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THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED JESUS' GARMENT:  
SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE  
SYNOPTIC ACCOUNTS

During the last thirty years significant advances have been made in the study of early Christian miracle stories. The story of the woman who touched Jesus' garment has been especially well analyzed by Heinz Joachim Held and Gerd Theissen,<sup>1</sup> and recently Manfred Hutter has brought additional information to bear on the Matthean version.<sup>2</sup> It is my goal to look at each version of the story from the perspective of 'comparative social-rhetorical' analysis and interpretation.<sup>3</sup> The rhetorical observations are informed especially by Kenneth Burke's chapter entitled 'Lexicon Rhetoricae' in *Counterstatement*<sup>4</sup> and by Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*.<sup>5</sup> The comparative and social observations are stimulated by various interpreters' use of Hellenistic-Roman data as well as Jewish data for analysis of New Testament literature.

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER AS FRAMEWORK

The three synoptic accounts of the healing of the woman stand in the middle of an account of the raising of Jairus' daughter, 'sandwiching' the healing story between the beginning and ending of the raising story. The sandwiching of one unit in the middle of another like this is regularly called 'intercalation', and those who espouse Markan priority usually consider intercalation to be a special Markan technique of composition.<sup>6</sup> Redaction critics have been especially interested in probing the theological and christological significance of this technique, and some of the results have been highly suggestive.<sup>7</sup> In this instance, the healing of the woman in the middle appears to have two basic functions: (1) it creates a time lapse which accentuates the actual death of Jairus' daughter, and (2) it presents the reversal of a woman's death-ridden life in anticipation of the raising of a young girl from death to life.<sup>8</sup>

Since all three synoptic gospels recount the healing of the woman in the middle of the story about Jairus' daughter, and since twenty-nine Greek words are exactly the same among the three units, there is good reason to think that there is some kind of literary dependence among them, or there is dependence on a common source. But it would be wrong to describe the

relationship among the synoptic accounts as 'scribal', since no account simply replicates another 'with scribal touches'. Rather, what Matthew tells in 138 words, Mark tells in 374 words and Luke in 280 words. The relationship is better described as 'rhetorical'. Each version contains adoption, adaptation, and composition which exhibits the use of traditional material in a manner congenial to the rhetorical style and purposes of its author. A model for understanding the relationship is best attained by looking at the 'preliminary' exercises Aelius Theon discusses and illustrates in his *Progymnasmata*.<sup>9</sup> These exercises exhibit how a person composes when he or she reproduces brief narratives or sayings in a style and form congenial to the rhetorical goal being pursued in a sequence of material. In antiquity, this was considered a 'preliminary rhetorical' form of writing. The degree of variation among Matthew, Mark, and Luke reveals that each was composing in this preliminary rhetorical manner. Whether or not the authors of these gospels actually performed preliminary compositional exercises (*προγυμνάσματα*) in the settings where they learned to write Greek, their accounts reveal that they compose in a preliminary rhetorical style rather than a 'scribal' style. Matthew has written an abbreviated version (*συστέλλειω*) and Mark has written an expanded version (*ἐπεκτείνειω*). Unless an interpreter has determined by other means that one has used the other as a source, there is no basis to know which writer may have used the other. From the data in this particular unit, Matthew could have abbreviated the Markan version, Mark could have expanded the Matthean version, or both Matthew and Mark could have composed from a common source.<sup>10</sup> The situation with Luke is quite different. Luke's version is a refinement and retooling of the Markan version.<sup>11</sup>

Limitation of space does not allow analysis of the rhetorical composition and its effect in the entire intercalated unit.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this article analyzes only the strategy of composition and its effect in the inner story about the woman with the haemorrhage. The underlying implication is that a comparative social-rhetorical analysis of the centre of the unit can contribute significant information toward analysis of the entire unit.

#### THE COMMON TRADITION

An initial social-rhetorical observation emerges from the similar features in all the stories. Our present critical text exhibits seventeen Greek words which are exactly the same in all three versions of the healing of the woman who touched Jesus' garment.<sup>13</sup> These common words tell of a woman who had for twelve years suffered from a flow of blood (called by Matthew 'haemorrhaging'), and who came up behind Jesus and touched his garment. In each story her ailment is cured and Jesus says, 'Daughter, your faith (*πίστις*) has made you well (*σέσωκεν*).'

The motifs common to all three versions are, as Gerd Theissen has shown, traditional motifs associated with healing in Hellenistic-Roman culture.<sup>14</sup> When Strabo describes cultic healing sanctuaries, he says that 'in Epidaurus Asclepius is believed to cure diseases': Ἀσκληπιοῦ . . . πεπιστευμένου (Strabo V, 374); in Canopus respected men 'believe' (πιστεύειν) and seek healing sleep for themselves and others (Strabo XVII, 1, 17). Here the absolute use of πιστεύειν is associated with the sleep or incubation necessary for a cure. In Epidaurus itself, πίστις (faith) is discussed as an attribute of those who are directly affected by the healings.<sup>15</sup> Also, σώζω in the sense of 'heal' is attested in non-Christian and non-Jewish Greek texts before and during the first century.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a non-Christian person who heard any of the synoptic versions of the story of the woman who touched Jesus' garment would encounter traditional language and motifs associated with healing. From a social-rhetorical perspective, then, the language perpetuated in all three versions of the story establishes a conventional base for communication in Greek-speaking Hellenistic-Roman society. Any person who spoke Greek could hear the story and develop some form of understanding of it, since basic terms in it were conventional terms associated with healing.

#### THE MATTHEAN VERSION (MATTHEW 9. 20-22)

The Matthean version presents an abbreviated form of the healing story. H. J. Held, using *Redaktionsgeschichte*, observed Matthew's creation of 'a kind of conversation'<sup>17</sup> in the centre of the story as the woman exhibits 'active' believing with 'a movement of the will' which presses her toward Jesus.<sup>18</sup> The woman's thought functions as a request which Jesus grants, just as God in the Old Testament grants deliverance to the believer who has praying faith. Yet through the catchwords 'faith' and 'save', and through the woman's action, the Matthean version establishes a 'rule' for the early church, which is a new formula in Judaism, that 'confidence in the helpful kindness brings help to pass and no faith is put to shame and destroyed'.<sup>19</sup>

Gerd Theissen, using *Kompositionsgeschichte* and motif analysis as a means for discussing social function, expanded Held's analysis of the Matthean version by proposing that Jesus' direct knowledge of the woman's thoughts allows him to assert that her faith has made her well. Jesus' knowledge, then, is like the knowledge of God 'who knows his children's requests before they express them' (Matthew 6. 8), and the dynamics of the woman's approach to Jesus are like those which accompany a person's approach to God. In addition, when the narrator comments that the woman was healed 'from that hour', he has transported a theme from stories where people are healed 'at the precise time' that a faithful, holy person completed a petitionary prayer for that person's healing in a distant

place. Since these stories emphasize that healing occurs as a result of a specific believing person's petition to God in prayer, this feature suggests that the woman's action is like a petitionary prayer based on faith. Therefore, in Theissen's terms, Matthew's version reproduces the story with a simple basic pattern guided by a view of faith as petitionary faith.<sup>20</sup>

A social-rhetorical approach to the Matthean version extends the observations of Held and Theissen. Within abbreviation and use of catchword, the Matthean version features a form of repetition which creates what Kenneth Burke calls 'logical progressive form'. Logical progression has 'the form of a perfectly conducted argument, advancing step by step'.<sup>21</sup> As a result of the logic, the expectations raised by the text are reliably fulfilled in the narrative sequence. The Matthean version creates a logical progression through a particular repetitive technique. The first instance of repetition occurs when the woman presents her motive through speech which repeats the action in the narration: she *touch*ed the fringe of *his garment*, for she said to herself, 'If I only *touch his garment*, I shall be made well.' The second instance of repetition occurs when Jesus repeats the woman's 'I *will be made well*' with 'your faith *has made you well*'. Then the narration repeats Jesus' assertion with the statement that the woman '*was made well* from that hour'. This kind of repetition can be called 'chain-link' repetition: words are repeated as links in a chain, and once a connecting link has moved to the next word, the previous word is not repeated again. Thus the sequence is: 'touched his garment', 'touch . . . his garment', 'shall be made well', 'has made you well', 'was made well'.

Robert Alter has shown that the basic components of this prose style are common in the Hebrew Bible and reveal special characteristics of speech and narration in Israelite and Jewish tradition. In the first instance, the process of the woman's contemplation is reported as direct rather than indirect discourse. This is a special characteristic of Hebrew Bible narrative, perhaps related to the 'strong sense of the primacy of language in the created order of things' so that 'thought was not fully itself until it was articulated as speech'.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the direct speech is characterized as something 'she said to herself'. This means that her speech is perceived to be 'dialogue' and her dialogue provides the occasion to introduce a motive, a reason, for her action. The repetition of narration in dialogical speech places the woman's action in the realm of reasoning, and it makes the narration subordinate to inner speech and thought. In the second instance, Jesus' speech repeats part of the speech the woman added to the narration ('I will be made well'), then Jesus' speech is repeated in a final narrative statement. This repetition transfers the woman's inner speech and thought first into Jesus' speech, then it places Jesus' speech in the realm of action. Alter uses 1 Samuel 27. 1 as an illustration of inner dialogue which becomes action in narration. David's statement could be abbreviated to 'If I

flee to Philistine country, I shall escape the hands of Saul.'<sup>23</sup> The presence of David's dialogue with himself makes direct speech primary to narration. As Alter says:

The primacy of dialogue is so pronounced that many pieces of third-person narration prove on inspection to be dialogue-bound, verbally mirroring elements of dialogue which precede them or which they introduce.<sup>24</sup>

In Matthew 9. 20-21 the narration precedes the inner dialogue:

... she touched the fringe of his garment;  
for she said to herself, 'If I only touch his garment ...'.

In Matthew 9. 22, however, the narration follows the dialogue:

'... your faith has made you well'.  
And from that hour the woman was made well.

The repetitive technique in the Matthean version, then, exhibits essential characteristics of narrative style in the Hebrew Bible. Manfred Hutter has shown, moreover, that the request for forgiveness followed by gesture is especially characteristic of ancient oriental texts, and he explores Saul's grabbing of the edge of Samuel's cloak after verbally seeking forgiveness (1 Sam 15. 24-25, 27) to show the importance of the combination of speech and gesture.<sup>25</sup> Thus the rhetorical features in the text reflect special social dimensions in ancient oriental culture. Held and Theissen would surely welcome these insights, since they understand 'faith' to be praying or petitioning faith which has developed out of the understanding of faith in Hebrew tradition.<sup>26</sup>

The Matthean story, however, stands in Greek, and the gospel of Matthew has an interest in communicating to 'all nations' (Matt 28. 19-20). How does it communicate to people who do not claim a heritage in Israelite and Jewish tradition? How could a non-Christian or non-Jewish Greek-speaking person hear and form an understanding of the story? When the woman says, 'If only I touch the fringe of his garment, I shall be made well', her motivation could be understood as 'simplemindedness or silliness' (*εὐηθία*), 'boldness' (*τολμᾶν/τολμεῖν*), 'faith' (*πίστις*), 'hope' (*ἐλπίς*), 'courage' (*ἀνδρεία*), 'despair' (*ἀπόγνωσις*), or some other state of mind or action. The first three concepts in this list are present in accounts of Asclepius' healings from Epidauros, and the fourth is present in an epigram of the orator Aeschines.<sup>27</sup> In the dramatic setting of the healing of the woman with the flow of blood, Jesus chooses one particular concept: faith (*πίστις*). From a social-rhetorical perspective, the choice is very important, because Jesus narrows the potential list to a term which is central in Jewish belief.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Jesus has supplied the term in a context of rhetorical logic. When the woman said, 'If I only touch the fringe of his garment, I shall be made well', she provided a 'logical' link between 'touch his garment' and 'be made well'. Rhetoricians would recognize this

link as syllogistic in form:<sup>29</sup> the touching of the garment is perceived to be the logical prior condition (the premise) for the healing to occur (the conclusion). But it is syllogistic in form only, not in content. A formal syllogism contains two premises and a conclusion, as the following well-known example shows:

Major premise: All men are mortal.  
 Minor premise: Socrates is a man.  
 Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

In a rhetorical setting, a speaker or writer regularly omits one of the premises, producing either 'Socrates is mortal, because he is a man', or 'Socrates is mortal, because all men are mortal'. The tacit reasoning is complete in either of these rhetorical forms, however, since the three terms 'men/man', 'mortal', and 'Socrates' are present. In contrast, the woman's conditional logic produces only two terms: 'touch his garment' and 'be made well'. Jesus' statement to the woman provides a third term, 'faith', in such a manner that it evokes the major premise, '*An act of faith* is able to make a person well', and fills in the last half of the minor premise, 'Touching my garment was *an act of faith*'. Jesus, then, evokes a complete syllogism by providing a term which turns conditional rhetorical logic into a logical demonstration:

Major premise: An act of faith is able to make a person well.  
 Minor premise: Touching Jesus' garment was an act of faith.  
 Conclusion: Therefore, the woman was made well.

H. J. Held is correct, then, when he says that this story introduces a formula or rule for the early church.<sup>30</sup> Jesus' statement is the powerful turning point in the story and presents a logical result based on a specific premise. While the story is being narrated, it is not clear if the woman's confidence is merited until Jesus tells her to take heart, names her motivation 'faith', and pronounces her well. According to Held, Jesus' statement actually effects the healing.<sup>31</sup> I think he is right. The healing occurs when Jesus completes the logic of the story. In other words, the woman is healed in the moment her motivation is named 'faith'. Jesus' speech has both naming power and healing power, and these powers derive from the power of God's speech in Hebrew tradition to create, bless, and restore, or to judge, curse, and destroy. Whatever alternatives the auditor may have expected for the resolution, the narrator has secured the healing within Jewish heritage and embedded a Christian approach to healing in the logic of a rhetorical syllogism.

#### THE MARKAN VERSION (MARK 5. 24-34)

The Markan version is much longer than the Matthean version. The difference in length is comparable to the difference between the abbreviated

and expanded version of the Epameinondas *chreia* Theon presents in his *Progymnasmata*.<sup>32</sup> Theon's expanded version, like Mark's version, contains expansion in three places: (1) the narration in the first part; (2) the narration in the second part; and (3) the final saying. Theon expands the first part from:

Epameinondas

to:

- (a) Epameinondas was of course a good man even in time of peace,
- (b) but when war broke out between his country and the Lacedaemonians, he performed many brilliant deeds of courage;
- (c) as a Boeotarch at Leuctra, he triumphed over the enemy,
- (d) but while campaigning and fighting for his country, he died at Mantinea.

Theon expands the second part from:

while he was dying childless he said

to:

- (a) While he was dying of his wounds,
- (b) and his friends were grief stricken,
- (c) especially that he was dying childless,
- (d) he smiled and said . . .

Then, Theon expands the final saying from:

- (a) I have left two daughters—
- (b) the victory at Leuctra
- (c) and the one at Mantinea

to:

- (a) Stop grieving, friends,
- (b) for I have left you two immortal daughters:
- (c) two victories of our country over the Lacedaemonians,
- (d) the one at Leuctra, who is older,
- (e) and the younger, who has just been born to me at Mantinea.

The Markan form exhibits a comparable amount of additional material in the initial presentation of the woman (cf. Matt 9. 20–21 with Mark 5. 25–28), the account of Jesus' finding of the woman (cf. Matt 9. 22a with Mark 5. 29–33) and the final saying (cf. Matt 9. 22b with Mark 5. 34). Theissen interpreted the Markan version as a 'commenting-repeating' narrative in which the commenting parts present a complete narrative sequence, and the 'evaluations, thoughts, and sayings form its inner perspective, which the narrator deliberately stresses as the important part'.<sup>33</sup> Faith is connected with the inner drama and exhibits a faith which overcomes difficulties by crossing the boundary created by barriers of legitimacy.<sup>34</sup> For Theissen, then, faith is faith tested by difficulties in this story and throughout Mark.

A social-rhetorical approach calls attention to the sequence of actions in the Markan version which produces a qualitative rather than logical

progression. With a qualitative progression, the auditor cannot anticipate what the next step in the action will be. Rather, 'the presence of one quality prepares us for the introduction of another'.<sup>35</sup> This story merges techniques of biblical and Hellenistic prose styles as it intermingles digression about the woman's suffering under physicians (5. 25-26), inner dialogue that repeats part of the narration (5. 27-28), narrative interpretation of inner experiences (5. 29-30), and oblique reference to the woman's telling of the whole truth (5. 33).

The first elaborated part of the Markan version features the woman and her action. An elaborate digression explains that the woman had had her ailment for twelve years, that she had suffered under many physicians, that she had spent all her money, and that there was no improvement in her condition. When she heard about Jesus, she decided that touching his garment would bring healing. This digression sets the stage for the conclusion to the first part as the woman touches Jesus' garment, and her haemorrhage immediately ceases.

The healing of the woman, which both she and Jesus perceive, provides the transition from the first elaborated part to the second elaborated part. The narration exhibits this centrality by the repetition of 'immediately' (*εὐθὺς*):

- (a) And *immediately* the haemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed from her ailment.
- (b) And *immediately* Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, turned and said, . . .

In contrast to the Matthean version where Jesus' speech immediately picks up and completes the woman's speech, the Markan version features Jesus' perception picking up and completing the woman's perception. Inner perception, then, rather than inner logic, accompanies the healing. Jesus' verbal response in Mark is simply 'who touched my garments?'. After the disciples engage in a temporary annoyance, the woman's fearful approach and confession to Jesus is the turning point in the final part of the story. The elaboration of the woman's fears, thoughts, and actions balances the elaboration of her situation at the beginning of the story. As a result, there are four clauses in the opening comments:

- (a) she suffered much under many physicians,
- (b) and had spent all that she had,
- (c) and had not benefitted,
- (d) but rather became worse,

which are balanced with:

- (a) the woman came in fear and trembling,
- (b) knowing what had been done to her,
- (c) and fell down before him,
- (d) and told him the whole truth.



Only the Markan version explicitly mentions 'physicians' who were consulted at a severe loss to the woman, and the elaboration of her experiences with them shows the narrator's investment in this social reality. The narrator's elaboration of the woman's response exhibits a total transfer of attention from 'physicians' to Jesus. She has turned to Jesus with her emotion, her knowledge, her obeisance, and her speech.

It is interesting that his version of the story gives no prominence to the woman's final actions as 'public events': she fell down before *him* and told *him* the whole truth. She has done this as a result of Jesus' sole attention to finding her, despite the intrusive remarks of the disciples. When she comes to him this second time, he addresses her with an elaborated form of the saying:

- (a) Daughter,
- (b) your faith has made you well;
- (c) go in peace;
- (d) and be healthy from your ailment.<sup>36</sup>

This statement by Jesus can in no way be a healing statement. Rather, it unfolds an additional quality of the woman. She knew what she did, she knew she had been healed, and she told the whole truth. Now she is told that the reason for her healing was her faith, and the auditor sees that she has exhibited her faith not only by her initial act but also by her fear, trembling, obeisance, and honesty. In other words, as the positive qualities of Jesus unfold, so the positive qualities of the woman unfold. Jesus tells the woman to 'Go in peace'. This is a standard Jewish blessing deriving from biblical tradition.<sup>37</sup> Then he tells her, 'and be healthy from your affliction'. Theissen considers this statement to be a motif Mark has been unable to integrate in his composition, making it appear 'as though the woman had not already been healed'.<sup>38</sup> Surely this is not a correct view of the final comment. Given the narrator's concern about physicians and their dealings with the woman, he includes in his greeting a variation on the common Hellenistic valediction: *σεαυτοῦ ἐπιμελοῦ ἢ ὑγιαίνης*, 'take care of yourself so that you remain healthy'.<sup>39</sup> Jesus has combined a Jewish and Hellenistic blessing at the end of the story, creating a congenial social-rhetorical environment for a person who comes to Jesus from Jewish, Hellenic, or Jewish-Hellenic heritage.

Throughout the story, then, the action and the internal experiences of the action are primary in the Markan version. Jesus' control of the situation differs remarkably from the Matthean account. Instead of controlling the healing through the logic of naming, he controls the feelings and thoughts of the woman by calling forth 'fear', 'trembling', 'obeisance', and 'a full confession of the truth'. There is no emphasis on the final actions as 'public events'. Rather, the woman orients all her activities toward Jesus, and Jesus controls and interprets her emotions, knowledge, and action as

she crosses the boundary from the world of physicians to the sphere of Jesus' healing power. Instead of exploring the logic of healing, as does the Matthean story, the Markan version explores the emotional dynamics of allegiance to Jesus in a world containing pain, suffering, and loss.

#### THE LUKAN VERSION (LUKE 8. 42-48)

According to Theissen, Jesus, in the Lukan version, displays his miraculous knowledge and power before all the people with his statement 'someone touched me', when everyone including the woman denies knowledge of who touched Jesus. In this christological setting, the story exhibits the woman's progress from lying to giving thanks. Her confession before all the people gives the impression of entering a cultic domain in which God's saving act is proclaimed before the whole community.<sup>40</sup> This is a good start for understanding the story.

Social-rhetorical analysis explores the intricate progressive interaction among Jesus, the woman, the disciple Peter, and the crowd. This version achieves its end through balanced, thematic repetition as 'touched' is repeated four times (8. 44, 45, 46, 47), 'the crowds' is repeated twice (8. 42, 45), 'had a flow of blood' (8. 43) is reversed by 'immediately her flow of blood ceased' (8. 44), and 'could not be healed' (8. 43) is reversed by 'she had been immediately healed' (8. 47). In this version, the woman is revealed to all and professes in the presence of all why she touched Jesus and how she had been healed when she did it. In contrast to the Markan version, the woman does not simply interact with Jesus. Rather, she makes a public proclamation of his powers.

The nature of this story as a public witness 'in the presence of all' becomes central in a later version of the story in the Acts of Pilate 7. The story is narrated as follows:

And a certain woman named Berenice crying out from afar off said: 'I had an issue of blood and I touched the fringe of his garment, and the flowing of my blood was stopped which I had twelve years.' The Jews say, 'We have a law that a woman shall not come to give testimony.'

This version shares thirteen words in exactly the same form with the Lukan version,<sup>41</sup> and it builds the story from her public testimony at the end. The Acts of Pilate version differs remarkably, however, when it features criticism from Jews.

In the Lukan version, the ending comes as a finale to Jesus' speech twice before. He speaks first to the crowd, second to Peter, and last of all to the woman. Each response introduces new and important information. In contrast to the Matthean and Markan versions, no internal speech is presented for the woman. Nor is the woman's internal perception of the healing told

in narration. Without elaboration, the narration presents the woman who touches Jesus and is healed. When this occurs, Jesus asks who touched him. Peter's suggestion that the crowds are pressing around him allows Jesus to exhibit his special knowledge and present the rationale for his question: 'Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me' (8. 46). This version, then, brings Jesus' reasoning rather than the woman's into prominence. In this version of the story Jesus introduces the rhetorical syllogism, and this time the three terms necessary to evoke a complete syllogism are present in the initial saying. The terms are 'I/me', 'power going forth', and 'touching', and the syllogism is as follows:

Major premise: I possess power which goes forth from me when touching occurs.

Minor premise: I perceive that power has gone forth from me.

Conclusion: Therefore, someone touched me [because I did not touch someone of my own volition].

Jesus' statement evokes a major premise about himself: 'I possess power which goes forth from me when touching occurs.' Theissen is correct, then, to assert that Jesus displays his miraculous knowledge and power before all the people with his statement 'Someone touched me.'<sup>42</sup> In contrast to the Matthean story, where the woman's inner dialogue is articulated in direct speech, the Lukan version articulates Jesus' inner dialogue in direct speech. The emphasis has shifted from the woman's reasoning about herself to Jesus' reasoning about himself.

As the Lukan version shifts the emphasis to Jesus' reasoning, the woman's role shifts to telling her story in public. The woman's reasoning appears only obliquely, without direct speech, in the story which constitutes her public confession (8. 47). Instead of direct speech, a story within a story encounters the auditor as the woman comes forward trembling, falls down before Jesus and declares 'in the presence of all the people' why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

When Jesus' reasoning produces the tacit premise, 'I possess power which goes forth from me when touching occurs', and when the woman's story tells why she touched Jesus and how she was immediately healed when she did, an exceptional amount of attention has focussed on Jesus himself, first through his own words, then through the woman's story. In the social environment of the Hellenistic-Roman world, this portrayal of Jesus is coming dangerously close to excessive praise in a public setting where Jesus initiated the process with implicit self-praise. Jesus' final remark, however, graciously deflects excessive praise as it refers to the woman: 'Daughter, *your faith* has made you well. Go in peace.' In other words, in the Lukan version the narrator shows his awareness of the technique Plutarch discusses in *De Laude Ipsius*, 'On Praising Oneself'. Self praise can be inoffensive if a person transfers the praise to others in such a manner that they share the praise, as when Epameinondas said:

But it is *your doing*, men of Thebes; with *your help alone* I overthrew the Spartan empire in a day (Plut. Laude 542C).<sup>43</sup>

In a similar manner Jesus tells the woman: '*Your faith* has made you well. Go in peace.' (Luke 8. 48).

The Lukan version is characterized by qualitative progression which leads to Jesus' public announcement of his healing power, the woman's public declaration of the effect of his healing powers, and Jesus' generous diversion of praise from himself to the faith of the woman. Each step in the story occurs without the reader's ability to predict what the next step will be. The logic in the story is logic about Jesus and his powers, not about a logical progression from the woman's reasoning about healing to an occurrence of the healing. When the successive steps occur in the Lukan version, the reader accepts the progression as an appropriate unfolding of the qualities of the people who are interacting with one another. Elaboration occurs only to display Jesus' reasoning and the woman's public declaration. As a result, the reader only gets enough information at each step to understand what is occurring. At the end, the woman's public story is narrated only through oblique reference, but Jesus' gracious deflection of excessive praise occurs in direct speech. As a result, 'faith' is part of the woman's character in a setting where Jesus reveals his true character by deflecting the praise to the woman herself. This version of the story presents both the woman and Jesus to members of the Hellenistic-Roman world in the mode of positive qualities of character. The woman shows her true character by her honesty in public. Jesus in turn shows his true character by letting her share the credit for her healing.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all three versions of the story contain themes common to healings in the Hellenistic-Roman world, but each of the three versions contains a perspective and emphasis of its own. The Matthean version emphasizes the internal reasoning of the woman and Jesus' fulfilment of her reasoning in a statement which evokes a formal syllogism. This way of telling the story produces a logical progressive form which uses the power of speech within semitic tradition to create Christian doctrine about healing. The Markan version emphasizes actions, inner perceptions, and emotions as the woman crosses the boundary from the world of physicians to veneration of Jesus. Elaboration of her problems under physicians and elaboration of her feelings, thoughts, obeisance, and speech when she comes to Jesus emphasizes her turning toward Jesus with her total self, which is called 'faith' by Jesus. Jesus acknowledges this crossing of the boundary by adding to the Jewish blessing, 'Go in peace', a Hellenistic exhortation to 'be healthy from your affliction'. The Lukan version

emphasizes Jesus' reasoning about himself, the public declaration of Jesus' healing powers by the woman, and Jesus' deflection of praise from himself to the woman. This way of telling the story provides an occasion for appropriate self-praise by Jesus himself and appropriate praise of him by another person in the Hellenistic-Roman world. In these ways the three synoptic versions of the Healing of the Woman with the Flow reveal the social and rhetorical interaction of early Christian tradition with Greek-speaking people in the Mediterranean world.

## NOTES

[1] Heinz Joachim Held, 'Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories', G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 165-299; Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983).

[2] Manfred Hutter, 'Ein altorientalischer Bittgestus in Mt 9 20-22', *ZNTW* 75 (1984) 133-5.

[3] This method was first applied to the entire Gospel of Mark in Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). In this article the method is applied to one pericope.

[4] Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California, 1968, c1931) 123-83.

[5] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

[6] John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ?* (SBLDS 10; Missoula, Mont.: SBL, 1973) 42, 58-63.

[7] D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of Mark* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963) 112, 298-301; cf. W. H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 98-102.

[8] William L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (NICNT 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 189-90. In Mark and Luke the woman's ailment has occurred exactly as long as the young girl's life - twelve years. Matthew does not indicate the age of the girl.

[9] For the text of Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata*, see T. Christian Walz, *Rhetores Graeci* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: J. G. Cotta, 1832) I, 137-257; Leonhard von Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1854) II, 59-130. The 'preliminary' exercises with the *chreia*, according to Theon, *Progymnasmata* 210, 3-6 [Walz], included the following; see Vernon K. Robbins, 'Pronouncement Stories and Jesus' Blessing of the Children: A Rhetorical Approach', *Semeia* 29 (1983) 48-51:

- (a) ἀπαγγελία: a recitation in a clear version either in the same or different words;
- (b) κλίσις: inflectional versions, using different persons, numbers, and cases;
- (c) ἐπιφώνησις: comments on what was said or done;
- (d) ἀντιλογία: objections to what was said or done;
- (e) ἐπεκτείνεω: an expanded version;
- (f) συστέλλεω: an abbreviated version;
- (g) ἀνασκευάζεω: a refutation of the *chreia*;
- (h) κατασκευάζεω: a confirmation of the *chreia*.

[10] See George Howard's accurate description of the situation among the synoptics in 'Stylistic Inversion and the Synoptic Tradition', *JBL* 78 (1978) 375-89.

[11] It is certainly the case, *qua* W. R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964) 240-1, that the Markan version would result from the Lukan version only if the Matthean version, or something like it, also were present. But with some of the pericopes it will be helpful to distinguish between 'rhetorical' relationships and 'scribal' relationships. The primary 'rhetorical' features in the Lukan version are related to the Markan version, yet the display in Frans Neirynck's *The Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark* (BETL 37; Leuven: Leuven University, 1974) 101-5 shows a series of 'scribal' relationships between Luke and Matthew against Mark: ἰδοὺ, ἀρχων, [ ]λθ[ ], [θυγάτηρ, προσ[ελθοῦσα], τοῦ κρασπέδου, εἶπεν, ([θύγατ]ερ), ἐλθὼν, τὴν [οικ]ίαν, ὁ [Ἰησοῦς], (γάρ), αὐτῆς. The primary 'rhetorical' features of the Matthean version are related to the Markan version, with a significant series of 'scribal' relationships

to the Lukan version. See below, n. 41, for the 'rhetorical' and 'scribal' relation of Acts of Pilate 7 to the Lukan and Matthean versions.

[12] A thorough analysis of the role of the intercalated unit would address at least the topics of 'fear', 'trembling', 'amazement', 'ecstasy', 'faith', and 'telling' or 'not telling' in all versions of the woman who touched Jesus' garment, the raising of Jairus' daughter, the women at the empty tomb (Mark 16. 5-6, 8 par.), the healing of the epileptic boy (Mark 9. 14-29 par.), and the discussion after the withering of the fig tree (Mark 11. 22-25 par.). Sharon Dowd has discussed some of these issues in "Whatever You Ask in Prayer, Believe" (Mark 11. 22-5)', Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1986.

[13] Comparison of the texts in Kurt Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (Stuttgart: Württemberg, 1964) exhibits the common words in the three synoptic versions as follows:

καὶ γυνὴ αἴμ[ ] δώδεκα ἐτ[ ]  
ἐλθοῦσα ὀπισθεν ἤψατο τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ  
ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, θυγάτηρ/θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε.

[14] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 130-3.

[15] Epidauros 3, 4; Emma J. and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius I* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1945) 222; see Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 131-2.

[16] BAGD, 'σῶζω' 1c, 798.

[17] Held, 'Matthew as Interpreter', 216, 235. [18] *Ibid.*, 280-1.

[19] *Ibid.*, 281-3, 286. At this point Held is quoting A. Schlatter, *Die Kirche des Matthäus* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1929) 489.

[20] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 134, 138.

[21] Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124; Robbins, *Jesus*, 9. [22] Alter, *Art*, 68.

[23] *Ibid.* In this example by Alter, David's inner reasoning precedes the narration, but both sequences occur in Hebrew bible narrative.

[24] *Ibid.*, 65.

[25] Hutter, 'Bittgestus', 134-5.

[26] Held, 'Matthew as Interpreter', 283; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 134-5.

[27] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 132.

[28] Artur Weiser, 'πιστεύω', *TDNT VI*, 182-96. [29] Theon, *Progymnasmata* 208. 1-4 [Walz].

[30] Held, 'Matthew as Interpreter', 283, 286. [31] *Ibid.*, 217.

[32] Theon, *Progymnasmata* 213, 11-214, 4 [Walz]; see the Greek texts in Robbins, 'Pronouncement Stories', 49-50; Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986) I: 100, 102; James R. Butts, 'The "Progymnasmata" of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary', Ph.D. diss.; Claremont Graduate School, 1987, 215, 217.

[33] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 133.

[34] *Ibid.*, 134.

[35] Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 125; Robbins, *Jesus*, 9-10.

[36] The Matthean version of the saying is:

- (a) Take heart, Daughter,
- (b) Your faith has made you well.

[37] E.g., Judg 18. 6; 1 Sam 1. 17; 2 Sam 15. 9. [38] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 176.

[39] E.g., B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri IV* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1904) 743. 43; 745. 10; 746. 9-10; 805.

[40] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 135.

[41] The Greek text of Acts of Pilate 7 is in Aland, *Synopsis*, 193. The common words in Luke 8. 42-48 and Acts of Pilate 7 are the basis for the 'rhetorical' relationship between the two versions, and the woman's statement as a personal testimony exhibits the relationship:

καὶ γυνὴ (ἥτις/τις)  
(ἤψατο/ἤψάμην) τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ  
(ἔστη/ἔστάθη) ἡ ῥύσις τοῦ αἵματος [ ] ἐτῶν δώδεκα (ὑπάγω).

There is 'scribal' agreement of Acts of Pilate and Matthew against Luke in only one word: αἵμορροῦσα.

[42] Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 135.

[43] See Hans Dieter Betz, 'De Laude Ipsius (Moralia 539A-547F)', *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (SCHNT 4; ed. H. D. Betz; Leiden: Brill, 1978) 367-93.