[...] a careful reading of biblical text and the reconstruction of their historical worlds must be complimented by a theological discussion on the contextual function of biblical texts, which are scriptural authorities in communities of faith.¹⁸⁷

According to Shüssler Fiorenza the interpreter's ethical responsibility is taking into account the political, social and religious consequences of the interpretation they offer. This is supported by the Hispanic theologian Leticia Guardiola-Sàenz, who in her reading of Matt 15:21-28 stresses that; "A cultural text should be read not just for the history it reflects, but also for the history it has made."¹⁸⁸ Guardiola-Sàenz argues that we do know something about how Biblical texts are used and misused; "[...] I cannot go to the text with ahistorical and innocent eyes, pretending that the biblical text is harmless."¹⁸⁹

6.1.2 The ideology of chosenness

Writing from an Asian context, the Chinese feminist theologian Kwok Pui-Lan emphasises how Christians have regarded people from other parts of the world as *heathens* or *gentiles* and that these labels are still used to justify an aggressive attempt to convert people in the Third World.¹⁹⁰ And Guardiola-Sàenz argues that "If the ideology of chosenness has proven to be fatal and exploitative to the two-thirds of the world, then it is an ideology that needs to be challenged by all liberative readers."¹⁹¹ Because Matt 15:21-28 has been interpreted in ways which would reproduce imperialism and an ideology of chosenness, as illustrated by Pui-Lan, Guardiola-Sàenz and Dube,¹⁹² "[...] we should guard against a simple and reductionist understanding of the other."¹⁹³ In the analysis of LK and NNK, we find that especially those articles that emphasises the issues of *mission* and *the woman's great faith*, are in danger of a reductionistic characterisation of the Canaanite woman by reducing her to an object and not a subject in her own right. "If Jesus was too active amongst the gentiles, it would ruin his possibilities to be taken serious by Jews. Maybe it had to be difficult for the

¹⁸⁷ Shüssler Fiorenza, *JBL*, 107, 1988, 15.

¹⁸⁸ Guardiola-Sàenz, *Semeia*, 1997, 71.

¹⁸⁹ Guardiola-Sàenz, *Semeia*, 1997, 72.

¹⁹⁰ Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, 1995, 71.

¹⁹¹ Guardiola-Sàenz, *Semeia*, 1997, 71.

¹⁹² Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 2000, 168-169, 182-183; Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, 1995, 78,

¹⁹³ Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, 1995, 82.

woman so that everyone could understand that this was an exception?"¹⁹⁴ In this view, the Canaanite woman exists as a tool to be used for the best of all gentiles. Pui-Lan warns us that since the faith and humility of the Canaanite woman served as a model for Christians and heathens to ease the spread of colonialism and imperialism; "colonized peoples were expected to be as subservient, obedient, and loyal as a 'devoted dog'."¹⁹⁵ If we take the ethics of accountability into consideration, it becomes clear that we must reject interpretations which enforce this uneven power-structure between groups of people and a representation of other people which subordinate them. As Guardiola-Sàenz argues;

A text that conceals ideology of a manifest destiny and a chosenness of people, which allows the displacement of Others from their own land and does not condemn such ideology as oppressive, cannot be a liberating text when it is interpreted by those in power, who wants to keep the power for themselves.¹⁹⁶

According to Guardiola-Sàenz it is only by listening to the voice of the Other, the one who has suffered the unjust invasion and oppression, that one can construct a liberating story.¹⁹⁷ This means that we must challenge the key interlocutors and that a self-critical reflection is a necessity.

6.2 The universal versus the particular

We will now take a closer look at the discussion about a universal versus particular perspective in hermeneutics. As we've discussed the articles have a great deal of explicit appropriation to a Norwegian context, but a global perspective is almost absent. It is somewhat surprising that a theological environment which is known for producing theology that claims to be universal, the biblical text is mainly applied in its own limited context. The problem arises when the Norwegian context appears as if it's the only context we're a part of. Hence we must ask what kind of interpretations this is and challenge interpretations which write as if they are living in an isolated bubble. Applying the text to a specific context

¹⁹⁴ Morland, *Luthersk Kirketidende*, 2001, 86. "Hvis Jesus var altfor aktiv blant hedninger ville det ødelegge hans muligheter for å bli tatt på alvor av jøder. Kanskje måtte det gjøres vanskelig for kvinnen, for at alle skulle forstå at det var et unntak?"

¹⁹⁵ Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, 1995, 78.

¹⁹⁶ Guardiola-Sàenz, *Semeia*, 1997, 73.

¹⁹⁷ Guardiola-Sàenz, *Semeia*, 1997, 73.

is not enough, as several theologians and theorists points out. Contextual theology is not only appropriation to a context but to ask questions about the key interlocutors. But how can we be honest to our local concerns and at the same time recognise the global nature of our existence in the world? Contributing to a highly relevant debate, Andrew Thiselton asks whether the hermeneutics of liberations theologies including black theology and feminist theology, manage to include a trans-contextual critique.

Does their hermeneutical systems function pragmatically to filter out from the biblical texts any signal which does anything other than affirm the hopes and aspirations of a given social group or do they embody a genuine socio-critical principle which unmask oppression as a part of a larger trans-contextual critique?¹⁹⁸

6.2.1 Socio-critical and socio-pragmatic hermeneutics

In exploring the different direction¹⁹⁹ coming from post-Gadamerian hermeneutics, Thiselton refers to what he calls *socio-critical* and *socio-pragmatic* hermeneutics.²⁰⁰ Building on the two literary theorists Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish, he points to how socio-pragmatic hermeneutics emphasises the reading-effects and the role of community and community-conventions and values.²⁰¹ According to Thiselton, socio-pragmatic hermeneutics remains explicitly ethnocentric because the community cannot be corrected and reformed from outside itself.²⁰² "Its only hope of change is to imperialize other communities by extending its own boundaries until it disintegrates under its own weight and internal pluralism."²⁰³ On the other hand we find socio-critical hermeneutics, which builds on Habermas and critical theory to "unmask the social interest that lies behind different actualizations of the texts or of truth through an emancipatory critique which serves freedom, justice and truth."²⁰⁴ Contrary to the socio-pragmatic approach, Thiselton argues

¹⁹⁸ Andrew C. Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics: The theory and practice of transforming biblical reading*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, 433.

¹⁹⁹ Metacritical, socio-pragmatic and socio-critical.

Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 11-12.

²⁰⁰ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 11-12.

²⁰¹ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 27.

²⁰² Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 27.

²⁰³ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 27

²⁰⁴ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 12.

that socio-critical hermeneutics “refuses to restrict enquiry to the socio-pragmatic level.”²⁰⁵ Socio-critical hermeneutics approaches texts to expose their role as instruments of power, domination or social manipulation.²⁰⁶ In acknowledging how the many Western traditional ways of reading and using the biblical texts “re-affirm pre-existing prejudices, traditions, attitudes, and social relationships”²⁰⁷, Thiselton argues that socio-critical hermeneutics becomes a potential tool for liberation and a weapon against individual and corporate self-deception.²⁰⁸

Socio-pragmatic hermeneutics, Thiselton argues “[...] would immunise the church against a theology of the cross which de-centres individual and corporate self-interest as a critique extended to the church itself.”²⁰⁹ By using feministic hermeneutics as an example, Thiselton points to how it: “[...] is not concerned with a group of people it wants to benefit, but with a type of injustice it wants to eliminate”²¹⁰ Feminist hermeneutics, he says, represent a variety of models, where some seek a universal critique in the name of freedom and justice, appealing to trans-contextual criteria which identify them as socio-critical approaches. Contrary, others seek in hermeneutics the affirmation of particular community-relative social norms; presuppose a socio-pragmatic rejection of any such trans-contextual critique. I think Thiselton is correct in his analysis when observing how different branches of feminist hermeneutics work in different ways, but I would argue that Thiselton's socio-critical approach which seeks a universal critique in the name of justice have some limitations. Even though I understand this concern, I disagree with his rejection of socio-pragmatic hermeneutics because in defining a strictly socio-critical hermeneutics, one can ask: Who is criticising in the name of freedom and justice? On behalf of whom are they criticising? How trans-contextual is Thiselton's critique really?

²⁰⁵ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 12.

²⁰⁶ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 379.

²⁰⁷ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 12.

²⁰⁸ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 12.

²⁰⁹ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 379.

²¹⁰ Thiselton, *New horizons in hermeneutics*, 1992, 443.

6.2.3 The local and the global context

Can one really have a socio-critical hermeneutics without the pragmatic aspect? I don't think we can. I would argue that a socio-critical and a socio-pragmatic hermeneutics compliment each other and that we need both perspectives if we want to be doing theology that takes both the particular and the universal context in consideration. There is no opposition between the universal and particular. The universal context consists of many particular contexts.²¹¹ As we know from the paradigm of *the birth of the reader* and *contextual theology*, all theological reflection and readings are influenced by the context of the "flesh-and-blood". To be aware of this and to make it explicit, like socio-pragmatic hermeneutics, is therefore a necessity. The recognition of our particular context does not mean that it can't have a trans-contextual function. But being a part of a larger context, the global context, our hermeneutics also need to be socio-critical. This double perspective is also recognised by liberation theologians when seeing the need for both an inside and an outside approach to the experience of oppression; "Inside as someone who knows what it means to be poor and oppressed but also to see the whole picture of injustice and realise that one's experience is not unique and special but part of the whole structure of social sin".²¹² And so must this double perspective be a part of self-critical reflection in the Norwegian context. Because we in the global north have interpreted our particular context as universal without reflecting on how our context influences us, others had to ask questions about the universality of our theology and challenged us to reflect critically on our particular context. I would argue that it is about time we start doing it ourselves.

²¹¹ Bergmann, *God in Context*, 2003, 10.

²¹² Racozy, *In Her Name*, 2004, 6.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I have done an intersectional and contextual analysis of the interpretations of Matt. 15:21-28 in *Luthersk Kirketidende* and *Nytt Norsk Kirkeblad*. Intersectionality has proved to be a useful tool in analysing how the articles deal with categories and has exposed that there were very few intersectional perspectives in the articles. We've also seen how the articles tend to address social categories in a historical context, but failed to address them in a contemporary context. Together with insights from other scholars working within an intersectional contextual framework, I have argued that by silencing categories such as ethnicity, gender, religion, we can be in danger of justifying discrimination based on these or other categories. It also reflects a society which seems to be free of social categories. The intersectional perspective also challenges how our own privileged positions, as well as marginalised positions are constructed. This could be one of the reasons why the articles failed to address the intersectionality of oppression in this text. The analysis also shows how the main themes in the articles such as *mission* and *faith* have a tendency to neglect the issues of discrimination and exclusion. By using contextual theology, the Norwegian homiletical commentaries were challenged in several ways. Firstly we asked questions about how the articles applied the text of Matt. 15:21-28 to their contemporary context and found that most of them did so in a Norwegian context, but not in a global context. This lack of appropriation in a global context emphasises the importance of universal and particular perspectives in theological hermeneutics. Secondly the analysis revealed that the articles have very little reflection on how their own context influences their work. I therefore argue that we need to critically examine the possible consequences of our work by taking into account the oppressive elements which the history of interpretation has made, such as the ideology of chosenness. Through the analytical tools of intersectionality and contextual theology, the analysis has shown that we need to give particular attention to the voice of the other in order not to further silence or oppress other voices and to reflect on our own context. This brings us back to the question in the headline; "Theology for the Dogs?" Not only do we have the responsibility to address the consequences of such a characterisation, but also to challenge and question all structures which separate us into masters, children and dogs in a historical, contemporary, local and global context.

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