

Copyright © 2001

Mi Sug Kim (Kang)

All rights reserved

A SOCIO-NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH TO JOHANNINE  
CHRISTOLOGY THROUGH CHARACTERIZATION OF  
WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

---

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

---

by  
Mi Sug Kim (Kang)

December 2001

**APPROVAL SHEET**

A SOCIO-NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH TO JOHANNINE  
CHRISTOLOGY THROUGH CHARACTERIZATION OF  
WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Mi Sug Kim (Kang)

Read and Approved by:

John B. Pollock (Chairperson)

Mark A. Seibert

Tom Schreier

Date July 6, 2001

**THESES Ph.D. .K56sa**  
**0199701489114**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATION .....	ix
PREFACE .....	x
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Women and Recent Johannine Scholarship .....	5
Justification and Use of Socio-narratological Approach .....	9
Limitations .....	10
Methodology .....	11
Cultural Codes .....	11
Character and Characterization .....	14
Means of Characterization .....	17
Thesis .....	19
Conclusion .....	20
2. CHRISTOLOGICAL FEATURES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN .....	22
The Divinity and Humanity of Jesus .. .	22
The Divinity of Jesus .....	23
The Humanity of Jesus .....	24

Chapter	Page
Key Concepts in Johannine Christology .....	25
Ἐγὼ εἰμί .....	25
The Messiah .....	27
Son of God .....	29
Son of Man .....	31
Rabbi and the prophet .....	33
The glory of God .....	34
Lord (Κύριε) .....	35
Lamb of God .....	36
The giver of life .....	37
Recent Approaches to the Christology of John .....	38
3. THE WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF SIGNS .....	44
The Beginning of the Gospels .....	44
Mary the Mother of Jesus (2:1-11) .....	47
Characterization by Literary Aspects .....	47
Characterization by Cultural Aspects .....	50
Dyadic personality .....	50
Kinship/οἶκος .....	53
Patron-client .....	56
Honor/shame .....	57
Characterization by Synkrisis .....	59

Chapter	Page
Jesus .....	60
The twelve .....	62
The headwaiter .....	63
Christological Implication .....	63
Summary .....	67
The Samaritan Woman (4:1-42) .....	68
Characterization by Literary Aspects .....	69
Characterization by Cultural Aspects .....	75
Patron-client .....	75
Characterization by Synkrisis .....	80
Other women .....	80
Jesus .....	82
The disciples .....	83
The townspeople .....	84
Christological Implication .....	85
Summary .....	88
Martha and Mary (11:1-44) .....	89
Characterization by Literary Aspects .....	89
Characterization by Cultural Aspects .....	94
Dyadic contract .....	94
Honor/shame .....	95

Chapter	Page
Personality features of the first century people . . . . .	96
Kinship/οἶκος . . . . .	97
Characterization by Synkrisis . . . . .	98
Jesus . . . . .	99
The twelve . . . . .	101
Other women . . . . .	102
Other characters. . . . .	104
Christological Implication . . . . .	104
Summary. . . . .	109
Mary of Bethany (12:1-8) . . . . .	110
Characterization by Literary Aspects . . . . .	111
Characterization by Cultural Aspects . . . . .	115
Kinship/οἶκος . . . . .	115
Limited goods. . . . .	116
Dyadic personality . . . . .	118
Characterization by Synkrisis . . . . .	119
Jesus . . . . .	120
Other women . . . . .	120
The twelve . . . . .	121
Christological Implication . . . . .	122
Summary . . . . .	124

Chapter	Page
Conclusion .....	125
4. THE WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF PASSION .....	127
The Women at the Cross (19:25-27) .....	127
Characterization by Literary Aspects .....	129
Characterization by Cultural Aspects .....	136
Kinship/οἶκος .....	137
Characterization by Synkrisis .....	139
Jesus .....	139
Mary .....	140
Beloved Disciple .....	142
The twelve .....	142
Christological Implication .....	143
Summary .....	147
Mary Magdalene (20:1-18) .....	148
Characterization by Literary Aspects .....	149
Characterization by Cultural Aspects .....	157
Kinship/οἶκος .....	157
Patron-client .....	158
Characterization by Synkrisis .....	159
Jesus .....	159
The twelve .....	160



Chapter	Page
Other women .....	161
Christological Implication .....	162
Summary.....	167
5. CONCLUSION .....	169
Characterization by Literary Aspects .....	169
Characterization by Cultural Aspects .....	172
Characterization by Synkrisis .....	173
Christological Implication .....	177
Conclusion .....	184
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	187

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>DRev</i>	<i>The Downside Review</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament—Supplement Series</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>RTL</i>	<i>Review of Theological Literature</i>
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>

## PREFACE

Praise the Lord who has sustained me so far in accomplishing this task.

Besides, I owe a great debt to many others as well. Special thanks are extended, first of all, to my committee of instruction: Professor John Polhill, who served as supervisor with patience and a caring heart, Professor Mark Seifrid, and Professor Thomas Schreiner.

Through this opportunity, I wish to recognize many others who have also provided support along the way. I am grateful to the heartfelt encouragement of parents, father (Jong Man Kang), mother (Sang Soon Lim), and mother-in-law (Boo Weol Son). I am also grateful to my uncle and aunt (Paul and Chris Seo) and friends (Bob and Irene Poff and Thomas Reeder) for their warm wishes and love.

Finally I wish to acknowledge the support of my husband, Jin, my daughters, Secil and Sejee; and my son Sehyun Kim.

To God alone be the glory.

Mi Sug Kim (Kang)

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2001

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

For centuries, Christians have struggled to settle upon some common view of the nature of Jesus of Nazareth. Central to this search has been the picture of Christ in the Fourth Gospel. In order to arrive at an adequate understanding of what John is saying about Christ, many approaches have been taken. For example, in order to achieve this goal William Loader selects a specific passage replete with christological themes and identifies the common christological elements. Then he suggests that in order to understand Johannine Christology one should note the repeated occurrences of these common christological elements in their various forms.<sup>1</sup> George Mlakuzhyil has attempted to acquire an adequate understanding of the Johannine Jesus by identifying a literary structure, focusing on the thematic relations of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> Bultmann has tried to achieve this goal by considering the incarnation as the central motif of Johannine Christology.<sup>3</sup> But how the multifaceted presentation of Christ in the Gospel of John might be understood coherently still remains as the challenge to be faced by Johannine scholars.

Although the issue of Johannine Christology has been given attention in an ever increasing volume of literature, few incorporate into their research materials related wholly to women. Johannine women appear at crucial points in John's Gospel. The fact

---

<sup>1</sup>William Loader, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989), 29-35.

<sup>2</sup>George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1987), 137-239.

<sup>3</sup>R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, ed. K. Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 2:40-92.

that all the Johannine women are placed intentionally is revealed in that they function as agents to reveal the identity of Jesus. The presence of the mother of Jesus alone testifies to this fact by her presence both in the beginning and at the end of Jesus' public ministry. The mother of Jesus together with Mary Magdalene proves the point more strongly in that women are present at the beginning of his mission, at the point of completing his mission by his death and at the moment of his resurrection and return to the Father where he was before. They are not only witnesses but also carriers of the revelation of Jesus. Therefore, women have much to say about the Christ of John. Thus, the specific goal of this work is to analyze the way that the Fourth Evangelist uses his characterization of these women to portray the Johannine Jesus. Perhaps the justification for this study is found in the hope that the Johannine women may provide a key to an adequate understanding of the Johannine Jesus, thus letting the disputed issues concerning the multifaceted presentation of Christ in the Gospel of John rest in peace.

The prominence that women have in the Gospel of John has been well noted by Turid Karlsen Seim: "Next to the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of John offers rich material, both in quality and quantity, for examining the roles of women in Early Christianity."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, women's roles in John are unique and significant. For instance, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is important both within the literary structure and meaning of the whole Gospel. According to Grassi the Gospel can be examined according to the following chiastic structure in terms of sign: (1) The wedding feast at Cana (2:1-12); (2) The raising of the dying son of the official (4:46-54); (3) The healing on the sabbath at Bethesda (5:1-16); (4) The loaves' multiplication and the bread of life (6:1-71); (5) The healing of the blind man on the sabbath (9:1-41); (6) The raising of Lazarus (11:1-41); (7) The hour of Jesus and issue of blood and water (19:25-38). He then asserts,

We immediately notice the striking parallels: signs 3 and 5 are both healing on the

---

<sup>4</sup>Turid Karlsen Seim, "Roles of Women in the Gospel of John," in *Aspects on the Johannine Literature*, ed. Lars Hartman and Birger Olsson (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 57.

sabbath; 2 and 6 contain the same theme of death to life because of Jesus' word; 1 and 7 complement one another as beginning and end, with Jesus' mother present at both. . . . The essential place of Mary is strengthened by this literary structure of the seven signs: Jesus' mother is present at the first sign at Cana (2:1-11) and at the seventh sign at the cross (19:25-37).<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, it appears that a close examination of Mary is essential for understanding Johannine women.

The study of the Samaritan woman (4:4-42) is very important because of the unique role given to her in the Gospel. The fact that both the disciples and the Samaritan woman were shocked by Jesus' speaking with this woman emphasizes her unique role in the understanding of the Johannine women as characters.

The examination of Mary and Martha in the Gospel of John is also significant since their roles differ from those in Luke. In John Martha does not altogether fit the traditional Christian image of Martha who is only concerned with domestic matters. According to Moltmann-Wendel, Luke describes Martha as rather common. Mary had an aura of holiness, whereas Martha breathed cooking and the smell of the kitchen.<sup>6</sup> In John Martha takes the initiative and leaves the house to meet Jesus. She makes a remark which contains all the grief, all the anger and all the disappointment of the last few days: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother need not have died." She discusses theology with Jesus and responds with a confession of Christ which stands out as a special climax in the New Testament: "You are Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world."<sup>7</sup> Martha's story and confession suggest that she was a leading personality, like the apostles in the early church. She was a tenacious, wise, combative, competent, emancipated woman with many practical responsibilities in the community.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Joseph A. Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 117-18.

<sup>6</sup>Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women around Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 18-19.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

In Luke Mary is portrayed as quiet, restrained, and a good listener (Lk 10:39). She does not seem to play a significant role except that she shows what behavior is proper for women in public. In John Mary, however, has her own story in the story of Jesus (12:1-8). The words of Moltmann-Wendel indicate that Mary definitely represents a common element in the presentation of Johannine women:

John's Mary story is the story of a woman who becomes herself. Even in the Lazarus story she remains in the crowd, does not detach herself from it and does not hear Jesus' voice; she therefore is not one of his, has not yet been grasped by him and has not become independent (Jn 10:3f.) But then she discovers how she can offer herself, her faith, her love. If Martha has felt the reality of the resurrection, Mary experiences the nearness of Jesus to death, the danger, the anguish which she herself feels in many little anxieties.<sup>9</sup>

Mary Magdalene has the most unusual role of being the first one in John's Gospel to see the risen Jesus and bring the message of his coming ascension to the rest of the disciples. Turid Seim emphasizes the important role of Mary saying, "Mary of Magdala among the female disciples has the same priority as Peter among the male."<sup>10</sup> This fact alone approves the close examination of Mary of Magdala as a character. It is interesting to note that though there is nothing about her in John's Gospel before she appears at the cross, her presence there and the events following point to a special relationship between her and Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

It seems apparent that the role of women genuinely coincides with an explicit interest of the Gospel of John itself. Turid Seim emphasizes the legitimacy of studying the female characters in John by saying,

Even more than in Luke, women are main actors in scenes that are quantitatively dominating and of great theological importance. Furthermore, they are presented as having a remarkable singleness of purpose, acting with a kind of striking intentionality and decisiveness.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>10</sup>Seim, "Roles of Women," 63. See also the argument by Martin Hengel, "Maria Magdalena und die Frauen als Zeugen," in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel*, ed. O. Betz et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 243-56.

<sup>11</sup>Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes*, 126.

<sup>12</sup>Seim, "Roles of Women," 57.

The passages and women in question are as follows: the mother of Jesus (2:1-12); the Samaritan woman (4:4-42); Martha and Mary (11:1-44); Mary and Martha (12:1-8); the mother of Jesus, her sister Mary the wife of Clopas (19: 25-27); Mary of Magdala (20:1-18).

### **Women and Recent Johannine Scholarship**

An apparent reason why Johannine scholars for centuries have overlooked the materials on women in John is that the Gospel of John is unique in its contents and theology. Thus, recent criticism of the Gospel has been occupied by historical, sociological, and theological concerns. Another reason may be that “for many others the women are simply not an issue.”<sup>13</sup> But the disposition to overlook the women may be inherent in the historical-critical method which has dominated biblical studies. The problem is that historical critics are both selective and subjective in their determination of which passages will open a window on to the world of the Gospel’s original audience.<sup>14</sup>

John’s women, however receive some attention through the studies which consider the status of women in the entire New Testament or the Bible as a whole.<sup>15</sup> In addition, during the late seventies and eighties, one can also witness several contributions to the study of women in John. In 1976, for instance, Raymond Collins wrote a short article in which he sought to identify characters in order to provide a basic insight into the

---

<sup>13</sup>Kevin Dale Goins, “The Narrative Function of the Women in Mark” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 6.

<sup>14</sup>According to Kingsbury, this problem of the historical-critical method is due to the assumption of redaction criticism that the text itself can enlighten the critic about the historical circumstances in which it arose (Jack Dean Kingsbury, “Reflections on the Reader of Matthew’s Gospel,” *NTS* 34 [1988]: 446).

<sup>15</sup>Evelyn Stagg and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978); Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979); Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women around Jesus*; Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus’ Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); idem, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).



meaning of the Gospel, the tradition that lay behind it, and the purpose for which it was compiled. His approach, which utilized the redaction-critical method, recognized women as symbolic characters of the individuals who represent a type of faith-response to Jesus. Collins' view is well indicated in his statement, "various persons were chosen from the common Gospel tradition or selected from his own tradition by the homilist in order to illustrate some point about the nature of faith, or lack of it, in Jesus Christ . . . . It is therefore from the perspective of his or her representative capacity that the appearance of each of these personages in the Fourth Gospel must be understood."<sup>16</sup> He undertook a lengthier examination of Johannine characters to reveal their functionary purpose in the text along the lines of redaction criticism. His approach is limited in understanding the women as characters because he does not pay attention to the character traits.

Another study on Johannine women was offered by Raymond E. Brown in 1975.<sup>17</sup> This article sought to identify the position of women in the fourth Gospel. In his hermeneutical exercise, Brown identifies the Samaritan woman in a missionary function and Mary Magdalene in a quasi-apostolic role. This article can be regarded rather as one practice among many hermeneutical exercises and does not reveal much of character traits.

The decade of the eighties witnessed a shift from the historical-critical method to the literary approach. Among them is an article written by Sandra M. Schneiders.<sup>18</sup> Assuming that the Gospel text is not so much a source of historical information as it is religious literature, Schneiders attempts to show that the function of Johannine women is "to bear witness to the faith of the first Christians and thereby to enlighten the faith

---

<sup>16</sup>Raymond F. Collins, "The Representative Figures in the Fourth Gospel," *DRev* 94 (1976): 31-32.

<sup>17</sup>Raymond E. Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *TS* 36 (1975): 688-99.

<sup>18</sup>Sandra M. Schneiders, "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church," *BTB* 12 (1982): 34-45.

understanding of the reader in such a way as to challenge him or her to ongoing conversion and increased fidelity to Christ.”<sup>19</sup> The article, however, concludes with similar remarks of previous studies of Johannine women in that her study does not yield more results in its portrayal of Johannine women than did studies employing historical-critical methods. In her conclusion, Schneiders states,

They are privileged recipients of three of Jesus’ most important self-revelations: his messiahship, glorification and its salvific effects given to his disciples. . . . We have seen that women officially represent the community in the expression of its faith (Martha), its acceptance of salvation (Mary Magdalene), and its role as witness to the Gospel (Samaritan Woman, Mary Magdalene). Two women in John hold the place occupied by Peter in the Synoptics: Martha as confessor of faith and Mary Magdalene as recipient of the Easter protophany and the commission as apostle to the Church.<sup>20</sup>

Another article which deals exclusively with women in John is “Roles of Women in the Gospel of John” written by Turid Karlsen Seim.<sup>21</sup> By her eclectic hermeneutical approach, Turid Seim seems to claim more about the status and roles of women in John. Johannine women show that following Jesus involves transformation of one’s values and radical adjustment of social roles. For example, at the cross, Mary mother of Jesus experiences the transformation of the genetic code; a new family is offered. The new family represents “a social alternative, a ‘counterworld’ replacing the one they have had to leave behind.”<sup>22</sup> With regard to Mary Magdalene, her prominent leadership in the Christian community is recognized by the fact that neither Mary Magdalene, Peter nor the beloved disciple were given priority in witnessing the resurrection of Jesus. In the words of Seim,

Each of them is given some priority, and only when their various pieces of evidence are gathered together does the witness become complete. Provided that a prominent position in the resurrection story may be connected with an authoritative and prominent position in the Christian community, this apportionment among Mary of

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>21</sup>Seim, “Roles of Women,” 56-73.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 65.

Magdala, Peter and the beloved disciple could imply an egalitarian interest in the leadership of the Johannine community.<sup>23</sup>

The Samaritan woman is said to experience a radical adjustment of social role in that her missionary function is obviously “a public role, and in addressing both women and men her work is not confined to a female context.”<sup>24</sup> As she states in the introduction that her emphasis is “on description rather than on explanation, the description not being dependent on any specific terminology or methodological frame of reference,”<sup>25</sup> she does not attempt a programmatic narrative analysis of characterization. In addition, though Seim utilizes some background information, she still leaves much of the general cultural context unexplored. For example, she fails to take into consideration the fact that the status of Johannine women is different from each other: Mary the mother of Jesus is a married woman and in parent relationship with Jesus; the Samaritan woman is the representative of the group; and Mary and Martha can be regarded as widows living with their brother.<sup>26</sup> In terms of character analysis of women, such a fact should be incorporated into the analysis.

As far as literary criticism is concerned, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, written by Alan Culpepper, is the ground-breaking work on Johannine studies.<sup>27</sup> The application of narrative criticism opened another way to appreciate the Gospel text better. Especially characters of the Fourth gospel are revealed and appreciated more than ever by the

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>26</sup>Malina citing Cutileiro points out that “there exists the consequent emotional closeness and affective ‘symbiosis’ of mothers and sons.” In this article, he also adds that the individuals of the first century world possess “dyadic personality.” In other words, it would make no sense at all to ascribe anything to personal and uniquely individual psychological motives or introspectively generated reasons and motivations to examine the individual. Besides, the first century lacks the “introspective conscience of the West” (Bruce Malina, “Dealing with Biblical [Mediterranean] Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers,” *BTB* 19 [1989]: 127-39).

<sup>27</sup>Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

method of characterization. Culpepper seems to adopt a two-category distinction: Jesus as the protagonist and all others as minor characters. His classification appears to be over-simplified. This distinction cannot be fair on the part of the characters because the role of the characters varies; some of them are more complex characters than others. Besides, even though the significance of the characters is pointed out, except for the mention of the Samaritan woman, women characters are not even mentioned in Culpepper's book. This fact warrants a more extensive character analysis of Johannine women.

### **Justification and Use of Socio-Narratological Approach**

The above cursory summary of studies concerning the characterization of Johannine women explains the need of a more extensive character analysis utilizing the social-scientific study of life in the first century to portray Johannine women. The literary approach treats the text as "narrations of a succession of events." Every narrative, however, is also "a socially symbolic act."<sup>28</sup> "A narrative--either overtly or covertly--assumes, utilizes, or controverts elements of the cultural milieu in which it was created."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, in this study, it seems essential to utilize what is called "a socio-narratological approach," a perspective which understands the critical role that cultural codes play in any narrative. The method of a socio-narratological approach will serve as a link to bring the perspectives together of both literary analyses and analyses of the cultural contexts in which the narratives were created.

The value of this approach to evaluate Johannine women as characters is obvious. First of all, such a method has never been applied for the portrait of the Johannine women. Secondly, the cultural context is essential for understanding the text.

---

<sup>28</sup>Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 9, 31-32.

<sup>29</sup>David B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991), 9.

Gowler states,

A symbiotic relationship exists, for example, between characterization in a narrative and the narrative's cultural context; the cultural scripts inherent in any text are an important form of implicit communication between the implied reader and the implied author.<sup>30</sup>

He further claims that "Nowhere is the importance of cultural contexts seen more clearly than in the portrayal of characters and their actions."<sup>31</sup> The statements by Robert Higbie make the consideration of cultural context indispensable: "In pre-modern society identity was generally equated with social role. . . . Pre-modern individual's character was seen as public and was defined in relation to other such 'characters,' much like a letter in a word is defined by the other letters."<sup>32</sup>

### **Limitations**

This study, however, does not utilize a specific sociological theory. It is only concerned about the general cultural context that existed in the first-century Mediterranean world. This presents a limitation to this study, because utilizing the general cultural context does not appear to be a thorough method to apply for drawing out the implications which a specific text possesses. This approach, however, helps us to approach the text more objectively without imposing any dogmatic theory or subjective opinion on the text. Thus, the general cultural context is applied to help to elucidate character traits aiming at a deeper understanding and appreciation of Johannine women as characters. On the other hand, I am assuming a specific historical and sociological setting; that is, the Johannine community as a sect to which the Gospel is addressed. This postulation is strongly supported by many scholars. For example, Wayne Meeks<sup>33</sup> and

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>32</sup>Robert Higbie, *Character and Structure in the English Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1984), 64.

<sup>33</sup>Wayne Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972): 44-72.

Robin Scroggs<sup>34</sup> postulate a Johannine community as a sect, arguing that the whole early Christian movement was sectarian. Following this line of approach, Raymond Brown assumes a more isolated sectarian community in that the Johannine community as a sect had broken communion with most other Christians who were sectarian.<sup>35</sup>

The primary focus of this study is upon characterization and how cultural codes are involved in that process. In doing so, this dissertation hopes to contribute to disclosing who the Johannine Jesus is. Another limitation for this study is that it does not intend to treat all the key concepts of Johannine Christology that appear in the Gospel, but only those christological concepts that are pertinent to the materials related to the women. As far as the materials in discussion are concerned, they can provide a better understanding of the Johannine Jesus by gaining deeper insights about Johannine women as characters in relation to Jesus and of their functions in the Johannine community by utilizing the method of characterization supplemented by analyses of cultural contexts that are implicit in the Gospel of John.

## **Methodology**

### **Cultural Codes**

By utilizing cultural codes which are consistent with the background of the Scriptures,<sup>36</sup> the interpreter can be empowered by the text's world view. These cultural codes are "part of the repertoire of the social matrix in which these narratives are

---

<sup>34</sup>Robin Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults--Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. J. Neusner, 4 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 2: 1-23.

<sup>35</sup>Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 14-15.

<sup>36</sup>In this regard, New Testament studies owe many thanks to cultural anthropologists who study the Mediterranean area. The cultural patterns that have been covered by cultural anthropological analyses are already utilized in the study of New Testament by such pioneers as Edwin A. Judge, Wayne Meeks, John Elliott, Jerome H. Neyrey and Bruce Malina.

imbedded.”<sup>37</sup> This study, however, focuses on the prevalent cultural codes that prove to be beneficial for interpretation. Some of the more important first-century cultural codes are as follows: “honor/shame,” “dyadic personality,” “patron-client contract,” and “limited good,” “kinship,” and “purity rules.”

Honor means a person’s (group’s) feeling of self-worth and the public, social acknowledgment of that worth. Shame means sensitivity for one’s own reputation, sensitivity to the opinion of others. In the areas of social life where male and female share a common collective honor, for example, the family, village, or city, honor and shame are applicable to both male and female. In terms of everyday, concrete conduct, the application of honor and shame cultural codes becomes gender-specific. At the same time, an individual’s honor is closely related to the honor of his or her family and to a social group to which he or she belongs. Consequently, the people of the first-century were very interested in maintaining or increasing collective or corporate honor because they perceived their identity in terms of a group such as family, village and region. Malina introduces two types of groupings where the collective honor is at issue: Natural groupings and voluntary groupings. Natural groupings are decided by birth, residence, nationality, and social class. One has no control, for example, over whether one is born physically and symbolically into the group. Voluntary groupings are formed by a person’s choice or result from contracts. In natural groupings, both internal opinions as well as public opinions are operative, while public opinion is considered sovereign in voluntary groupings. In both groupings, “the head of the group is responsible for the honor of the group with reference to outsiders, and symbolizes the group’s honor as well.”<sup>38</sup> In the book of signs (John 1-12) women’s actions can be seen in terms of their attempt to gain honor by joining Jesus’ group. For example, the Samaritan woman left

---

<sup>37</sup>Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*, 15.

<sup>38</sup>Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 51.

her water jar and went to the town to tell the town folk about Jesus. Her action demonstrates that by accepting Jesus as her patron and showing to the town folk who Jesus really is, she attempts to receive honor. In her world, honor was far away from widows or single women without the protection of males.

The concept of “limited good” is that in the first century all goods in life such as land, wealth, prestige, blood, health, friendship and love, manliness, honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety existed in finite, limited quantity and were always in short supply. Two kinds of social interactions are found: horizontal alliances involving people of equal social rank and vertical alliances involving people of different social ranks. What is a major concern of the Gospel is the vertical alliances in which the persons on a higher social plane serve as patrons for their clients on a lower social plane. This patron-client relationship provides things not normally available in the village or urban neighborhood, things that at times are badly needed.<sup>39</sup> Patron-client contracts exist in a variety of concrete forms, but three core characteristics can be found in all such relationships: (1) The alliance is clearly asymmetrical, and the patron has access to resources that would otherwise be denied to the client; (2) The patron is not altogether altruistic and expects the client to reciprocate in some fashion (e.g., labor for or deference to the patron); (3) The relationship is an informal one, usually with a long term interpersonal obligation to continue the alliance. The recognition of the concept of limited good and patron/client contract may yield a different perspective concerning women in John. For example, this cultural implication seems to be inherent in the Cana-story. Mary makes Jesus become like a patron who provides the goods, the wine.<sup>40</sup> By initiating the miracle, Mary serves in the role of a broker who tries to persuade the town folk to enter the vertical alliance with Jesus as the Son of God, which is also the role of

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>40</sup>Although John never refers Jesus’ mother as “Mary,” for convenience this writer will use her traditional name “Mary” throughout the dissertation.



Jesus as a broker who brings people to God the patron through himself.

Kinship is another cultural aspect which may increase the understanding of the text profoundly. The family or kinship group was central in first-century social organization; the household was the basic building block of society; it was the primary focus of personal loyalty and it held supreme sway over individual life. Family integrity was to be valued above all.<sup>41</sup> This cultural implication of the household seems to be inherent in the relationships of the first-century people. The recognition of these kinship features can be helpful in understanding the characters. For instance, the relationship of mother and son is a prominent feature to be recognized in the story of Cana; kinship features can illuminate the relationship between the brother and sisters of Bethany (John 11-12).

The above categories show examples of how cultural codes are inherent in literature and demonstrates the importance of their recognition. They can provide clues to understand the basic premises and sets of assumptions in the text. A more complete knowledge of the cultural contexts of the first century will give us a better understanding of the New Testament. In the words of David Gowler,

Any methodology of character analysis has to encompass the protean approach necessitated by the symbiotic relationship between characterization in a narrative and that narrative's cultural context. . . . A socio-narratological approach seeks to integrate these two concerns into a cohesive methodology, where a narrative-critical perspective of characterization is merged with a knowledge of the socio-cultural and literary patterns of communication in the first century and inherent in the text. . . .<sup>42</sup>

### **Character and Characterization**

The Gospel of John is now generally recognized as an appropriate subject for studies of a narrative-critical nature since the ground-breaking work of Alan Culpepper. In *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* Culpepper demonstrates that “the Fourth Gospel develops narration, themes, characterization, ironies, and symbolism with a great deal of

---

<sup>41</sup>Bruce J. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London: Routledge, 1996), 52.

<sup>42</sup>Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*, 26.

internal consistency.”<sup>43</sup> Since the goal of this study is to examine the characters of Johannine women and their functions, this study demands a method attuned to the narrative dynamics of the Gospel. Therefore, a narrative-critical method rather than a historical-critical one is preferred.

Narrative criticism focuses on the text in a communication model of speech-act theory. It primarily deals with the narrative text which includes author (a sender), narrative (a message) and implied reader (a receiver).<sup>44</sup> Since the narrator and the narratee are part of the narrative, the narrative text is itself the complete medium of communication from author to reader through the narrative.<sup>45</sup> Powell defines a narrative as any work of literature that tells a story. Narratives have two aspects: story and discourse. Story is the content of the narrative which consists of events, characters, and settings. Discourse refers to the form in which a story is told or “how the story is told.”<sup>46</sup> It includes such elements essential to story-telling as point of view, narrator, standards of judgment, style, narrative patterns, and other literary features.<sup>47</sup> In practice most narrative critics approach the text in an “analytic” fashion by focusing on plot, character, setting, and point of view as individual components of a literary work.<sup>48</sup>

Characterization is conceived by most literary critics as a function of the entire literary work, not just particular passages. According to Baruch Hochman, characterization assumes the entire context of a literary work. Hochman states,

The characters themselves figure more centrally or less centrally in various works,

---

<sup>43</sup>Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, ix.

<sup>44</sup>Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 19.

<sup>45</sup>Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 150-51.

<sup>46</sup>Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 23. See also Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 19.

<sup>47</sup>David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 35-36; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 23-24.

<sup>48</sup>Goins, “The Narrative Function of Women,” 33.

but they always derive their qualities from the text as a whole. Indeed, when characters take shape in our imaginations as whole, coherent, consecutive creatures that seem analogous to the people that we know in life, the impression of their wholeness tends to rest not on them as they are in and for themselves but on them as they are generated and sustained by the text as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

The study of characterization, then, like narrative studies in general, assumes that the text is a coherent connected whole, and it is this assumption which separates the historical critic from the literary critic.

Narrative criticism not only recognizes characterization as an essential component of story, it also provides the critic with a vital key to understand how it functions in any text: Whatever characters do or say or represent they must serve under the governing principle of the whole work.<sup>50</sup>

This study aims at gaining the significance and meaning of the text itself as conveyed through the narrative components of characterization, setting, plot, and rhetoric. This goal also speaks for the necessity of a cultural and historical matrix for the interpretation of a text. The cultural and historical matrix is indispensable because characters in ancient literature are virtually incomprehensible without a clear understanding of the cultural processes which influence the text.<sup>51</sup> Bruce Malina also points out that it is doubtful whether a critic can understand a character's actions without first recognizing the actor's behavioral motivation; to understand the "why" of behavior requires an understanding of the cultural matrix in accordance with or against which a character acts.<sup>52</sup> Since the main focus of this study is on the Johannine women as characters and how they function in the Gospel of John, it is necessary to describe more about both character and characterization.

---

<sup>49</sup>Baruch Hochman, *Character in Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 64-65.

<sup>50</sup>Mary Doyle Springer, *A Rhetoric of Literary Character: Some Women of Henry James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 14-18.

<sup>51</sup>David B. Gowler, "Characterization in Luke: A Socio-Narratological Approach," *BTB* 19 (1989): 54.

<sup>52</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 17-18.

Recent work on narrative criticism of the Gospels has emphasized plot and story, but very little has been done with characterization. There seem to be two basic reasons for this. First, a character is a troublesome construct to conceptualize; a theoretical issue concerning the fact whether characters in any text are persons or words has not been resolved.<sup>53</sup> Second, “a number of literary-critical methodologies have appeared in the last fifty years which have undermined the role of character in fiction.”<sup>54</sup> The need for studies of characterization in the Gospels, however, is urgent because the understanding of characters may be partially connected to the understanding of other areas of inquiry, such as Christology or theological concerns.<sup>55</sup> How then can literary criticism help to clarify the characters that are portrayed in biblical narratives? To address this question is the burden of the following section.

**Means of Characterization.** The story is presented according to the narrator’s evaluative point of view which the reader must accept in reading the story. For example, the evaluative point of view of Jesus is true all the time because Jesus is presented as equal with God in the Gospel of John. The narrator, however, utilizes various means to portray characters. Literary critics recognize two basic methods: telling the reader about the character or by showing the reader what the characters are like by both “having them speak and act and having others talk about them and react to them.”<sup>56</sup>

The portrayal of characters can be achieved by both direct and indirect means. Direct means, which provide the most explicit characterization, include direct definition, the overt naming or judgment of someone’s qualities. Direct definition guides the reader

---

<sup>53</sup>Fred W. Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels,” *Semeia* 63 (1994): 3-4.

<sup>54</sup>Goins, “The Narrative Function of Women,” 42.

<sup>55</sup>Burnett, “Characterization,” 3.

<sup>56</sup>Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 52; Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 101; Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 3-20.

directly and clearly. It is given the highest possible authority in the presentations of characters when it is the words of an omniscient, reliable narrator.<sup>57</sup>

Indirect means involves the speech of the characters, their actions, their physical appearance, and mannerisms.<sup>58</sup> For example, the observation of both form and content of characters' speech is important because they can tell about their social standing and relationships with other characters. Actions of characters which include not only acts of commission, but also acts of omission and contemplated acts can help define characters more clearly. Such things as physical features, clothing, movement and gestures are also important data concerning characterization.<sup>59</sup>

Indirect method of characterization also needs to consider a particular environment where a character is placed. Not only physical setting but also cultural, social, racial, religious and family background can be of great importance to the process of characterization.<sup>60</sup> In addition, Mieke Bal mentions a character's gender, because the character's sex creates certain behavioral expectations which may be fulfilled or frustrated by the ensuing story.<sup>61</sup>

The use of analogy is also an important aspect for indirect characterization.

Joel Williams explains analogy as follows:

When two different characters are presented in similar circumstances, the similarities or differences in their responses emphasize the distinctive traits of both.

---

<sup>57</sup>According to Gowler, the level of authority concerning direct definition is evaluated upon a scale of descending reliability and explicitness. While direct definition has most explicitness in terms of clarity, the level of its authority ranges from the highest authority to unreliable authority. For example, information provided by the omniscient narrator or Jesus has higher authority than that supplied by other characters (Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend*, 55-61).

<sup>58</sup>Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, JSOTSup, 70 (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1989), 64-67; Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*, 56-57. On mannerisms, see Robin Macauley and George Lanning, *Technique in Fiction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 64-69.

<sup>59</sup>S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), 65-66; Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend*, 72-73.

<sup>60</sup>Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 66.

<sup>61</sup>Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, 48.

This means of characterization is less explicit than the presentation of a character's actions and words, because it requires the reader to make inferences concerning the actions and words of two characters rather than one character.<sup>62</sup>

For example, characterization by analogy is clearly operative in the story of Mary and Martha (John 11- 12). In the Lazarus story, Mary is portrayed as quiet and restrained, thus remains in the crowd even when Jesus calls. In chapter 12, this quiet and restrained Mary is described in stark contrast with a male disciple Judas Iscariot. She is in conflict even with a male. She demonstrates her total commitment to Jesus in public showing her willingness to sacrifice as opposed to the male disciple's selfish desire. This contrast not only characterizes the male disciples, but also emphasizes more distinctively the traits of the women characters.

Finally, the aspect of human relationship is also an important clue to characterization. Harvey states the importance,

By far the most important of contexts is the web of human relationship in which any single character must be enmeshed. So much of what we are can only be defined in terms of our relations with other people.<sup>63</sup>

The way characters relate to Jesus or other characters can clearly reveal their character.

### **Thesis**

The study of Johannine Christology is an ongoing subject that interests many scholars until this time because it affects Christian faith as a whole. In attempting to have a better understanding about John's Christology, especially the different presentation of Jesus, scholars have used various methods such as "Text-Centred Approaches," "Theological-Christological Approaches," "Literary-Christological Approaches," and "Historical-Christological Approaches." As mentioned in the introduction, even though women in John appear at a crucial point of Jesus' ministry, scholars either ignored the materials on women in John considering them as insignificant or simply overlooked them

---

<sup>62</sup>Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel*, JSNTSup 102 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 65.

<sup>63</sup>W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 52.

because the women are not an issue to them. The thesis to be tested in this dissertation is that women play a key role for the understanding of Johannine Christology.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to achieve a better understanding of the Johannine Jesus by gaining deeper insights about Johannine women as characters in relation to Jesus and of their functions in the Johannine community by utilizing the method of characterization supplemented by analyses of cultural contexts that are implicit in the Gospel of John. Following the characterization of the women by the cultural and literary analysis, each section provides christological implications, which disclose who the Johannine Jesus is in each pericope.

Chapter two describes the major christological features in the Gospel of John. The key christological concepts discussed in this chapter are directly relevant for the understanding of the christological implications which each pericope presents. This chapter also includes the recent approaches and the scholarly discussion on Johannine Christology, which reveals the need for this kind of study.

Chapter three focuses on the women who encounter Jesus in the Book of Signs (2-12). Chapter four deals with the women who appear in the second half of the gospel called the Book of Passion.

Both chapters deal with individual episodes according to the following manner in relation to the Gospel's plot as it unfolds. First, in each episode, the direct and indirect means of characterization are explored. Second, in constructing character traits more accurately, each episode is treated in its cultural context recognizing cultural codes inherent in the text. Third, since much of what characters are is defined in terms of their relationship with other characters, a special effort is made to compare and contrast the women with the other characters to whom they are related such as Jesus, the disciples, other women and other characters. This method broadens the analysis of women's

relationships, thus providing a more comprehensive assessment of their function in the narrative. The method of comparison and contrast, termed *Synkrisis*, was one of the standard exercises practiced by students of rhetoric in the New Testament period and late antiquity.<sup>64</sup> The rhetorical nature of the Gospels justifies its application to the Gospels.<sup>65</sup> Lastly, each pericope is concluded with Christological implications that are uncovered in order to enhance the understanding of who the Johannine Jesus is.

Chapter five contains the conclusion. The concluding chapter summarizes the results of this study in an attempt to find out the purpose behind the Gospel's portrayal of women. In this chapter the goal that was set out in the introductory chapter--who the Johannine Jesus is and how do we understand Johannine Christology--is answered.

---

<sup>64</sup>George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 22-23.

<sup>65</sup>William L. Lane, "Hebrews 1-8," *WBC*, vol. 47A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), lxxii-lxxviii. Lane asserts this aspect by saying, "Rhetorical criticism has been fostered by the fact that Greco-Roman rhetoric is clearly systematized and is set forth in extant handbooks from the NT era. The NT documents were written in the context of hellenistic culture, and the education center of that culture was in the inculcation of rhetoric. Even those writers of the NT who had not received formal training in the rhetorical schools would have been influenced by public speeches in the marketplace and elsewhere in urban centers."



CHAPTER 2  
CHRISTOLOGICAL FEATURES  
IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

This chapter is to introduce some of the major Johannine christological themes, which will set the stage for an understanding of the christological emphasis in each pericope related to women in John.

The uniqueness of the Gospel of John is stated well in the words of C. K. Barrett that for John Jesus is the Gospel and the Gospel is Jesus. As a result christological titles in John presuppose a different understanding compared to those that appear in the Synoptic Gospels. For example, in the Synoptic Gospels, “Jesus as ‘Son of God’ demonstrates His obedience to God, and ‘Son of man’ points to His nature of a heavenly being while in the Johannine Gospel ‘Son of God’ means one who shares the nature of God, ‘Son of man’ one who shares the nature of man.”<sup>1</sup>

**The Divinity and Humanity of Jesus**

The Johannine Christology exhibits two opposite natures of Jesus: one as the eternal Logos who is identified with God yet distinguishable from him (1:1-2) and the other as a very human Jesus, in fact the son of Joseph (1:45) because the eternal Logos expressed himself in flesh and made his dwelling among us (1:14a). Thus the recognition of this dual aspect of the nature of Jesus is fundamental for the understanding of the Johannine Jesus and of the Gospel as a whole.

---

<sup>1</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 70-72.

**The divinity of Jesus.** Jesus describes himself as an eternal divine figure in virtue of the fact that he was active throughout Israel's history: "before Abraham came into being, I AM" (8:58).

Jesus is presented to be equal to God by the fact that he has God's two basic powers, creative and judgmental power.<sup>2</sup> In terms of chapter 5:19-20, Jesus' equality with God is revealed. That God loves the Son and shows the Son what he does (5:20) asserts that God makes him equal. Besides, Jesus is also granted with God's creative power because he is said to do what God does: "what the Father does, the Son does likewise (5:19b) and the Father shows him all that he himself does (5: 20a)." Chapter 5:21-29 indicates that Jesus is equal to God because he possesses God's full eschatological power. It states the following characteristics of Jesus.

1. Makes alive: "As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son makes alive whom he wills" (v. 21)
2. Judgment: "The Father has given all judgment to the Son" (v. 22)
3. Honor: "that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father" (v. 23)
4. Dead hear & live: "The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live" (v. 25)
5. Life in himself: "As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (v. 26)
6. Judgment: ". . . and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man" (v. 27).
7. Dead raised & judged: "All in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (vv. 28-29).<sup>3</sup>

In light of these observations, Jesus enjoys the same honor as God, the same authority, and the same extraordinary powers, which undeniably present him to be equal to God. In addition to the fact that the Fourth Evangelist virtually equates Jesus with God, he goes on further to ascribe the title "God" to Jesus. After the resurrection, Jesus is undoubtedly

---

<sup>2</sup>J. Neyrey, "My Lord and My God: The Divinity of Jesus in John's Gospel," SBL Seminar Paper Series, 25 (Atlanta: SBL press, 1986), 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 155-56.

designated or addressed as God in 20:28. Thomas reverences the risen Christ with the exclamation, “My Lord and my God!”

**The humanity of Jesus.** While Jesus is hailed as the eternal Word who existed from all eternity with the Father, the Fourth Gospel also states that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The name Jesus itself reveals humanity: “John uses the human name ‘Jesus’ 237 times (Matthew has this name 150 times, Mark 81 times, and Luke 89 times), more than a quarter of the total in the entire New Testament (905 times).”<sup>4</sup> The reality of Jesus’ manhood is proved by the fact that Jesus is described as a son of a particular family. Twice Jesus is called the son of Joseph: “we have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and about whom the prophets spoke--I mean Jesus, the son of Joseph, the man from Nazareth” (1: 45); They kept saying, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” (6:42) Besides, he seems to have enjoyed normal family relations in the fact that he went to a wedding with his mother (2:1).

The Gospel is replete with examples of a very human Jesus. He had to meet his physical needs. On his journey through Samaria he grew tired and thirsty, just as thousands of other travelers stopped at Jacob’s well to rest and receive refreshment.<sup>5</sup> He also needed human affection. Jesus enjoyed a close friendship with Martha and Mary and Lazarus (chap. 11). At the Last Supper one of his disciples intimately leaned on his breast (13:23). The emotions which Jesus expressed also point to a real humanity of Jesus. Jesus felt pain and sorrow at the death of a loved one:

When Jesus saw her weeping, and when he saw the Jews who had come with her weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit so that an involuntary groan burst from him and he trembled with deep emotion (11:33).

Jesus said to them: “Where have you laid him? “Lord,” they said to him, “Come

---

<sup>4</sup>Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 63.

<sup>5</sup>John O’Grady, “The Human Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,” *BTB* 14 (1984): 63.

and see.” Jesus wept (11:35). . . . Again a groan was wrung from Jesus’ inner being. He went to the tomb (11:38).<sup>6</sup>

Jesus expressed fear and anxiety when facing his destiny: “now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say?” (12:27); “When Jesus had said these things he was troubled in spirit” (13:21).

“The Word became flesh” (v. 14) hints that the divinity of Jesus is not to be understood separately from the humanity. The true humanity of Jesus can be revealed in the use of the word flesh (σὰρξ). The Johannine antithesis expressed in 1:14 over against 1:1 concerning the Word draws out most clearly the humanity of Jesus: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (1:14).” In chapter 1:1, “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The contrast is evident in that verse 1:1 states that “the Word was with God” while verse 14 says “the Word became flesh.” In other words, Jesus is spoken of as the enfleshment of the Word in verse 14. The true emphasis seems to fall on the humanity of the Word because the revelation which Jesus brings to humanity (i.e., to make the Father known in 1:18) is made possible only by his very real enfleshment. Flesh is the typical mode of being human in contrast to the divine, and in the humanity of Jesus we as humanity can come in contact with the divinity. Therefore, “the Word became flesh” must mean that such revelation of God (1:18) occurred through and in the “flesh” of Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

### **Key Concepts in Johannine Christology**

Ἐγώ γώ. Perhaps no passages in John’s Gospel express the divinity of Jesus more explicitly than the “I Am” sayings. The absolute use of ἐγώ εἰμι on the lips of Jesus presents him to be divine. While “I am” sayings with an image (e.g., I am the light

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Marianne Meye Thompson, *Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 50.

of the world or I am the bread of life) point to conceptual parallels to explain Jesus' role among humanity, the "I am" sayings without an image point to formal parallels in the Old Testament to explain Jesus' identity. The Johannine Jesus is spoken of in absolute terms: "If you do not believe that ἐγὼ εἰμι, you will die in your sins" (8:24); "when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that ἐγὼ εἰμι (v. 28); "Before Abraham even came into existence, ἐγὼ εἰμι (v. 58); "When it does happen, you may believe that ἐγὼ εἰμι (13: 19).<sup>8</sup> The background of this usage is found directly in the Old Testament: The use of ἐγὼ εἰμι in Genesis 28: 13 and Ezekiel 20:5 appears where God tells who and what He is. 'Eγὼ εἰμι in Deutero-Isaiah as well as in Hosea 13:4 and Joel 2:27 is used to stress the oneness of God. The usage in the LXX of Deutero-Isaiah (43:25; 51:12; 52:6) where the Hebrew *ani hu* is translated ἐγὼ εἰμι is understood not only as a statement of divine oneness and existence, but also as a divine name.<sup>9</sup>

From the usage of ἐγὼ εἰμι found in the Septuagint of Isaiah, Harner states six important characteristics of the phrase:

1. It is always spoken by Yahweh, never by anyone else
2. It signifies that Yahweh alone is God
3. It presents Yahweh as lord of history, and therefore as redeemer of Israel
4. It presents Yahweh as creator of the world, as well as lord of history
5. It points to a reality that Israel perceives, in faith, within the context of its witness and service to Yahweh
6. It is closely related to other expressions of divine self-prediction especially the phrase "I am Yahweh" (*'ani hu YHWH*)<sup>10</sup>

These observations point out that Jesus takes on himself a phrase that is reserved for Yahweh alone, and thus intimately identifies himself with God's acts of creation and salvation. Consequently, the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι on the lips of Jesus expresses the unity of

---

<sup>8</sup>These translations are offered by Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:549.

<sup>9</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 535-36.

<sup>10</sup>Philip B. Harner, *The "I Am" of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 7.

the Son with the Father, which points to the divine origin of Jesus.

**The Messiah.** This English word “Messiah” is a transliterated word of the Hebrew *māśîah*, which basically means “anointed.” Its equivalent word for Greek is *Christos*, which is translated into “Christ” in English. Therefore, we get the equation “Christ” = “Messiah” = “anointed.”<sup>11</sup> The Johannine Messiah is much more than the Messiah of traditional expectation envisioned as an anointed son of David, who would restore the glory of Israel and destroy the hated pagan rule over Palestine. In the words of Morris,

The Messiah of whom the Fourth Evangelist writes is called “the Word” (1:1), “God” (1:1), “the light of men” (1:4), “the true light” (1:9), “the only-begotten from the Father” (1:14), a greater than John the Baptist (1:15, 26-27, 30), “only-begotten God” (1:18), “the Lord” (1:23), “the Lamb of God” (1:29, 36), “he who baptizes in Holy Spirit” (1:33), probably “God’s chosen one” (1:34), “Rabbi” (1:38, 49), “he of whom Moses and the prophets wrote” (1:45).<sup>12</sup>

By giving a survey of messianic titles and designations in chapter one, the Fourth Evangelist appears to emphasize that all those titles and designations find their true meaning and fulfillment in Jesus. In other words, the Evangelist intends to say that Jesus fulfilled all that to which Jewish expectation pointed, but more, much more. After introducing messianic titles and designations, the evangelist carefully develops the christological theme of Messiah--who the Messiah would be and what the Messiah would do. As long as messiahship is concerned, the Evangelist aims to correct Jewish misunderstandings of the Messiah and reveal what messiahship means and how it was manifested in Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

For instance, the statement of 7:27 voices a traditional conception of the Jews about the coming of the Messiah: “We know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from.” In response to this objection, Jesus answers

---

<sup>11</sup>Morris, *Jesus is the Christ*, 68.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 73.

that he is from above, i.e., directly sent by the Father (7:28-9). The Jews object to Jesus' messiahship based on his supposedly earthly origin as opposed to his heavenly origin. They have been expecting their royal Messiah from heaven, and indeed that is where Jesus comes from.<sup>14</sup> But they do not realize this. Only those who see Jesus with the eyes of the Fourth Evangelist come to know who Jesus really is.

The debate in 7:40-44 is also aimed to reveal the true messiahship of Jesus. The Evangelist points out that objections against Jesus' messiahship were raised on account of doubts concerning his Davidic descent and his coming from Bethlehem (v. 42). The Evangelist seems to show that although the Jews have scriptural knowledge, if they attempt to recognize the Messiah according to typical Jewish arguments from a wrong starting-point, they will never know him. The Evangelist seems to claim that even if they have scriptural proof witnessing about the Messiah, if Scripture is not read and interpreted with the center of Johannine theology as the starting-point, one will never discover the truth revealed by God.<sup>15</sup>

Seeing the works which Jesus performs, the Jews are asking for something impossible in 10:24, saying, "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." They do not understand what the Messiah would be like because of their typical concept of messiahship. "He will never be recognized as Messiah by people who are set in the old ways and can not conceive of the Messiah as anything other than a conquering general."<sup>16</sup> The center of Johannine theology about the Messiah is that people can clearly find in Jesus the fulfillment of all the messianic titles and designations mentioned in chapter one

---

<sup>14</sup>According to de Jonge, the Jews held two types of expectation concerning the Messiah: (1) the one is found in IV Ezra and Syr. Bar., where a pre-existence of the Messiah in heaven will appear at the appointed time. The origin of this Messiah is hidden from mortal eyes although he is present. (2) The other is the conception that the Messiah is already on earth, incognito and even himself not knowing who he is (M. De Jonge, "Jewish Expectations about the 'Messiah' According to the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 19 [1985]: 254).

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 259-60.

<sup>16</sup>Morris, *Jesus is the Christ*, 85.

if they are willing to see Jesus with the Evangelist's viewpoint of "from above," that is "Jesus' being sent by the Father." It is this message that the Fourth Evangelist wants to send to his readers through the christological title of Messiah.

**Son of God.** This title expresses a distinctive Johannine Christology compared to the Synoptics: "While the Synoptics nowhere describe Jesus' sonship in terms of pre-existence, John begins his Gospel by linking the 'Word' (*logos*), operative at creation, to the Son (1:1-18); and at subsequent points in the Gospel Jesus Son of God speaks of his pre-incarnate existence (8:56-58; 17:5, 24)."<sup>17</sup> While this title describes Jesus' unique relation to the Father, it also describes the humanity of Jesus because he came in flesh to reveal the Father. Although the Evangelist employs the word *huios* in the normal way for a son in an ordinary family, and he uses it also of Christ as the Son in the heavenly family, his usage is peculiar. Jesus is Son of God in a sense not true of anyone else, even believers. "Whenever John uses 'son' with respect to the heavenly Father, he always means Christ. For the human members of the family he prefers to use '*tekna*' children (e.g., 1:12)."<sup>18</sup> The Evangelist brings out this unique relationship by referring to Jesus as the only (*monogenēs*) Son (1:14, 18; 3:16). Since the adjective "monegenēs" derives from *gen-*, the stem of *ginomai*, not *gennaō*, it means "only-being" rather than "only-begotten."<sup>19</sup> This reveals the unity of the Father and the Son in the sense that his being is bound up with the being of the Father. This means that no one else stands in the same relationship to God the Father as does Jesus Christ.

The divine origin of "the Son of God" is attested in several places where the title "Son of God" occurs. The first testimony is given by John the Baptist. Although the narrative does not record a heavenly voice to testify concerning Jesus at his baptism,

---

<sup>17</sup>D. R. Bauer, "Son of God," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 775.

<sup>18</sup>Morris, *Jesus is the Christ*, 92.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.



God's testimony to Jesus is given by John the Baptist. The narrative claims that God had previously spoken to John the Baptist about the coming of "the Son of God," thus having John the Baptist testify Jesus to be the Son of God (1:34).

The guileless Nathanael responds to Jesus, saying, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel" (1:49). Through the lips of Nathanael, the Son of God (Jesus) is identified as the theocratic king. That the Son gives life now to those who believe (3:18) and that at the end of the age he will call people from the grave into their final state (5:25-9) show plainly that Jesus as the Son of God has eschatological power, which is characteristic of being God. Martha confesses, "Lord, I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who has come into the world" (11:27). When this confession is taken in the light of the fact that the words are recorded in the context of calling back Lazarus from the dead, it seems clear that the Evangelist is giving expression to the full deity of the Christ.<sup>20</sup>

The role of Jesus as Son of God is characterized by the following elements. First, the Son of God perfectly obeys the will of his Father: Jesus' food is "to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (4:34). "The Son can do nothing of himself, but he can do only what he sees his Father doing" (5:19). Jesus has "come down from heaven" not to do his own will but "to do the will of him who sent me" (6:38). Even his coming into the world reflects his obedience to the Father's will, "I have not come on my own; but he sent me" (8:42). Second, as sonship involves the sharing of character, Jesus the Son of God shares the work of the Father. He gives life to the dead (5:21, 24; 6:40) and gives judgment (5:22, 27-29; 8:16). The works he does are actually the Father's works performed through him (5:17; 9:14; 10:32). Third, Jesus the Son of God enjoys intimate fellowship with the Father. He knows the Father and his will (6:45-47; 8:55; 15:15). Like the Father the Son shares in all that the Father has (6:15) and has special

---

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 96-98.

access and influence with the Father (14:13-16). Fourth, Jesus the Son of God and the Father share mutual love. The Father loves the Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:23) and the Son loves the Father (14:31).<sup>21</sup>

**Son of Man.** The Johannine Son of Man is an enigmatic title or epithet. It is a self-designation of Jesus which he alone uses.<sup>22</sup> Some consider the title Son of Man as a variation for at least two other titles, namely, the Son of God and the Son. For example, Edwin Freed denies the existence of a separate Son of Man Christology in John. He argues that “the three titles for Jesus, the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the Son, stand in the same context (3:13-18), obviously parallel to one another, and thus are identical.”<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, other scholars generally accept that there is no Son of Man Christology though the Son of Man motifs are a constituent part of John’s Christology.<sup>24</sup> What differentiates the title “the Son of Man” from other titles is that it does not convey either humanity or any suggestion of sonship.<sup>25</sup>

The first appearance of the Son of Man is found in 1:51, “Amen, amen I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” According to the immediate reference to Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Gen 28:12), the Son of Man is the gateway that connects heaven and earth.<sup>26</sup> In light of this

---

<sup>21</sup>Bauer, “Son of God,” 775.

<sup>22</sup>D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 132.

<sup>23</sup>Edwin D. Freed, “The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 86 (1967): 403.

<sup>24</sup>Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel*, 132; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 335-40; J. Painter, “The Enigmatic Johannine Son of Man,” in *The Four Gospels 1992*, ed. F. Van Segbroeck (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 3:1867-68.

<sup>25</sup>Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 340.

<sup>26</sup>Both Ashton and Painter follow the alternative translation of Gen 28:12 that the angels were ascending and descending upon Jacob. Thus they argue that John substitutes for “Jacob” a name of his own, “Son of Man,” thus suggesting that there is no other route between heaven and earth than the Son of Man (Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 347-48; Painter, “The Enigmatic Johannine,” 1876).

understanding, the Son of Man is seen as a mysterious heavenly figure who communicates between earth and heaven, which is now open.

The ascent/descent motif that occurs in the Son of Man sayings attests Jesus' heavenly origin and divinity. For example, in 3:13 the descent of the Son of man preceded the ascent; in 6:62 the Son of Man is described as a pre-existent heavenly figure. In 5:27, "he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man." The Son of Man is depicted as a heavenly figure who will also judge the world. In fact, the judgment is given to him because he is the Son of Man.<sup>27</sup>

The Son of Man saying in 6:27 makes the point of the heavenly origin/nature of the food that the Son of Man will give. This theme is expanded to the point where Jesus identifies himself as the life-giving bread (6:35) and asserts that the bread came down from heaven (6:48,50). Again the heavenly origin of the Son of Man is attested by the nature of the food that he offers, which issues in eternal life.

The Johannine Son of Man is said to be exalted and glorified by the horrible death on the cross. "To be lifted up" in the Son of Man sayings (8:28; 12:34) also points to the ascent of the Son of Man. "To be raised up" on the cross is also the means by which the Son of Man is exalted to heaven, because his ascent to heaven becomes possible only when he departs from this earthly scene by way of death. "To be raised" describes the manner in which Jesus will die. His death is concerned with the revelation: the death is the means by which Jesus' authority is realized and revealed, bringing about the judgment of the world.<sup>28</sup>

This brief examination of a few Son of Man sayings indicates that the Son of Man comes down to earth from heaven and ascends to where he formerly was. He has the authority to judge (5:27) and power to grant life (6:27). As noted above, it is,

---

<sup>27</sup>Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 356-57.

<sup>28</sup>Painter, "The Enigmatic Johannine," 1884.

however, very difficult to speak of a Son of Man Christology in the Gospel of John that stands out distinctly from a Son of God Christology, because the titles Son and Son of God are very closely associated with the title Son of Man. For example, the closest identification is found in 5:26, “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to judge, because he is the Son of Man.”

**Rabbi and the prophet.** The titles “Rabbi” and “prophet” are also applied to Jesus in John. Jesus is called Rabbi in 1:38. Jesus is surely a teacher come from God; thus Nicodemus fails to comprehend his teaching (3:2). More than a Rabbi, Jesus is a prophet. “Jesus the prophet was not so much a figure like Amos or Hosea, pronouncing God’s judgment against a wayward Israel, as he was the prophet like Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-22, that is a second edition of Moses, Moses redivivus.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus is said to fulfill the expectation of the prophet like Moses, who is prophesied in the tradition of both Deuteronomy (Deut 18:15, 18f) and Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7): The prophetic Moses is the “Ebed Yahweh,” the servant of God (Deut 34:5; Isa 63:11); the prophetic, kingly Moses, bears the burden of his people, thus identified as the suffering servant of God (Isa 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7). The prophet-like-Moses mediates the Law, instructing in it and administering its justice (Isa 42:1f). This suffering Ebed-like Moses is the light of the world (Isa 49:5-9; 42:1-6). Like Moses, he is mediator of the covenant (Isa 42:6; 49:8), leader of the new exodus. The Mosaic servant of God atones for sins and suffers for his people.<sup>30</sup> The prophet-like-Moses would also perform Mosaic wonders. Therefore, Jesus is seen to be the fulfillment of the expectation of the prophet like Moses as well of the Davidic Messiah.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel*, 125.

<sup>30</sup>Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 309-21.

<sup>31</sup>The traditional Davidic Messiah was not expected to be a miracle worker. The Johannine

**The glory of God.** The use of glory originated from the Hebrew concept of כְּבוֹד. The Hebrew noun כְּבוֹד is derived from “ a root meaning ‘weight,’ but it is always used metaphorically to connote the weight a person carries, his status, importance, worth, impressiveness, majesty. In a secondary sense it connotes the honor or esteem accorded to worth, human or divine.”<sup>32</sup> The LXX represents this by δόξα, which is given the same meaning as the Hebrew noun כְּבוֹד. As far as the Hebraic usage is concerned, “it does not mean God in his essential nature, but the luminous manifestation of his person, his glorious revelation of himself.”<sup>33</sup> For instance, Ezekiel 39:21 states that in the last days the glory of Yahweh would come to earth visibly and convert the Gentiles. The Fourth Evangelist vigorously expands the theme in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Jesus is said to possess the eternal glory of the Logos before incarnation (12: 41; 17:5, 24). In the incarnation “God has willed that the eternal glory of the Logos should be communicated to the man Jesus, so that others might see it and draw from it the conclusion that he was the unique Son of God (1:14). This glory Jesus is said to have manifested in his signs (2:11).”<sup>34</sup> The glory of God is inseparable from the glory of Jesus. When the Son of Man is glorified, so is God: “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once (13:31-2).” Where Jesus manifests his glory, the glory of God is also to be seen. In the story of Lazarus, the sickness of Lazarus is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it (11:4). To see the glory of Jesus is like seeing the glory of God

---

Jesus, however, performs the working of signs as Moses did before Pharaoh to authenticate his divine commission. Thus he is seen not only as the Davidic prophet of God but also the prophet-like-Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-22 (Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel*, 126).

<sup>32</sup>G. B. Caird, “The Glory of God in the Fourth Gospel: An Exercise in Biblical Semantics,” *NTS* 15 (1968-69): 267.

<sup>33</sup>S. Alen, “Glory,” in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown (Exeter, U. K. : The Paternoster Press, 1976), 2:45-52.

<sup>34</sup>Caird, “The Glory of God,” 269.

because it is impossible to see the one without the other: “He who sees the Son sees the Father also” (14:9). This theme of “glory” is central for the Mary and Martha scene (11:1-42) and thus will be treated in greater detail later in that section.

**Lord** (Κύριε). The term κύριε is used over 9,000 times in the LXX and in some 6156 occurrences it is used in place of the proper name of God, Yahweh.<sup>35</sup> When κύριε is used in place of Yahweh, “it is an interpretative circumlocution for all that the Hebrew text implied by the use of the divine name: Yahweh is Creator and Lord of the whole universe of men, Lord of life and death.”<sup>36</sup> Κύριε for Yahweh also contained the idea of legal authority: “Because Yahweh saved his people from Egypt and chose them as his possession, he is the legitimate lord of Israel. As Creator of the world he is also its legitimate Lord with unlimited control over it.”<sup>37</sup> Although the secular use of κύριε (i.e. as a polite form of address for a superior) is found, when it addresses God it expresses his creatorship, his power revealed in history and his just dominion over the universe. For instance, while the first occurrence of κύριε (John 5:7) is a polite form of address, its usage right after the sign of feeding 5,000 (6:23) bears christological weight. In the Gospel of John, although the Evangelist does call Jesus κύριε (e.g., 6:23), Jesus does not call himself κύριε “Up until 20 whenever the term is found on a disciple’s lips, it is always in the vocative, and none of these instances is clearly christological.”<sup>38</sup> The words of Mary Magdalene “my Lord” (John 20:13) comprise the first non-vocative use of κύριε by a character within the narrative. The absolute form of κύριε occurs in 20:18, 20:28, 21:7 and also several times in 21:15-21. These observations point out that it is Mary

---

<sup>35</sup>B. Witherington III, “Lord,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 485.

<sup>36</sup>H. Bietenhard, “Lord,” in *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1986), 512.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Witherington, “Lord,” 491.

Magdalene among other characters who first calls Jesus κύριε in the transcendent sense.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the christological theme of “Lord” appears to be crucial to the scene of Mary Magdalene. This writer would like to reserve space for this discussion of the christological theme later in the episode of Mary Magdalene (20:1-18).

**Lamb of God.** This christological title for Jesus is found only on the lips of John the Baptist in the Gospel of John. There are two occurrences: “Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29) and “Look, the Lamb of God!” (1:35). The Lamb of God is understood in relation to the Servant theme found in Isaiah (chaps. 40-55). Several evidences support this interpretation. First, the association of John the Baptist with the opening verse of 40:3 is clearly suggested in his identification as “a voice of one calling in the dessert” (John 1:23). Second, the testimony of the John the Baptist, “the Spirit came down from heaven as a dove and remained on him” (1:32) connects it with Isaiah 42:1 and also with Isaiah 61:1. Third, the identification of Jesus spoken by John the Baptist as “God's chosen one” (1:34) fits well with the description of Isaiah 42:1. Fourth, that Jesus is described in terms of the Suffering Servant elsewhere in John is attested by the quotation of Isaiah 53:1, which is located in John 12:38. These arguments suggest that Jesus as “the Lamb of God” in the Fourth Gospel is to be interpreted against the background of the description of the suffering Servant in Isaiah.<sup>40</sup>

The function of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world is also understood in relation to the Passover motif. The close identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God with the paschal lamb is clearly suggested. Jesus is condemned to die in order to take away the sin of the world, as the paschal lamb was to be dead as a sign of deliverance. In John Jesus was crucified at noon on the day before Passover (19:14),

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>These observation are found in Brown's commentary (Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1966], 1:61).

which was the very time when the priests began to slaughter the paschal lambs in the Temple. The use of hyssop also suggests the close identification between Jesus as the Lamb of God and the paschal lamb: A sponge full of wine was raised up to Jesus on hissope (19:29) reminiscent of hyssop that was smeared with the blood of the paschal lamb to be applied to the doorposts of the Israelites (Exod 12:22). Like the paschal lamb (Exod 12:46), none of Jesus' bones was broken (John 19:36). Another support comes from the fact that another Johannine work, Revelation attests the strong Passover motif.

"Revelation 9 mentions the ransoming blood of the Lamb, a reference particularly appropriate in the paschal motif where the mark of the lamb's blood spared the houses of the Israelites."<sup>41</sup>

**The giver of Life.** Eternal life is one of the central themes of Jesus' teaching according to John. In the prologue, the divine Logos is revealed not only as the mediator of creation (1:3) but also as the source of life and light for all human beings (1:4-5). The nature of this life must be divine since this life is from the Father and the Father gives it to the Son (5:27). The whole purpose of the Son's coming into human life (the incarnate Logos) is to give life, abundant and full (10:10). What is unique about the Johannine presentation of Jesus as life is that this life is available not only at present but also at the last day.<sup>42</sup> Jesus will raise up in the last day those to whom he has given eternal life (6:40; 5:28-29). This eternal life is also something that one may possess in the present: "whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (5:24).

The Son (the incarnate Logos) himself claims to be the life (11:25; 14:6). True life traces its source to him (10:10). He is the bread from heaven which gives life to the

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>42</sup>D. H. Johnson, "Life," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 469.



world (6:33). He gives living water that wells up to eternal life (4:14). He is also its sustaining power. The eternal life is sustained and nourished by the eating and drinking of his body and blood (6:51, 53, 54). Apart from him, nothing can be accomplished (15:5). Another characteristic of the Johannine life is found in the statement that the words which Jesus has spoken are life (6:63). Jesus says that God's commandment is eternal life (12:50). The Word is not merely the source of life; it is life itself in the sense that it conveys the "life-giving" Spirit (6:63).<sup>43</sup>

As a result, the Son himself is life. His words are a source of eternal life. He is the giver of the divine life to those who believe in Jesus, the Son of God. The fact that the divine life is mediated by Jesus reveals not only the divine identity of Jesus but also insinuates that Jesus is the life-giver. This christological theme is prevalent throughout the Gospel and will be further treated in detail in each pericope pertinent to the theme.

### **Recent Approaches to the Christology of John**

The christological themes found in the portrayal of the Johannine Jesus have brought forth many studies. These are conveniently discussed by Paul Anderson, whose treatment will serve as a summary of the most significant recent approaches to the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. He groups them into five major kinds of approaches: comprehensive overviews, text-centered christological approaches, theological-christological approaches, literary-christological approaches, and historical-christological approaches.<sup>44</sup>

According to Anderson, comprehensive overviews of John's Christology gather information regarding John's distinctive presentations of Jesus and categorize them into a recognizable form. For example, H. Conzelmann discusses such themes as

---

<sup>43</sup>George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1987), 293-95.

<sup>44</sup>Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 14-32.

the Johannine Logos, christological titles and their significance, the revelational connection between the Father and the Son, the sending of the Son by the Father and the characteristics of the divine Emissary, and Jesus' account of himself, including the "I am" sayings.<sup>45</sup> Although this approach can provide a helpful digest of some of John's main christological themes, it plays only an introductory role, limited to addressing the component elements of Johannine Christology and identifying such problems as John's high/low Christology, the evangelist's apparent ambivalence toward the signs, and the puzzling relationship of the Father to the Son.

Text-centered approaches to John's Christology deal with a particular word, phrase, theme or section within the text itself in order to apply one's findings to an understanding of John's overall portrayal of Christ. For example, scholars identify a particularly loaded text which is thought to contain a summary of John's Christology and seek to derive from it the overall structure of John's Christology. The texts which are often considered as portraying the central structure of John's Christology include such passages as John 1:1-18; 3:31-36; chap. 17 and 20:30-31. An example of this procedure is W. R. G. Loader. Based on an outline on John 3:31-36, he infers the following christological emphases in the Gospel: (1) the reference to Jesus and God as Son and Father; (2) that the Son comes from and returns to the Father; (3) that the Father has sent the Son; (4) that the Father has given all things into the Son's hands; (5) that the Son says and does what the Father has told him.<sup>46</sup>

Although many of Loader's conclusions are applicable for most of the other "central structure" passages, this kind of approach has trouble in telling who Jesus really is. The shortfall of this approach seems to be in not providing an understanding about the

---

<sup>45</sup>H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 322-58.

<sup>46</sup>W. R. G. Loader, "The Central Structure of Johannine Christology," *NTS* 30 (1984): 188-216.

person of Jesus per se, but only endeavoring to make sense of the conflicting statements about Jesus as the central structure of the Johannine Christology is applied to the text.<sup>47</sup>

Theological-christological approaches begin with a particular theological problem emerging from apparent contradictions in the text or theological difficulties resulting from interpretations of John. The theological issues that have received most attention are such interpretive problems as the humanity/divinity of Jesus, the relationship of the Son to the Father, or the relationship between Jesus' signs and faith.

Regarding Jesus' humanity/divinity, scholars who have practiced this kind of approach try to make one perspective dominant over the other. The classic example is the argument between Bultmann and Käsemann. Both, seeing 1:14 as the fulcrum of the Prologue, argue differently. Bultmann argues that 14b, "the Word became flesh," summarizes the christological inclination of the Gospel while Käsemann interprets 14c, "we beheld his glory" to be the christological inclination of the Gospel. In other words, to Bultmann the core of the evangelist's Christology is exclusively incarnational while Käsemann argues that the heart of the Johannine Christology is his making manifest the glory of God--God strides over the earth in all his glory. Käsemann emphasizes the glory of God so much that he denies the existence of the fleshly pole altogether, while Bultmann argues for the fleshly pole to the extent that he reduces all the references to Jesus' divinity as being eclipsed by his humanity, attributing the materials for the other pole [the glory of God] to the work of a subsequent redactor. The problem with their respective approaches is seen in that both ignore one of the poles [flesh and glory] whose tension obviously exists in the Gospel.

Literary-christological approaches are practiced both diachronically and synchronically. The diachronic literary approach seeks to explain John's literary and theological perplexities, such as the odd sequence of chapters 4-7, the abrupt ending of

---

<sup>47</sup>Anderson, *Christology*, 22.

chap. 14, the apparent full stop of 20:31. Diachronic approaches attempt to provide answers by means of postulating several stages in the composition of the Gospel, involving multiple authorship and a conflation of literary sources. For example, the christological problems of the Gospel are explained either as due to the work of a the subsequent redactor or to multiple sources. As far as the christological problems of the Gospel are concerned, this approach is not very effective in addressing the christological problems, because representative scholars who have practiced this approach--such as Bultmann, Teeple, and Fortna have not dealt comprehensively with the unifying and disunifying features in Johannine Christology.<sup>48</sup>

Synchronic approaches focus on John's message as communicated by means of literary rhetoric, regardless of its content or the tensions inherent to it. A weakness with this approach is that it tends to neglect theological and historical problems since those issues are treated only as the result of the writer's literary techniques. According to Anderson, although this approach can explain some of John's christological problems in terms of the writer's literary technique, this attempt still does not deal adequately with the many seemingly contradictory themes that run throughout the Gospel.<sup>49</sup>

Historical-christological approaches attempt to address John's distinctive portrayal of Jesus pertaining to history. Over the last decades the historical interest of Johannine scholars has shifted from the search for the historical Jesus into the search for the historical Johannine community. Recently, the focus of Johannine studies has been a quest for the "historical evangelist" and his socio-religious context. One representative scholar, Raymond Brown, in *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* attributes the christological problems of the Gospel to the following socio-religious development: (1) John's Prophet-like-Moses and anti-Temple christology was the result of Samaritan

---

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 30.

converts entering the Johannine community; (2) the acceptance of the Samaritan converts necessitated the development of a high, pre-existence christology; (3) both the excommunication of Johannine Christian Jews from the Synagogue and the addition of Gentile converts led Johannine Christology to be shaped by more Hellenistic ways of describing the exalted Christ--which led to docetising tendencies among Gentile Christians.<sup>50</sup>

This kind of approach seems to have two major problems. According to Anderson, first they must be based upon a high degree of speculation. Second, "even with the passages attributed to various phases of the community's history, there is still a great amount of christological unity and disunity."<sup>51</sup>

This survey of recent approaches to John's Christology witnesses to the christological tensions within the Gospel. Each approach tries to alleviate this tension although none fully addresses the dualistic nature of Johannine Christology. Likewise, although recent approaches facilitate a better understanding of the christological problems within the Gospel, no consensus has as yet developed for dealing comprehensively with these problems.

This writer's goal is to show that scholars have overlooked at least one important stratum of material in discussions of John's Christology--the materials related to women. Study of these materials may contribute to an understanding of other interests in the Fourth Gospel. Examining the materials related to women seems to be crucial for understanding the Johannine Jesus for the following reasons: first, it opens up another path which may make further headway in discussions of Johanne Christology or lead to a foundation from which other interests of the Gospel related to Christology may be ventured. Second, the materials related to women themselves demand scholarly attention

---

<sup>50</sup>Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 166-69.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 31.

because they seem to serve as an *inclusio* for the entire public ministry of Jesus where the evangelist reveals who Jesus really is.

Putting aside the beginning (the Prologue; 1-18) and the epilogue (chap. 21), the public ministry of Jesus appears to have begun at the wedding of Cana, where he reveals his glory and gains the trust of his inner circle. Jesus' manifestation as the universal Messiah is effectively disclosed as he preaches the good news of salvation to a Gentile woman, the Samaritan woman. The Gospel narratives are developed through the plot. When the hour of Jesus came, his Messiahship was once more proclaimed by the confession of Martha along with his divine attribute, "You are the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world" (11:27). As his Messiahship is confirmed on the lips of Martha, Jesus is identified as the paschal lamb by the anointing of Mary of Bethany (chap.12). His death as the Messiah is confirmed by the women and the Beloved Disciple standing beneath the cross. Through the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus takes on the role of God (20:28) which was proclaimed in the beginning of the Gospel. As the core disciples of Jesus also participate in these events, the fundamental bondedness (e.g., indicated in 20:17 on the lips of Mary Magdalene) is established between Jesus and his disciples, through which the community of faith must be recognized. It appears that with this basic frame in his mind, the evangelist has completed the Gospel by inserting other materials as they suit his christological, historical, theological, and sociological intentions. As this preliminary research on the materials related to Johannine women indicates, they seem to be a major key for understanding the Johannine Jesus.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF SIGNS

#### **The Beginning of the Gospel**

The beginning of the Gospel deserves to be mentioned because it deals with the character traits of the main characters. It also directs the entire story as it indicates themes which are to be developed throughout the Gospel. This seem to be the case with regard to the four Gospels.

The Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which will point to the divine messiahship of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of the divine promise. He also died for God's cause as prophesied in Isaiah 53:7-12. This fact says that Jesus was sent by God with the glory of God. This is proved by Matthew's vivid description of the last scene of the cross. Natural phenomena testify to Jesus' having been sent by God with the glory of God:

The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. (Matt 27: 51-3)<sup>1</sup>

The Gospel of Luke begins with the key theme, i.e., what the savior will do to his people. In chapter 1: 15-17, the angel Gabriel states that the savior will turn the people around to righteousness. The prophecy of Zechariah sings the deliverance of the Israelites. That is the governing theme of Luke, the salvation or deliverance of God's people through the Messiah. That is why readers witness the healing of the numerous sick. For example, all the women in Luke who were in the need of help from Jesus are

---

<sup>1</sup>This writer follows the translations of *New International Version*.

portrayed as people who must be delivered because they suffer (Peter's mother-in-law in 4:38-9; the woman who anoints Jesus in 7: 36-50, the healing of a crippled woman in 13:10-17; the widow of Nain in 7:11-17). Besides, only Luke mentions that darkness came over the whole land because they lost the light of men, the hope of salvation (23:44). Luke only mentions the words from the lips of the centurion, "Surely this was a righteous man" (23:47), which describes Jesus in terms of the goodness that he has done for his people before God.

The Gospel of Mark starts with "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." This governing theme, in spite of Jesus' intention to hide his identity, is fulfilled at the cross by the centurion's confession, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The Gospel of John seems to operate in the same manner. While the theme of seeing and believing in the prologue and again in 20:31 forms an *inclusio* for the whole Gospel, the theme of the divine identity concerning Jesus in the prologue and 20:28 forms another *inclusio* inside the overall *inclusio*.

D. A. Carson makes an insightful comment concerning the Fourth Gospel, saying, "The fundamental question the Fourth Gospel addresses is not 'Who is Jesus?' but 'who is the Christ? Who is the Messiah? Who is the Son of God?'. . . The question should not here be taken to mean 'What kind of Christ you talking about?' but who the Christ is."<sup>2</sup> What the Fourth Evangelist is doing is that he spells out specifically who Jesus is in the prologue and confirms it throughout the gospel, as a result through the mouth of Thomas he reasserts, "My Lord and my God."

Scholars such as Bultmann and Käsemann regard verse 4 as the climax or the fulcrum of the prologue.<sup>3</sup> It states that the Logos who dwelt with God, was clothed in the

---

<sup>2</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 90.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 25.



full majesty of the divinity incorporated in flesh, so that human beings behold the glory and grace of God manifested through him. Here in the historical juncture both in the history of God and humans, John the Baptist bears witness concerning this matter. John the Baptist testifies in verse 15, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” The sole purpose of his witness is that he identifies Jesus with this incarnate Logos who was pre-existent, and now through Him we humans behold the glory of God. Framing the doubts and questions raised by Pharisees, the evangelist reinforces the truthfulness about his witness with the insertion of three cameos of witness: the witness of the Holy Spirit with regard to Jesus (1:29-34), the coming of John the Baptist’s disciples to Jesus, and the witness of Philip to Nathaniel as one of Jesus’ disciples (1:43-51). Gerald Borchert rightly points out that these three cameos of witness built upon the initial confessions of John the Baptist confirm that his testimony is truthful and expand the perception of who Jesus is.<sup>4</sup>

The perception and understanding of Jesus in the prologue is very crucial in that the evangelist seems almost to force the readers to see Jesus with this understanding of Jesus whenever they meet Jesus throughout the entire narrative. As a result, the evangelist is influencing the reader to make the right choice concerning Jesus.

With this intention in his mind, the evangelist seems to indicate that the story of Jesus should begin and end in the presence of his mother, which forms an *inclusio* for the life of Jesus on earth. The presence of Jesus’ earthly mother will provide an unmistakable stamp of credibility about John’s presentation of Jesus in that Mary the mother of Jesus is a key witness of the identity of Jesus, both as Logos coming in flesh in the person of Jesus and as the Messiah who dies in order to fulfill the history of salvation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Borchert, *John 1-11*, New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 133-34.

### **Mary the Mother of Jesus (2:1-11)**

This incident occurred in the small village of Cana in Galilee. Mary went to a wedding. Jesus and his disciples were also there. The wine ran out at the wedding and Mary reported to Jesus that they did not have wine. Jesus responded rather enigmatically saying, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?” In spite of Jesus’ cold response, Mary said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Jesus performed a miracle, which is said to be the first sign in Cana of Galilee. As a result, he revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him.

### **Characterization by Literary Aspects**

In this passage, no direct definition of Mary occurs except that she is called the mother of Jesus three times. She is only characterized in terms of the relationship between herself and her son Jesus. She is never named in the Fourth Gospel and is referred to only by her social/gender role as “the mother of Jesus.” Instead of listing the genealogy of Jesus or providing birth narratives, which would claim his status as a legitimate Messiah who was going to come, the fourth evangelist introduces the mother of Jesus in relation to Jesus. This fact leads us to a couple of observations. First, mentioning of this relationship can be seen in light of the evangelist’s theological emphasis on his incarnate nature. Besides, the evangelist writes that the disciples of Jesus believed in him, not God. This seems to indicate that the evangelist wants to emphasize that Jesus is the incarnate Logos and that he urges the readers to put faith in Jesus as the divine Logos. It is a high christological statement about Jesus. Through the miracles Synoptic writers usually bring people’s attention to God while the fourth evangelist refocuses people’s attention on Jesus--through the first sign, people put their trust in Jesus as they would have in God. This fact illuminates the intention of the Fourth Evangelist concerning the presentation of Jesus--he is determined to present Jesus according to his own understanding right from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry that he is God come in flesh in the person of Jesus.

In this case, this fact would imply that the evangelist held what Barrett and Anderson call a dialectical understanding concerning Jesus, i.e., holding apparent contradictions of truth in tension right from the beginning. Second, the mother of Jesus can be viewed either as a “mother character-type” or “mother of an important son.”<sup>5</sup> According to Exum, biblical writers insert the mothers strategically in order to further the plot and insure the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. The mother-characters accomplish this narrative purpose either by giving birth to the son of the promise or by their action which would help their son to fulfill his destiny and keep alive the promise of God made to Abraham regarding descendants.<sup>6</sup> Along this line of argument, Fehribach argues that Jesus is connected with the promise made to Abraham by equating “Jesus’ giving people the power to become children of God” with “fulfilling the promise made to Abraham” in the sense that the Hebrew Bible portrays children of Abraham as children of God. Thus, she states,

The mother of Jesus can be viewed as fulfilling her role as the “mother of an important son” because it was her implied request, “They have no wine” (2:3), that was the catalyst for Jesus’ giving the sign that revealed his glory and resulted in his disciples’ believing in him (2:11).<sup>7</sup>

Indirect presentation seems to portray Mary as a widow. The presence of Mary

---

<sup>5</sup>J. Cheryl Exum, “‘Mother in Israel’: A Familiar Figure Reconsidered,” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 73-82. In this article, Exum has identified within a broad “mother” character-type of the Hebrew Bible a more specific character-type called “Mother of Israel.” Fehribach coined the word “Mother of Israel” differently as the “mother of an important son.” In Adeline Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>6</sup>Exum supports her argument with the observation made from Genesis 12-50. It was the actions of “mothers of Israel” which made the promise of God realized in the history of Israel. Sarah’s actions on behalf of Isaac guaranteed Isaac’s inheritance against the threat of Ishmael; Rebekah’s actions on behalf of Jacob insured his blessing foretold by God, and she keeps him alive advising Isaac to send Jacob to his uncle until his destiny is fulfilled. Thus Jacob took two wives, Leah and Rachel, action which resulted in the twelve tribes of Israel. Similarly, Moses’ mother took a decisive action to save her son, which insured the future existence of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, it was the actions of the “mothers of Israel” which made the promise of God realized in the history of Israel and determined the future of Israel (“Mother in Israel,” 73-82).

<sup>7</sup>Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 27.

in public seems to question the historical reality of the rabbinic ideal that a woman never be found in the market-place (in public). The Babylonian Talmud mentions the story of R. Judah's wife who went out to buy wool, from which she made an embroidered garment; subsequently she would don this garment when she went out to the market.<sup>8</sup> The Gospel of Luke seems to agree with this point because a poor widow in chapter 21 was present in public and offered two very small copper coins into the temple treasury. Leone Archer states that Jewish women were allowed to visit their parents and were able to attend weddings and funerals.<sup>9</sup> Before marriage Jewish women were identified by their father's name and after marriage they were recognized by their husband's name, for example Joanna the wife of Chuza (Luke 8:3). When she is widowed, she is very likely to be identified by her son's name since she is under the care of her son. The fact that Joseph the father of Jesus is not mentioned here and that Mary is called the mother of Jesus seems to suggest that she could have well been widowed. Besides, the fact that she was able to show up in public in a less restrained way proves the point. When moving in public, modesty was expected of married women: the married woman should wear the veil which functioned as a symbol of the man's possessions. The most important rule of conduct for women according to Mishnah (Ket. 7.6) was that they should never under any circumstances speak to a man; when a married woman had cause to meet with a man in her husband's absence, then a chaperone was required to be present.<sup>10</sup> Malina also adds that widows may have had an element of autonomy and should have been able to function more aggressively.<sup>11</sup> As the weakest class of the society, the widows did not have much

---

<sup>8</sup>Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 129.

<sup>9</sup>Leonie J. Archer, *Her Price is beyond Rubies: The Jewish Woman in Graeco-Roman Palestine* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 243.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 247-49.

<sup>11</sup>Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 44.

earthly honor to lose. In other words, they were beyond public criticism. The evangelist, however, portrays Mary with respect because of his mentioning that Jesus was also present at the wedding. It seems more honorable when a widowed mother of a living son was accompanied by relatives, preferably sons.

When Mary as a poor widow noticed her son not doing what he is supposed to do as a male in the first century world, her instinct as a mother comes to play an important role. The initiative of Mary, which leads to a sign can be better understood under cultural aspects.

### **Characterization by Cultural Aspects**

A discussion of the cultural codes that are inherent in the text can elucidate characterization in this scene.

**Dyadic personality.** In the Mediterranean world of the first century,

The way the human being is perceived as fitting into his rightful place in his environments, physical and social, and acting in a way that is typically human is by means of his inmost reactions (eyes-heart) as expressed in language (mouth-ears) and/or outwardly realized in activity (hands-feet).<sup>12</sup>

This points out the difference between God and man: God perceives and expresses through language what he perceives and without fail carries out the action that matches his perception and language. That is why he is called perfect, thus God. Three modes of expression (seeing, speaking and acting) work in harmony in God, while man can not evidence the harmony of three modes of expression which will make him truly honorable. In other words, “Man is unlike God, imperfect, since what he plans often never takes effect, what he says often does not agree with what is in his heart, and what he does often turns out ineffective, incomplete.”<sup>13</sup> In the prologue, Jesus was proclaimed

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>13</sup>Bruce Malina, “The Individual and the Community--Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity,” *BTB* 9 (1979): 136.

by the evangelist that he was God and he was with God in the beginning. Jesus' ability to see as God is demonstrated in calling his disciples. Both his ability to see and speak as God is demonstrated in calling his disciples, especially in meeting Nathanael: Jesus saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him and spoke to him saying, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Thus he was proclaimed as the Son of God. His ability to act, however, has not been evidenced to prove what he claims upon his identity as Son of God. Now it is time to act to evoke an acknowledgment of his origin, identity and authority before he begins his work.

Mary the mother of Jesus went to a wedding accompanying Jesus and his disciples. Mary tells Jesus, "They have no more wine." Many scholars have interpreted this sentence in various ways: informing, requesting, demanding, reproaching, praying. It is hard to decide what this statement means by itself. When it is aided by Mary's reasserted request, "Do whatever he tells you to do," the most plausible reading, says Robert Maccini, is "to see Mary at least implying if not requesting that Jesus should work a miracle."<sup>14</sup> Besides, a comparison of Jesus' mother's words with those of the sisters Martha and Mary in John 11 strongly implies that Jesus should intervene in a miraculous fashion.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus' not acting as he is supposed to can be understood in relation to his time. But Mary might have perceived that since there was no wine, it was a good opportunity to reveal her son's identity as the Son of God,; if not, at least the prophet as the one who was going to come for the Messiah.

It seems that Jesus reluctantly acts in order to honor the right of Mary as the

---

<sup>14</sup>Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony is True: Women as Witnesses according to John* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 100.

<sup>15</sup> Maccini argues that "Martha and Mary simply inform Jesus that Lazarus is sick, but this unadorned report carries an implicit request for miraculous healing. . ." (ibid., 99-100).

mother.<sup>16</sup> Jesus turns water into tasty wines. Jesus revealed his glory as being equal to God because as God does, what he perceives in His heart and speaks with his mouth is good and effectively takes place. Verse 11 concludes the incident at the wedding saying, “the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.” The identity of Jesus as claimed by both the prologue and the three cameos of witness is proved to be true.

The concept of dyadic personality present in the people of the first century is operative behind Mary’s reporting the problem of no wine. It is the time to prove that Jesus as the Son of God is divine because he acts as God does. In light of the socio-cultural background, two conditions must be met: first, there should be established a vertical dyadic relationship through patronage, so that Jesus as the patron can provide limited goods like wine. For this relation to come about, someone--usually the clients who are in need--should adopt a posture of deference to Jesus (the patron) in order to have access to resources (wine). Since neither the bridegroom nor the headwaiter knew who Jesus was, it was up to someone like Mary who had some idea about who Jesus was, to act on behalf of them to establish the patron-client relation between Jesus and them. Under the circumstances, Mary acts like a social broker to bring about the patron-client relation by reporting the problem of no wine with the implication that she wants Jesus to provide wine. Second, there should be a situation which is in need of desperate help. Lacking wine is the perfect opportunity of both establishing the patron-client relation and of revealing the divine identity of Jesus. In a society where goods are extremely limited, providing the choice wine when there was no more certainly proves that Jesus acts like God does. As a result, the evangelist took this occasion as a perfect opportunity to prove that Jesus is the Son of God as he has claimed to this point of the narrative, not only in

---

<sup>16</sup> According to Malina, there exists “the consequent emotional closeness and affective ‘symbiosis’ of mothers and sons--a pan-Mediterraneanism” (Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and The Gospels* [New York: Routledge, 1996], 56).

his perception and speeches but also in his action.

**Kinship/οἶκος.** Why did Jesus address his mother with a rough term , ‘Woman’ (γύναι), and how can the reader understand Jesus’ seemingly indifferent response, τί εμοὶ καὶ σοί to his mother?

Maccini points out that except on only one occasion where Jesus calls Mary Magdalene “woman” along with her proper name, he always uses proper names to address women he knows.<sup>17</sup> This being the case, when he calls his mother twice γύναι, it seems a little bit odd. It seems obvious that the sentence τί εμοὶ καὶ σοί sounds discomfoting when compared with the statement of the demoniac both in Matthew 8:29 and Mark 5:7.

The cultural dynamics between mother and son, however, seem to provide a context for understanding. According to the cultural code of kinship, there exists a symbiotic relationship between mother and son.

The following reasons seem to explain the reason why Mary went to the wedding. First, a kinship group operates in terms of reciprocity. If she does not attend the wedding, tomorrow she may have a wedding for one of her children and might not get any help. Second, personality traits which tend to strengthen group cohesion are positive, encouraged and rewarded in childhood, approved and upheld as ideals in adulthood.<sup>18</sup>

Regardless whether Mary acted to demonstrate the group cohesion or engaged in horizontal or vertical dyadic contracts which involve some form of reciprocity, she felt urgency to provide the necessary wine. At this moment, Mary reported to Jesus that the

---

<sup>17</sup>Maccini lists many occasions where Jesus uses “Woman” to an unknown woman such as the Samaritan, the woman caught in adultery, the Canaanite, the crippled woman (Maccini, *Her Testimony*, 101).

<sup>18</sup>Bruce Malina, “Mother and Son,” *BTB* 20 (1990): 59.



bridegroom ran out of wine and Jesus answered indifferently, “Woman, what is it to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

Both Mary and Jesus seem to have their own interest. Mary felt obliged to provide wine in terms of either “honor” or “reciprocity” or as being “a codependent self” while Jesus was waiting for his own time to act.<sup>19</sup> Jesus as the Son of God chooses whom he will bless since he is God; he acts as the patron when he was properly asked by the client in respect. Besides, he did not come to privatize his power, thus satisfying his physical mother Mary. Mary perceives the situation as an opportunity to fulfill her unmet needs. She was occupied only with the thought of how she would get the best out of the situation. The way she can fulfill her needs is to use her son Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

Since the mother-son bond is vaunted as the closest of Mediterranean affective relations, Jesus cannot ignore Mary’s needs. Yet this value system is challenged when Jesus intended to show who he is now--he is no longer identified with his mother Mary, but with the Father as Son of God. At this point of the narrative, it seems that identification of Jesus with the Father has been established completely. Mary can no longer identify herself with Jesus. Mary, however, still expects Jesus to be her son with whom she can identify and use according to a mother’s wish. Jesus’ need to show the dis-identification from Mary seems necessary if the reader assumes that Mary’s husband

---

<sup>19</sup>According to Malina, a codependent self results where the social system is oriented so much toward the needs and behavior of others that the needs about oneself are never met. The Mediterraneans in the first century were normally codependent in that they were raised in a family controlled by oppressive gender rules, focused upon its own honor and in conflict with other families (ibid., 61).

<sup>20</sup>In the same article, Malina points out that Mary was suffering from the syndrome of “codependency.” Codependency refers to “any suffering and/or dysfunction that is associated with or results from focusing on the needs and behavior of others” (ibid.). Mary as an adolescent mother at the time of her firstborn would be mentally and emotionally impoverished to meet the range of basic human needs. Then she would not develop a strong true self, thus trying to compensate by developing an exaggerated false or codependent self. “She would then be so in need that she would use others in an unhealthy and inappropriate way to get those needs met, as Mediterranean mothers usually do. Anyone in her immediate environment, anyone close to or near her, including her infant son, will be unconsciously used” (ibid).

Joseph was absent for some time resulting in her own poverty.<sup>21</sup> The absence of the father results in what Michael Carroll calls “the father-ineffective” family.<sup>22</sup> In this case, authority within the home concentrated heavily on the mother, and she could assume a male’s role. This fact suggests that Mary is challenged to let go of her son Jesus, i.e., she must accept the fact that Jesus can no longer identify himself with her, and Jesus confirms this by his distancing utterance--“Woman, what is to you and to me?”

Maccini takes Jesus’ response to be a stern reprimand rather than a mild distancing, because Mary is seen here to attempt to steer the course of Jesus’ ministry as in the case of Peter (Matt 16:23). The use of an irony is observed in the fact that Jesus denies physical kinship ties by distancing himself from his mother, yet forms the “family” of discipleship with outsiders who put trust in him. The benefit written in the Prologue, “becoming children of God by believing” is now established. In light of the personality traits of the Mediterranean world, to express one’s feeling is honorable. In this world, males are expected to show their emotions. When they are offended, even a rampage is acceptable if it is not too destructive. Malina writes, “Males who do not show their feelings are suspected of lacking a vital human trait, hence not dependable. The show of emotion was an attribute of the honorable man.”<sup>23</sup> The scholarly attempt to tone down Jesus’ reply to his mother is not necessary because it is not unusual or improper for a Mediterranean son to talk down to his mother.<sup>24</sup> Even if his reply is viewed as rebuke,

---

<sup>21</sup>Dis-identification is referred to as a process where Mediterranean boys had to switch their gender identification from their mothers to fathers. In the absence of a male figure, this process is impeded. Jesus, however, has recognized his identity as the Son of God, identifying himself with the Father (God) while Mary did not realize that the process of Jesus’ dis-identification from herself has taken place already on his side (Malina, *The Social World of Jesus*, 56).

<sup>22</sup>Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 50.

<sup>23</sup>Bruce Malina, “Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers,” *BTB* 19 (1989): 137.

<sup>24</sup>Malina, “Mother and Son,” 55.

rebuff, or refusal toward his mother, expressing his heart makes Jesus more honorable.

**Patron-client.** In the first-century Mediterranean world, “Adult males were busily at work setting up direct relationships of personal attachment involving some form of interaction with a single other individual,” which is called a dyadic relationship.<sup>25</sup> In light of this, Mary attempts to engage in a dyadic relationship on behalf of Jesus. Whether it was a horizontal relation or vertical one, both relationships involve the exchange of favors. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus seems to work as a patron while Mary takes up the role of a social broker, who places people in touch with the patron (Jesus) either directly or indirectly. She is a social broker in that she has access to Jesus who can control resources directly as the Son of God. As a professional manipulator of people and information, a social broker acts for personal benefit. In the case of Mary she might have sought honor and future possible services for her family in time of need. Jesus is seen as patron because he himself provides non-expandable goods to reveal his glory. Providing non-expandable goods (i.e., goods out of nothing) points to the divine nature of Jesus. Thus, the disciples of Jesus came to believe. The fact that the disciples came to believe indicates their previous lack of faith in Jesus. This fact also indicates that Jesus did not yet have an in-group of members whom he could trust like blood relatives. The evangelist seems to say that the formation of Jesus’ in-group members resulted from this first sign, which marked the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. At the same time, the ability to control first-order resources like goods (i.e., wine in this case) placed him in the position of the patron as the God of Israel.<sup>26</sup> Having Mary assume the role of a social

---

<sup>25</sup>Malina, “Patron and Client: The Analogy Behind Synoptic Theology,” *Forum* 4:1 (1988): 5.

<sup>26</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 78. Malina states that “the honorable man in the first century never admits to initiating bonds or alliance with others. Such things either just happen or he is asked by another” (ibid.). This illuminates that Mary seems to take the role of initiating bonds, i.e., forming the in-group members for Jesus. Halvor Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” *BTB* 23 (1993): 167. Halvor Moxnes writes that glory (δόξα or δοξάζω) is used mostly of God and Jesus. This being the case, revealing his glory through the miraculous sign makes Jesus identified with God and his glory equal to God’s glory. This will put him in the position of the patron as the God of Israel. The supply of the

broker, the evangelist portrays Jesus as the patron like the God of Israel by meeting human needs in an extraordinary way. He also describes the qualitative service due Jesus--Jesus expects commitment and loyalty due God.

The relationship of patron-client possesses another important aspect in that it can move political, economic, and religious relations into the realm of kinship. As kinship demands boundless and unconditional loyalty to fellow family members, patron-client relations take on these kinship dimensions. This aspect spells out the qualitative symbol of commitment that Jesus' disciples must have for him and his movement.

By changing water into wine, Jesus gained the status as the patron, and his core group, who would provide loyalty and commitment for Jesus, was formed. By witnessing Jesus' ability to handle the first resource, they came to possess faith in him in whatever he might do in the future. The sign at Cana indicates that Jesus had met the requirement of being the divine patron in that he demonstrated his ability to provide the limited goods directly by himself and was honored publicly like any other patron.

**Honor/shame.** From the fact that a number of servants were available and a head steward was there to host the banquet, it appears to be the wedding of a relatively well-to-do family. At this moment of the narrative, Jesus cannot claim his honor because he as a Galilean peasant does not possess enough honor to challenge or lose in the eyes of his superiors.

Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgment of worth. Thus, honor indicates a person's social standing and rightful place in society. The Prologue states that Jesus was the incarnate Logos who was with God in the beginning of

---

abundant wine (about 100 gallons of wine from the six stone jars) also supports the idea. The abundance of wine points to the messianic blessings which can be given by the God of Israel, Yahweh (Isa 25:6; Jer 49:11-2; Joel 4:18). In this case Jesus was assuming the role of Yahweh, who is the patron as the God of Israel.

the creation, thus given the honor equal to God. Since no one at this stage of the narrative grants him this ascribed honor, Jesus needs to claim this ascribed honor publicly. That is, Jesus as the honorable Godman (i.e., he is not a hyphenated man-God or God-man) should be able to defend his honor, honor ascribed by God.<sup>27</sup> An honorable man, however does not initiate alliances because it is viewed in such a way that “the admission of asking someone who is not somehow already indebted to him may be interpreted as presuming or imposing on another, trying to get something to which he may not be entitled.”<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, a person’s claim to honor requires a grant of reputation by others before it becomes honor in fact. Therefore, the request of Mary is very important in that through her initiative Jesus’ ascribed honor as the incarnate Logos was manifested publicly.

The readers are not offered any detail with regard to the actual transformation of the water into wine. Only the word of Jesus is seen as the medium of the transformation of the water to wine: “Fill the jars with water. . . . Now draw some out and take it to the head steward.” Omitting the details of the miracle seems to direct the reader’s attention to the person of Jesus--as Jesus is the incarnate Logos, his words are the sole means for the performed miracle. The evangelist intends that he is the one the readers should pay attention to, not to the sign itself, and thus recognize who he really is.

The fact that Jesus commanded to take the wine to the head steward suggests that the cultural aspect of honor/shame is operative behind the intention of the evangelist, i.e., honor due Jesus as the incarnate Logos should be manifested publicly. The reader can notice the steward’s action: he called (φωνεῖ) the bridegroom, suggesting a loud

---

<sup>27</sup>According to the model of honor and shame, “Glory and honor is a quality that symbolically rests on the father and is passed on to male offspring, especially the first born” (Matthew S. Collins, “The Question of δόξα: A Socioliterary Reading of the Wedding at Cana,” *BTB* 25 [1995]: 106. See also Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29-30.

<sup>28</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 78.

voice. On the contrary the narrator uses a simple term ‘speaking’ or ‘saying’ (λέγει) for the words of Jesus and his mother. Bauer defines (φωνέω) as “1. produce a sound or tone of persons as call or cry out, speak loudly, say with emphasis, or as 2. call to oneself, summon.”<sup>29</sup> Ironically, honor is thus attributed to the groom for his largess. The reader and his disciples, however, know where the wine came from. The narrator’s comment (v. 9b) reveals that the honor due Jesus as the divine Logos was recognized. In the eyes of the insiders, his disciples and the readers, the reversal of status and honor can be noticed.

Lastly the narrator states that Jesus performed his miraculous signs in Cana of Galilee. He thus “revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.” The use of δόξα seems to shed light concerning what the narrator is up to with this sign. Collins states that δόξα in the Johannine gospel has two dimensions of meaning: (1) It can signify personal social glory such as honor, personal reputation, and social esteem; (2) It is used to indicate “glory as of the only Son of the Father,” thus making theological affirmations about Jesus in relation to God.<sup>30</sup> In this passage, since δόξα results in the faith of the disciples, it refers to his glory equal to the glory of God. The cultural code of honor/shame also supports this view in that the glory and honor of the father is passed on to his son through birth. In this regard, Collins adds, “The use of δόξα in 2:11 recalls 1:14 and fulfills the statement that ‘we have beheld his glory,’ thus connecting Jesus with the Logos of 1:1-18 and confirming the reader as one of the ‘we’ or community members of 1:14.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Characterization by Synkrisis**

As noted in the chapter on methodology, characters are often revealed to the

---

<sup>29</sup>Walter Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. W. Arndt, W. F. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 870.

<sup>30</sup>Matthew Collins, “The Question of δόξα,” 106.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

reader in terms of the way they relate to each other. The following section is aimed at enhancing an understanding of the characterization of Mary the mother of Jesus by comparing and contrasting her to Jesus, the twelve, other women, and other characters, thus hoping that this will provide an additional insight for the disclosure of the Johannine Jesus.

**Jesus.** The evangelist's initial characterization of Mary seems to suggest that she has a confusion over the relationship between herself and her son, Jesus, because she has a desire to press some maternal claim on her son. She wants him to supply the shortage of wine which does not seem to be included in the intention of Jesus. As a commoner, perhaps a widow in a society where goods are extremely limited, she would scheme to advance her own son's standing in the community, and subsequently to elevate her own standing in the community as well. She is yet to realize fully the sacrificial demands of God's will on her side. To say it in a different way, she is still trying to identify herself with Jesus as her physical son, expecting caring and nurturing while Jesus insists on his own identity. The reader is informed that discerning God's will by following Jesus exceeds even the biological relationship.

Jesus' reply to Mary, "Woman, what is to you and to me? My hour has not yet come" can be seen as an attempt to establish a clear boundary concerning who he is in relation to Mary and to stress the uncompromising task that lay ahead in his life. The cultural code of patron/client tells the reader that that question must have meant something like Jesus saying to Mary, "If they have the need of wine, why can't the bridegroom do the asking? Why should you be bothered with their shortage of wine? Please would you stop trying to draw me into the local game of honor and patronage."

The statement, "My hour has not yet come" seems to be understood in relation to the hour of Jesus' glorification. The hour refers to the glorification of Jesus, which includes the events of crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In reference to 8:28,

“When the Son of Man is lifted up, then you will know that *ego eimi*,” only after the event on the cross is his divine identity as the Messiah firmly established and at that time he will draw all people to him; after completing the history of salvation on the cross, then people will know him. Thus, the statement seems to reflect his intention that after his glorification he can finally invite people with authority to put faith in him because they now have a full knowledge about who Jesus is and are placed in a position where they have to make a choice concerning him. The narrator’s commentary saying, “his disciples believe in him” supports this view. The narrator does not say people believed, but the members of Jesus’ private kinship circle and fictive kinship circle believed. In other words, it is sufficient right at this moment that his inner circle believes in him, who will be witnesses to the world concerning him. Besides, the fact that it is the bridegroom who receives the honor from the public also lends support for the view that since his hour has not yet come his true identity remains hidden to outsiders until the hour. What Jesus achieves through this sign is that he defended his own honor and status as the Son of God before his inner circle. As a result “faith-as-belief” as the boundary marker is established between outsiders and insiders.

In the story of the wedding feast at Cana Mary is not a marginal figure; her role is central, although her status of “belief” in Jesus appears to be ambivalent. In light of the socio-cultural aspects, Mary is an ordinary Mediterranean widowed mother. In this narrative, she can not be claimed as a figure of the Church. Mary’s request can be seen in such a way that Mary took this as an opportunity to enhance honor and extend the family’s web of reciprocal relationship, thus pressing her wayward son to act without recognizing his hour.<sup>32</sup>

In relation to Mary, Jesus is depicted as an obedient son because he carries out

---

<sup>32</sup>Ritva H. Williams, “The Mother of Jesus at Cana: A Social-Science Interpretation,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 685.



Mary's request anyway. The statement, "Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί," which separates Jesus and his family asserts, right from the beginning of Jesus' public ministry that Jesus is no longer "son of Mary." Since this idiom is used to indicate the higher nature of Jesus from the lips of demons in all the Synoptic passages, the Fourth Evangelist seems to point to the divine nature of Jesus, having him utter this idiom.<sup>33</sup> Through this sign, the incarnate Logos proclaimed by the prologue reaffirms his divine identity. In light of the socio-cultural code, the statement, 'he revealed his glory' can be said something like, "he defended his ascribed honor and status as the Son of God (the incarnate Logos). With "Woman, what to me and to you?," Jesus seems to terminate his identity as "son of Mary" and moves on the plane of the divine. From this point on, the Son of God is identified as both a truly honorable man and the divine patron as the Logos.

**The twelve.** Fehribach views "the persistence on the part of the women" as a positive character-trait of "mothers of important sons." In this regard, she places male disciples in a passive role in the wedding. She states a possible reason saying, "The hesitancy to speak up to Jesus and be persistent may be connected to the typical male concern for honor, which is portrayed as being detrimental to belief in Jesus."<sup>34</sup> While this could be a possible interpretation, the statement of the narrator saying, "the disciples believed" seems to point to their lack of faith and understanding with regard to the identity of Jesus. The lack of trust prohibits Jesus from forming a voluntary group who will form a coalition with him and serve as the witnesses for his work on earth. The disciples having seen the sign and believed in him implies that they are now "in" the group.

---

<sup>33</sup>Maynard states that the Fourth evangelist had Jesus utter the idiom to reveal his divine identity since he could not have "this recognition come from demons, not only because Jesus does not cast out demons in this Gospel, but also because in this Gospel it is part of the function of Jesus to reveal his divine nature" (A. Maynard, "ΤΙ ΕΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΙ," *NT 31* [1985]: 585.)

<sup>34</sup>Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 40-1.

**The headwaiter.** The fact that he is a man of relatively higher status can be made from the following facts: (1) Jesus tells the servant to take the water changed to wine to the head waiter; (2) He calls the bridegroom and praises him that he has saved the best wine for last. He acts as a minor functionary character in that he testifies neither to the fact of the miracle nor to the content of the sign. He has no name. His inner self is hidden from the reader and causes no ambiguity, conflict, or development. Without knowing the miraculous nature of the wine, he simply praises the best quality wine, thus disclosing the identity of Jesus to the disciples. He might have appeared here as an authoritative witness concerning the truthfulness of the sign. Without fully understanding the situation, he attributes honor due Jesus publicly.

### **Christological Implication**

Fehribach argues that Jesus came to fulfill his role as messianic bridegroom, so that he gives people the power to become children of God and thus fulfills the promise made to Abraham.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, the women involved with Jesus' ministry are assigned a specific gender role, for example, Mary the mother of Jesus as "Mother of the Messianic Bridegroom" and other women as betrothed and bride of the messianic bridegroom. Her approach, however seems to be at fault in that her methodology can be applied only to women. In other words, male disciples such as Peter, the Beloved disciple and Thomas were allowed to have their individual characteristics while women characters are treated as types, not allowing for individuality based on a type-scene found in the Old Testament. For example, Mary as a mother is assigned to "a typical gender specific role" as mother, i.e., the mother of the messianic bridegroom based on a character-type from the Hebrew Bible. The Samaritan woman is characterized as a bride of the messianic bridegroom as she was constructed from a type-scene at a well. At a

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 32.

well a betrothal takes place when a stranger meets a woman. Thus, Fehribach argues that a symbolic marriage took place between Jesus and the Samaritan woman on behalf of her people.<sup>36</sup> Besides, considering the fact that even the typical characters fluctuate between type and individuality until the narrative ends, it would seem wise to understand characterization on a continuum. Thus, Burnett asserts that “for narratives like the Gospels the focus should be on the degree of characterization rather than on characterization as primarily typical.”<sup>37</sup> Since women in John are the focal point of the examination, it seems logical to focus on characterization, allowing for their individuality, because even a very simple and brief account of a person’s relationship with others can reveal a good deal about the person concerned.

The next issue, then, concerns how the characterization of Mary provides insights about the Johannine Jesus. Mary seems to be in a mediating position like a match-maker in the narrative. The following observations can be made: She is a medium through which the Word came in flesh in the person of Jesus; by initiating the sign, she moves the person of Jesus from the earthly plane to the divine plane; the disciples develop the point of view “from above” with regard to Jesus; she initiates the patron-client relation between Jesus and the bridegroom’s family. These observations indicate that Mary is characterized as a broker. Then the Johannine Jesus must be taken in the role of a divine patron who can control the first order resources.<sup>38</sup>

Another issue that will enhance the understanding of the identity of Jesus has something to do with the word  $\delta\omicron\xi\alpha$ . This first sign is the archetype of all the signs,

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>37</sup>Fred W. Burnett, “Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels, *Semeia* 63 (1993): 15.

<sup>38</sup>According to Malina, the patron is the one who can control the first order resources such as jobs, land, power, information and goods. The broker is the one who can control the second order resources, which are largely strategic contact with the patron who controls the first order resources (Malina, “Patron and Client,” 12).

which declares the glory of the incarnate Logos and is intended to lead men to put faith in him. At the wedding, Jesus is said to reveal his glory. The question that comes to the mind of the reader is What kind of glory is it then?

Verse 14 in the Prologue says, “We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son.” In terms of a kinship system, δόξα here can be considered as equal to God’s glory, since the father’s honor/glory can be passed on to male offspring through birth.<sup>39</sup> Since persons of the Trinity have different primary functions in relating to the world, they possess their own glory in that respect. V. 1 seems to support this view saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Each member of the Trinity, is, however fully God and they together form one God. Thus, each member’s δόξα cannot be differentiated from that of the others, and the δόξα that each member of the Trinity attributes to each other is simply God’s δόξα.

The evangelist describes God according to what Malina calls “a Three-Zone Model.” Like God the way a human being is perceived as fitting into his rightful place in his environments, physical and social, and acting in a way that is typically human involves three zones of interacting: zone of emotion-fused thought (to see, know, understand and think through the organs such as eyes, heart, eyelid and pupil), zone of self-expressive speech (to speak, hear, say, call, cry, praise, curse and instruct etc. through the help of mouth, ears, tongue, lips, throat and jaws), and zone of purposeful action (to do, act, accomplish, execute, intervene, walk, come, stand, and go using hands, feet, arms, fingers, legs). To Jesus, these three zones work in harmony: Jesus has perceived [understood] the seriousness of lacking wine, spoken “fill the jars with water” and what he has expressed to do was realized, i.e., wine. In terms of the three zones, Jesus is a truly honorable man because these three zones work in harmony in the person

---

<sup>39</sup>Malina refers to this kind of honor as “ascribed honor” (Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29).

of Jesus; yet he is the divine *Logos* because these three zones not only work in harmony, which is an attribute of the divine, but also in miraculous fashion. In this way, the evangelist provides a total and complete experience of Jesus as both the divine and true human to the reader. Through the first sign, Jesus reveals his glory. Since this glory is described as that of a father's only son, his characteristics as the "Son of God" are affirmed. Since the first sign, the christological title given in 1:14, the "Son of God" was firmly fixed as characteristic for the proper name Jesus.<sup>40</sup> Later in the gospel the evangelist ascribes the incarnate *Logos* (Son of God) to various narrative roles.<sup>41</sup> As the narrative progresses, the reader encounters different characteristics of the "Son of God" and the christological titles which refer to the "Son of God." But for characterization it is the proper noun Jesus which provides the reader with a stable locus for unifying, integrating, individualizing the disparate manifestations of the Son of God. In other words, the evangelist employs various themes, titles and adjectives to describe differing characteristics of the "Son of God," which all can be subsumed under the proper name

---

<sup>40</sup>According to the current poststructuralist theories of language and reading, proper names like Jesus function primarily for identification or for reference. They do not provide information. Unlike definite descriptions, they do not in general specify any characteristics at all of the objects to which they refer. Proper names function as an instrument of exchange (i.e., as a Sign for proper characteristics). This exchange allows the reader to fill the sign with characteristics (adjectives) to produce the illusion of a person. The PN, then, provides both a destiny for the narrative and the quest by the reader to attach proper characteristics to the name. In John, Jesus seems to be the proper name which is at the same time a linguistic convention pointing away from itself to the characteristics--the incarnation, the 'in-fleshing' of the Word. The dialectic which is created by the use of the proper name Jesus and the signified (God's presence) is resolved by their unification into a dominant third term, e.g., Son of God." Fred W. Burnett, "Characterization and Christology in Matthew: Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Society of Biblical Literature: 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. by David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 591-95.

<sup>41</sup>The incarnate Word is the Son of God. The Son of God has an exact parallel when defining human relationship. Then this phrase would have a special language effect in showing how God can be a father to the human family. Besides, it can provide a hint to the reader with regard to the relationship between the human being Jesus and his having divine nature. Peterson according to the socio-linguistic approach supports this view arguing that everyday language like "father" and "Son" are employed by the evangelist to express the relation between the Other (this is the inclusive term for both God and the Word) and the human being Jesus of Nazareth (Norman R. Petersen, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993], 16).

Jesus.<sup>42</sup> The narrative at the wedding at Cana discloses that Jesus is the proper name [the identification] for his identity, i.e., the “Son of God,” the “in-fleshing” of the divine Logos as he reveals his glory (in terms of socio-cultural background, as he defends his ascribed honor and status as the divine). Therefore, in this narrative the evangelist confirms the identity of Jesus as the “Son of God,” thus allowing its being the key christological title from then on.

### Summary

It appears that the narrator strategically placed the Cana narrative in the beginning of the Gospel: the wine miracle marks the dawn of a new age. Malina and Rohrbaugh make an interesting observation in their commentary. According to them, “on the third day” in the opening verse of the narrative coincides with the eighth day, which is the first day after the close of the first (creation) week since the beginning (1:1)<sup>43</sup> This being the case, the Cana narrative bears much significance upon the characters. This significance is expressed especially through a ritual of wedding, which marks some individual’s or group’s transition or transformation. This wedding possesses a double meaning: the wedding of unknown individuals on the surface of the narrative serves as a ritual of transformation both for Jesus’ group and his mother Mary. Mary is the one who brings about the wine miracle because she is the one who asked Jesus to replenish the

---

<sup>42</sup>All the expressions such as to become children of God, to be born of water and the Spirit, and to drink the living water point to the theme of salvation. The purpose of the coming of the Word incarnate (the Son of God) is explicitly written in 3:16-17. The proper names such as “Jesus” have no meaning in themselves, but just serve as “identification.” On the one hand these proper names gain their meanings as the narrative progresses by many different themes and the titles. On the other hand, the dialectic tension created by the interrelated meaning of being human and divine are resolved by the christological titles, e.g., the Son of God. After this is done, throughout the narrative the evangelist builds up many different characteristics in order to tell the reader concerning who he is and what he can do.

<sup>43</sup>Malina and Rohrbaugh divide the first chapter of the Gospel into five days of episode. Added to these five days, another three days in the opening of 2:1 make eight days. Therefore, they consider the first seven days as John’s creation week marking the eighth day as the first day after the close of the first creation week (Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998], 66).

wine. Jesus reveals his glory and his disciples put faith in him. Through this wedding, both Jesus' group and his mother are transformed: Jesus' real identity not as the son of Mary but as the divine son is firmly appended to the proper name Jesus by revealing his glory which he shares with God; Mary's status as mother must be conceded to that of her being Jesus' disciple; the disciples have become the inner circle of Jesus by putting faith in him. Under the circumstance, Mary's role is significant. Most importantly, the role of Mary is to indicate the Christological idea that God came in flesh having the proper name Jesus. This is suggested by the fact that Jesus has his physical mother, yet possesses glory equal to God. She brings the human Jesus to the divine plane. Including Mary in the overall structure of the entire Gospel, i.e. she is present both in the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry, adds the narrative a sense of beginning and end. It appears that the narrator planned to begin his narrative with the Cana wedding in terms of specific reasons: first, this wedding seems to indicate that it is the beginning of Jesus' public ministry dealing with a large crowd. The fact that only the inner circle of Jesus and the servants know where the wine came from supports that he has not yet become a popular miracle worker; second, the narrator implies that this wine miracle leads to the formation of Jesus' inner circle saying that his disciples had put faith in him. Besides, the intention of the narrator placing the Cana wedding in the beginning of the narrative seems to be obvious in that the presence of Mary and Jesus' reference to "his hour" assures the link between the Cana episode and the crucifixion where the hour has come for him to be glorified and Mary is also present. The reference to the hour indicates that Jesus has an important task to fulfill within a prescribed time limit, which also serves to further develop the plot.

#### **The Samaritan Woman (4:1-42)**

The content of the passage can be summarized as follows: verses 1-4 forms a transition from the preceding chapter and serves as a general introduction to this

narrative, verses 5-7a forms a more specific introduction to the discourse and subsequent events at the well, verses 7b-9 opens the dialogue, verses 10-15 is the discussion on life-giving water, verses 16-26 is the second half of the dialogue, verses 27-30 serves as a transition as the disciples return and the woman departs, verses 31-8 is a short discourse on heavenly food, and verses 39-42 is the conclusion: many believe (39), more people believe (41), and confess faith in Jesus as the Savior (42).<sup>44</sup>

### **Characterization by Literary Aspects**

The episode happens when Jesus is on his way to Galilee and has to pass through Samaria. The term ‘the sixth hour’ establishes the temporal setting of this passage, which is said to be midday. The spatial setting finds Jesus sitting by Jacob’s well in a town in Samaria called Sychar. Thus, the whole episode is situated by Jacob’s well given to his son Joseph in Samaria. These initial references implied in the mentioning of certain items and expressions are significant for decoding the text. By choosing these specific pieces of information, the writer intends to say something with it. For example, the repeated use of the term Samaritan can indicate that the evangelist wants the readers to be aware of the issues involved between the Jews and Samaritans. In the same way, the mentioning of the names of Jacob, Joseph and the history of the well is very significant for the readers. The evangelist wants the readers to deduce specific information from this exact location. Jacob and Joseph are well-known characters and they symbolize a specific reference. “The reference to Jacob and Joseph would immediately produce images of faith, orthodox Jewish tradition and the history of salvation.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently, this reference would help to place the mind of the readers on the Old Testament background.

---

<sup>44</sup>J. Eugene Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1991), 96.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.



Direct definition is sparsely used. The woman is called a Samaritan woman by the narrator (4:7). The fact that the word Samaritan is repeated twice (to define the spacial setting and to denote the woman) indicates it bears some importance. In verse 9, the emphasis appears to be on the gender related issue, i.e., Jesus as a Jewish male encounters in public a foreign woman. Maccini, however, states that the emphasis falls not on the character's gender, her womanhood, but on her ethnic identity. That is, she is called Samaritan because the evangelist intended to remind the readers of hostilities that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. Citing sources where women seem to be required to attend the synagogue service and read together with men and where they served as messengers and witnesses who are heard and believed, Maccini further states that Jewish rabbinic codes regarding the place of women in the public, religious and legal spheres should not be applied routinely to Samaritans. Thus, the Samaritan woman's astonishment stems from Jesus' violation not of gender barriers but of religious/ethnic ones.<sup>46</sup>

Jesus defines himself as the Messiah through the emphatic formula, *ego eimi* saying, “ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι.” The narrator identifies Jesus as the Savior of the world by the mouth of townspeople. The *ego eimi* saying seems to bear a significant importance upon the text because it is in a position of particular emphasis in the discussion.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the mentioning of its background appears to be inevitable.

---

<sup>46</sup>Maccini, *Her Testimony*, 133-37.

<sup>47</sup>L. Eslinger, “The Wooing of the Woman at the Well: Jesus, the Reader and Reader-Response Criticism,” *Literature and Theology* 12 (1987): 171. Eslinger suggests that the dialogue (vv. 7-26) is structured chiasmatically and that Jesus begins and concludes both halves of the dialogue by his utterance, “λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς.” In this case, the *ego eimi* saying bears a significant meaning upon the text because the sentence which contains *ego eimi* acts as an *inclusio* to the dialogue begun in v. 7. David Mark Ball, *I Am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 63. Ball also adds to the significance of the *ego eimi* saying in that because it occurs between two questions concerning Jesus' identity (vv. 10, 29), the *ego eimi* saying answers the first indirect question formulated by Jesus while it acts as the structural climax of the main part of the episode because after this saying, the woman departs to inform the villagers about this man who knows all about her (v. 28).

Although there is some disagreement about whether to categorize *ego eimi* sayings as “absolute” or not, David Ball agrees with Harner in that 4: 26 (Ἐγὼ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν) appears to contain a double meaning in which a predicate is implied on at least one level.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Ball further clarifies his position by saying,

While the ‘I am’ sayings without a predicate are primarily concerned with who Jesus is, those with a predicate are primarily concerned with what Jesus does. At the same time the Gospel displays a relationship between who Jesus is and what he does so that what he does also reveals his identity, his essential character.<sup>49</sup>

Rejecting the Mandaean background postulated by Rudolph Bultmann, most scholars such as Raymond Brown and C. H. Dodd argue for its background both in the Old Testament and Rabbinic Judaism. Giving the parallelism found in Isaiah 52:6 (Ἐγὼ εἰμι, αὐτός ὁ λαλῶν), Brown asserts that *ego eimi* is to be understood not only as a statement of divine unicity and existence, but also as a divine name.<sup>50</sup> Dodd also cites several examples to argue that not only the Greek form *ego eimi*, but also the Hebrew form *ani hu* served as a divine name in the liturgy.<sup>51</sup> If Jesus’ saying in verse 26 is almost a direct parallel to words in Isaiah 52:6, the evangelist could have intended to allude to the meaning and the context of the *ego eimi* saying in Isaiah 52:6 to the mind of his audience when writing the *ego eimi* saying in verse 26. In this case, Jesus’ claim to messiahship should be interpreted not only in the context of a dialogue with the Samaritan woman, but also in the context of Isaiah 52:7. Then through the *ego eimi* saying in verse 26 Jesus intended not only to reveal who he is but also to define his role through what he does. Jesus identifies himself both with Yahweh and the Messiah. To

---

<sup>48</sup>Ball, *‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel*, 168. See also P. B. Harner, *The ‘I am’ of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 37-48.

<sup>49</sup>Ball, *‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel*, 175.

<sup>50</sup>Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB, vol. 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 536.

<sup>51</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 94.

say it in a different way, the predicated 'I am' sayings point to the absolute "ego eimi" (the divine name) which unfolds the divine attributes of the absolute "ego eimi." David Ball offers a concise summary by saying,

If it is correct to see in Jesus' words a reference to the similar words of Isa, then it would mean that this verse operates on two levels. The first level is there for all to see. Jesus claims to be the messiah of whom the Samaritan woman speaks. . . . On the second level, Jesus' words make him out to be the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that the people would know his name, and also know that it is he who speaks. Jesus' identity as messiah is therefore an identity which includes an identification with Yahweh.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the verbal analogy of Jesus' words with the words of Yahweh in Isaiah offers an interpretation on a far deeper level, namely, that ἔγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν is the Messiah who is also identified with Yahweh.

Indirect presentation also is used to portray the characters. The Samaritan woman is often described as a libertine by the statement, "You have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband" (v. 18). This interpretation, however, does not do justice to the Samaritan woman based on the following grounds. First, the focus of this narrative is not to point out sinfulness on the part of the Samaritan woman. The evangelist does not deal with her life style at all. In addition, the statement of Jesus (v. 18) is made not to make her repent pointing out her immorality, but to direct the woman's attention to the identity of Jesus. In fact, verse 18 serves like a catch phrase to make a turning point in the narrative. By this phrase, Jesus reveals his omniscience on which he bases his claim to be the divine Messiah (v. 26). Thus, interpreting this woman through the moral lenses is not relevant to the purpose of this narrative.

Second, the social situation of her days portrays her differently. The fact that the woman married many times and that she is living with a man out of marriage seems to indicate that she is morally a loose woman. Many scholars interpret this woman's successive marriages as the result of her lustfulness and add that because she lives in

---

<sup>52</sup>Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel*, 180.

shame, she comes to fetch water at midday to avoid meeting other women. Luise Schottroff gives another reason why the Samaritan woman is viewed as a morally loose person. This interpretation is based on the idea that her moral misbehavior is due to “the female-oriented variant of the theological idea which is characterized by the assumption that, in the case of women, the failures in their lives are connected with their sexuality.”<sup>53</sup> The social situation in those days, however, demands that women must have a male protector to survive. Almost all social and legal matters were handled by the hands of males. “Women simply could not afford to be without a male provider/protector in a society which was ordered along strictly patriarchal lines.”<sup>54</sup> Marriage was the only real security for the adult Jewish woman. Therefore, the widows without any male protector had to marry repeatedly for economic and social reasons. This being the case, her life situation was not necessarily created by the woman’s lustfulness. Besides, the Bible records women’s consecutive marriages without regarding them as immoral. For example, in the Old Testament Tamar the daughter-in-law of Judah was asking for her husband’s brother in order to produce an heir for him after her husband died without an offspring. In the New Testament the Gospel of Mark in chapter 12 speaks of the sevenfold levirate marriage of a woman. The book of Tobit also provides a case where a young woman had seven husbands, each dying during their wedding night because an evil demon killed them. She is mocked: “You have already been married to seven husbands and have not borne the name of a single one of them” (Tob 3:8). These examples show situations in which women are pressured to enter repeatedly into new marriages in order to secure the patriarchal chain of inheritance.

But there was another reason for successive marriages. The divorcee and

---

<sup>53</sup>Luise Schottroff, “The Samaritan Woman and the Notion of Sexuality in the Fourth Gospel,” in *What is John?*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 2:164-65.

<sup>54</sup>Archer, *Her Price*, 125.

widow suffered economic loss from their change in status. For this reason “the rabbis viewed remarriages as the best solution for the unfortunate women who were either divorced or widowed.”<sup>55</sup> Tal Ilan adds that “widowhood in Judaism was in most instances a temporary situation, and the sources describe many cases of widows remarrying; there are only very few cases of women remaining widows long after the deaths of their husbands.”<sup>56</sup> Besides Léonie Archer provides information which would create an unfortunate situation for the widows.<sup>57</sup> In those days, it was very difficult for the widows with little financial security to remarry. The patriarchal social system, however, requires a male protector or provider for the women to survive. Under the circumstance, the fact that the Samaritan woman married many times and that she is now living with a man out of marriage is quite understandable. In this case, this woman’s life situation is not necessarily related to her lustfulness. Because of her poor life situation, she is beyond the criticism of the people. Thus, she is not judged to be right or wrong. If the reader sticks to the literal meaning of “the man you now have is not your husband” (v. 18), she is viewed as immoral. The social situation of that day, however, characterizes her as a poor widow who could not even afford the sixth marriage either due to poverty or low social status, thus failing to have a lawful protector for her life. In this respect, to judge her immoral in light of her lustfulness does not seem to be fair to the Samaritan woman. She is characterized just as one of the poor widows who could not even obtain a lawful male protector for her life. Yet, she is portrayed as a privileged woman. Jesus makes this unprivileged and socially oppressed woman to be privileged because he chose to reveal to her that he is the Messiah, thus giving her privilege to meet the Messiah first among the Samaritans.

---

<sup>55</sup>Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*, 148.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>57</sup>Her argument is based on Babylonian Talmud (*Ket.* 339b, 84a, 97b; *Gitt.* 49b). See Archer, *Her Price*, 180.

### Characterization by Cultural Aspects

Recognizing the cultural code which is inherent in the narrative is an important tool to deepen the understanding of the characters involved. John 4:1-42 contains one main cultural code that will shed light upon characterization, i.e., patron/client. The kinship terminology of “Father,” as used by Jesus, points to such a patron-client relationship. Titles such as Father, Messiah and Savior describe God as patron, since they illustrate God’s person and activities. The vocabulary of favoritism like “the gift of God” also signifies such a relationship: Jesus offers the gift of God to the Samaritan woman without effort for the highest quality possible on her side.

**Patron-client.** The role of Jesus becomes clear when examined in light of the woman’s role; that is, the Samaritan woman is acting as a broker who introduces the gift of God to the townspeople. In this narrative, a vertical dyadic relationship is exhibited. In other words the persons on a higher social plane serve as patrons for their clients on a lower social plane; the exchange of the goods or services in this reciprocal relationship will not be the same. This vertical dyadic relation formed by means of patronage occurs when someone adopts a posture of deference to another deemed more powerful in order to gain access to resources.<sup>58</sup>

The specific introduction (5-7a) creates tension and suspense by the unnecessary repetition of the word Samaritan because it makes the reader aware of the problematic social and religious relations between the Jews and Samaritans.

The tension on the part of the reader increases more in the opening dialogue (7b-9) by Jesus’ encountering the woman alone at the well in public. The arrival of a woman at the well becomes problematic. The fact that she is a Samaritan indicates the problematic nature of her arrival: “they are two strangers, of opposite belief, man and

---

<sup>58</sup>John Davis, *The People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 132.

woman, Jewish rabbi and Samaritan woman, social anathema to each other, and yet there they are confronted with each other.”<sup>59</sup> Verse 8 intensifies the problematic nature of Jesus’ approaching the woman because they are alone, the evangelist having removed the disciples from the scene.<sup>60</sup> Besides, the fact that his request for water is denied poses a real dilemma in that the character of Jesus which has been told by the trustworthy evangelist and with whom the readers have identified becomes questionable.

The unraveling of the cultural code of patron/client diminishes this seemingly problematic nature of the narrative. Jesus has arbitrarily chosen his client and attempts to establish a patron/client relation between the Samaritan woman, preferably the Samaritans and himself. In this narrative, Jesus acts as a broker working for himself (patron as God). Malina summarizes well the activity of Jesus as follows:

He moves from the tiny hamlet of Nazareth to bustling Capernaum, makes contact with persons with lakeside transportation facilities, information flow (tax or toll collector), as well as building up a fund of credit by healing. Then he manipulates these relations to his own benefit, obtaining honor as well as material support since he could dedicate himself to this brokerage once his contacts were firm.<sup>61</sup>

As the result of this patron/client relation, Jesus gains personal benefits: (a) he has earned “capital” in that he has extended his personal network of relations with people who would enable him to carry out his mission; (b) he is entitled to receive “tariff,” which consists of included services (invited to people’s houses, fund contributed), information (what do men say that I am?), standing (“and his fame spread”) and honor.<sup>62</sup>

The means that he sought for a patron/client relation here was to offer living water (v. 10). In a limited goods society, what she needed was “water.” Thus, Jesus

---

<sup>59</sup>Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*, 110.

<sup>60</sup>Botha asserts, “Before the character of the woman answers the author interrupts the discourse with another aside in 4:8, stating that the disciples have gone to buy food. . . . Suddenly a totally different subject, chronology and characters are mentioned, contrary to what one would expect in reply to the question 4:7b.” *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>61</sup>Malina, “Patron and Client,” 13.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

offers the living water since he is both the living water (Jer 1:13) and the source of it (Rev 7:17 and 21:6). Jesus' persistent conversation with the woman reveals that Jesus is initiating a dyadic contract between them. He is patiently talking the woman into a dyadic relation and does not stop pressing her until she asks for the living water. The cultural code of a patron and client contract requires that someone needs to adopt a posture of deference to another deemed more powerful and then gains access to resources as a result.

After Jesus' continuous claim on his ability and authority (v. 14), the Samaritan woman finally acknowledges that Jesus has the ability and authority to do something for her; she now asks for the water (v. 15). At this moment, the dialogue turns abruptly into another subject, which has generated various interpretations. For example, scholars like Fehribach and L. Eslinger are in line with Carmichael who argues that the beginning verses (vv. 16-18) of the second half of the dialogue contain sexual and marital overtones. She states that "the switch in conversation would be inexplicable if it were not for the underlying marital theme. The woman by requesting the gift of living water is becoming, in a sense for the first time a bride for the bridegroom."<sup>63</sup> Others like L. Morris and W. Hendriksen argue that Jesus intended to reveal her sin because the woman is a sinful person. This does not seem to provide a satisfactory answer in that there is no indication in the preceding section to indicate a problematic past for her; except the fact that she visited the well at an uncustomary hour.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Botha points out that the nature of abruptness "affords the character Jesus an opportunity to continue the conversation and to introduce a new topic or program in his dealing with the woman."<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup>C. M. Carmichael, "Marriage and the Samaritan Woman," *NTS* 26 (1980): 338.

<sup>64</sup>W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 164; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 264.

<sup>65</sup>Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*, 141.



She further adds that by responding to the woman's denial of having a husband, the character Jesus here shows his omniscience.<sup>66</sup>

The last approach seems more likely in line with the insights that the cultural code of patron/client provides. Up to verse 15, Jesus' authority and ability to provide the living water is challenged and he has assumed a position of relative authority, which she has accepted in the fact that she has accepted the switch from his needs to hers. Now it is time for him specifically to spell out who he is and prove his claimed authority by some sort of means. Switching into another topic in relation to the woman's life was a means to show his power of omniscience, thus defending the honor which he has claimed with her. As a result, the woman confesses, "I can see that you are a prophet" (v. 19). After this confession, the woman has finally realized her spiritual thirst. She is now in contact with the living water. She still could not perceive Jesus as the Messiah, but the authority of Jesus has been elevated to the point where he reminds her of the coming Messiah. Jesus declares, "I who speak to you am he" (v. 26). As a result, the woman went into the town leaving her water jar behind.

The fact that woman left her jar at the well, went into the town, and then brought townspeople to Jesus is very significant on several grounds: (1) this is the first reaction by the woman that is recorded after Jesus' self-revelation; (2) her response to Jesus is not verbal as could be expected, but is described as an action; (3) in the light of socio-cultural practices where goods are extremely limited, it seems radical that she left her valuable water vessel.

The woman's action is operative on two levels. On the surface level, it reveals that the cultural code of patron/client is at work. She now recognizes Jesus as the Messiah come from God, as the supreme patron who can provide the first order resources that she is lacking. She has decided that she wants to be his client. As client, she wants

---

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 142.

to show respect and honor to Jesus by bringing more clients to him. In the first century world, the power of a patron was often measured by the number of clients he possessed. In that respect she acts now as a broker. She runs to the townspeople, invites them to come to see Jesus and see for themselves whether they could be his clients like her. The fact that Jesus was invited to their town indicates that now a patron-client relation was established between them and Jesus. Through patronage, Jesus gained “capital” in that he now had more clients who could form a coalition with him. He also gained “tariff” which involves included services. The most notable gain of all, Jesus was honored as the savior of the world.

On a spiritual level, the woman is now in possession of the real living water. H. Boers argues, “In so far as the jar represents the means of satisfying the need for drinking water, dropping it must mean the negation of that need.”<sup>67</sup> This would indicate that the woman understands the words of Jesus and accepts who he says he is.

Jesus as the Son of God rests at the well of his spiritual forebears. The woman comes to draw water. The scene at the well is reminiscent of Old Testament betrothal scenes.<sup>68</sup> The former reference would immediately place the narrative in the history of patriarchal tradition, faith, and of orthodox Jewish religion, which provide the interpretive framework along the line of God’s redemptive work in the history of the Israelites before the Jews and the Samaritans got separated. On the other hand this reference produces in the mind of the reader the image of God bringing His people unto Him through the metaphorical use of a betrothal scene.

---

<sup>67</sup>H. Boers, *Neither on this Mountain Nor in Jerusalem: A Study of John 4* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 183.

<sup>68</sup>Many scholars such as L. Eslinger, P. J. Cahill, B. Olsson, and Adeline Fehribach argue that the scene at the well contains the initial elements of a betrothal type-scene. Like the meeting of Isaac’s surrogate and Rebekah at a well (Gen 24:10-61) and Jacob and Rachel at a well, which lead to betrothal, this scene also indicates the initial elements of a betrothal type-scene in that a male Jesus meets a woman at the well. If the implied reader really intended to remind the reader of a betrothal type-scene, the reader must have an expectation that their encounter at the well would lead to some kind of a binding relationship, if not a metaphorical marriage, which Fehribach argues.

In the context of the salvation history of God, *ego eimi* will surely invoke the divine name of Yahweh. When the woman says that she knows that Messiah is coming, Jesus claims to be the one. In the mind of the reader, this is also reminiscent of the preaching of the prophet Isaiah, “the Lord had said that in that day the people would know that it is he who speaks” (52:6). This is a high christological affirmation of the Johannine Gospel which differentiates it from the Synoptics.

### **Characterization by Synkrisis**

In spite of her different origin, the Samaritan woman displays such commendable character traits as persistence and commitment. She serves as a standard by which John’s other characters can be compared and evaluated. Characterization by synkrisis shows her to be a very unique contributor to John’s story.

**Other women.** Most strikingly, the Samaritan woman is of non-Jewish origin and is not defined in relationship to men like Mary the mother of Jesus. Unlike the mother of Jesus, she does not ask for a sign. It is Jesus who initiates the conversation and stimulates her in order to bring her to the revelation of himself. This Samaritan woman does seem to be an intelligent and educated woman. She engages in a lively conversation with Jesus that eventually results in words of self-revelation on his part. She responds appropriately to his revelation and assumes spontaneously the role of public witness to Jesus.

Scholars such as Maccini and O’Day describe the Samaritan woman as a woman of little faith. O’Day states, “It (her invitation to come and see Jesus) is an ironic invitation in the mouth of the Samaritan woman, because she was able to see so little in the course of her conversation with Jesus. It is the correct invitation, but she offers it unknowingly.”<sup>69</sup> This judgment, however, does not seem to do justice to the woman.

---

<sup>69</sup>G. R. O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 76.

The change of vocative in calling Jesus, first from a respectful form of address “Lord,” to “a prophet” in verse 19 and finally “the Messiah” in verse 26 implies that she obtains increased knowledge about the person and identity of Jesus, and thus develops a gradual faith in Jesus. Her faith is based on the omniscience that Jesus demonstrated regarding her marital status. She did not act until she heard that Jesus was the Messiah: Right after the confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, then she acts. Besides, her utterance, “He can’t be the Messiah can he?” in verse 29 should not be understood in ways that her commitment to Jesus is less certain or that it is an indication of weak faith.<sup>70</sup> In terms of Speech Act Theory, her suppositive utterance strengthens the perlocution (the intended effect) of the previous utterance in that it provides further incentive for the villagers to act in the required manner. Since she is not in a position to command the villagers, she is requesting them to take a certain action.<sup>71</sup>

She also left her valuable water jar behind. This fact portrays the Samaritan woman positively in that like the male disciples of Jesus, she also left everything behind. Leaving the water jar behind in a society where all the goods are limited bears an important significance: she is revealed as a person whose perception grows until she responds in faith and acts as a full believer in that she extends the invitation to others.

Like Mary the mother of Jesus, she is also portrayed as a broker leading her people to the Messiah. The readers may never be sure why she offered the invitation indirectly using the question formula. The fact that her indirect invitation made the townspeople act positively, however, proves that the way she spoke was effective in the first century Mediterranean world and that she utilized effective communication skills. Therefore the Samaritans came out to see Jesus based on what she had said.

---

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Botha, *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*, 164.

**Jesus.** At the level of characters, the woman is doing exactly what is expected within her social context and is contrasted with Jesus, who exhibits deviation from the cultural norm. The fact that in v. 9 the woman responds by using an interrogative form to tone down her negative response in replying to the request of Jesus (v. 7) reveals character traits about her. Botha states that “by refusing Jesus’ request, the woman is pictured as being a true Samaritan, clinging to her beliefs and traditions, yet in some sense she is not insensitive to Jesus’ request.”<sup>72</sup> This characterizes the Samaritan woman with a positive trait. Her positive characterization that she is being true to herself is enhanced by an implicit commentary, “For Jews do not have dealings with Samaritans.”

In the beginning of the narrative, the image of Jesus is not so favorably presented because he is not only shown to be acting contrary to the expected, but his initial approach to the woman fails in that it is not fulfilled, and he is rebuked. Jesus is contrasted with the woman who is being shown as a conservative or a traditional figure. He is viewed as a more liberal figure, not adhering to the conventions which say that Jesus as a Jewish rabbi should not talk with a foreign woman in public and should not violate the social custom that Jews do not associate with Samaritans.<sup>73</sup> The evangelist seems to challenge the reader to ask the following questions: “first, is Jesus in the wrong or are the accepted social customs perhaps wrong?; secondly, is the belief correct in that Samaritans are to be avoided?”<sup>74</sup> This will force the reader to evaluate the situation, his/her own beliefs, and the actions and beliefs of the characters, which will lead to formulate more accurate Christian values and beliefs.

In this dialogue, the characterization of Jesus has been developed through the ironic interplay with the Samaritan woman, and toward the end the narrator’s ideological

---

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 120.

point of view concerning the identity and mission of Jesus is confirmed through Jesus' "I am" saying. In doing so, the narrator's point of view about Jesus first disclosed in the prologue is reinforced.

**The disciples.** No significant characterization is visible for the disciples except for a couple of minor points. The fact that they were silent when they found Jesus talking with a woman is a natural response on their side, since they belong to a "voluntary grouping," i.e., a core faction group of Jesus. In this group the sacred persons or posts have power over all the dimensions of honor in their respective groups. They arbitrate questions of value; they delimit what can be done or maintained without sacrilege; they are above criticism.<sup>75</sup> In the narrative, according to the Jewish perspective, Jesus rests in a profane place and talks with an unclean woman in public, violating the standard behavior rules for a Jewish rabbi. The disciples were obviously in shock, but did not voice any criticism, though the behavior of Jesus did not match the character of Jesus with whom they had identified thus far. They are at the stage of learning and accepting the norms and values that Jesus defines, even though they are not acceptable according to the social norms of the Jews of that day.

Second, their reasoning voiced in verse 33 indicates that they do not yet have a clear understanding of Jesus' identity and mission. Whether or not the evangelist intended to compare the Samaritan woman with the disciples is not certain. The literary technique of *Synkrisis* which identifies "likeness" and "unlikeness" seems to place the woman and the disciples in comparison. In spite of a relatively long period of time that the disciples have been with Jesus and witnessed many signs, they have not developed a perspective "from above" in identifying Jesus. On the contrary, although the woman has not witnessed miraculous signs, she believes in his words by hearing and responds in

---

<sup>75</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 41.

action. Leaving the valuable water jar behind indicates that she accepts the identity of Jesus based on his words, ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν and thus gains a perspective “from above” with regard to Jesus.

**The townspeople.** The townspeople deserve to be considered in that they also are mentioned anonymously. They serve as a foil in encouraging the reader to receive Jesus as their savior and belong to a community of faith who would form a coalition with Jesus whenever necessary.

Anonymity gives freedom for the reader in that it erases the identity distinction of the name and instead creates a gap that the reader is invited to fill with her/his own identity, entering into the narrative and confronting the circumstances and situation of the character in the text.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, the anonymity of those characters such as the Samaritan woman and the disciples, and the blind man facilitates the process of reader identification with them, thus more powerfully resulting in the alteration and re-formation of the reader’s self.<sup>77</sup>

Recently several studies have suggested that “adult readers would identify with story characters who display a similar gender role orientation. Male and female readers rated their identification with male and female characters who acted in either a masculine or feminine manner in short story vignettes.”<sup>78</sup>

These facts may prove to be useful to explain the neglected intention of the evangelist, i.e., the woman is not identified by any name. David Beck specifically argues that the Samaritan woman was anonymous in that she did not have a specific name.<sup>79</sup> In

---

<sup>76</sup>David R. Beck, “The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization,” *Semeia* 63 (1993): 147.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>78</sup>Paul E. Jose, “The Role of Gender and Gender Role Similarity in Reader’s Identification with Story Characters,” *Sex Roles* 21 (1989): 697.

<sup>79</sup>Beck, “The Narrative Function of Anonymity,” 145.

this narrative, it seems logical to apply anonymity of the characters to both the townspeople in Samaria and the woman, in which case the readers--whether they are males or females--can identify themselves rather easily with both characters. But the fact that toward the end of the narrative the evangelist shifts the focus from the Samaritan woman to the villagers, leaving Jesus and the Samaritan villagers at center stage, seems to indicate that the evangelist intended to involve the reader's identification more with the townspeople. The evangelist seems to encourage the readers to identify more with the townspeople in Samaria who made the right choice, based only on hearing the word of Jesus, to join them in a community of faith. This fact implies that the evangelist might have intended to discourage the readers from identifying more with the woman, but rather with the townspeople, because he lived in a patriarchal society. His intended audience includes women. If the readers identify more with the women, this will endanger the basic operation of the social systems in those days. Leaving the water jar behind means that the woman abandons her primary duty in order to tell someone about Jesus. It would also mean the reversal of gender roles between men and women. It seems obvious in this narrative that the Samaritan woman assumed a male posture in two aspects: (1) she neglected her feminine duty (i.e., to fetch water from the well), appeared in the main street of her town, and made a public speech to males; (2) she was assuming a broker position which was a male role in that she invited the townspeople to come and see for themselves.

### **Christological Implication**

Most scholars find the background of the "I am" sayings in the Old Testament. For example, in his dissertation J. Richter made a comprehensive study of the use of "I am" in the Old Testament and asserts that "*ani hu* is a code-word of absolute monotheism and thus it becomes by its breadth and all embracing significance the sum of all God's



statements about himself.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, he reached a conclusion that ἐγώ εἰμι in the New Testament does indeed point back to *ani hu* in the Old Testament and maintains that Jesus speaks as God.<sup>81</sup>

David Ball goes one step further by arguing that “it is not only in the words ἐγώ εἰμι that John points back to Isaiah, but also in the way that those words are presented.”<sup>82</sup> Then he concludes that the way that they are formulated in John points the reader to the thought world of Isaiah, and it is in this context that the words of Jesus must be heard in order to understand who he really is.

If this is the case indeed, P. B. Harner’s observations about the use of *ani hu* in Second Isaiah bear specific implications upon the use of such phrases in John.<sup>83</sup> His observations direct that the reader must understand such a phrase in both eschatological and soteriological terms. Such a phrase is eschatological in that it expresses the time when the Lord will proclaim “The Lord reigns” (Isa 52:6-7) and soteriological since the purpose of his coming is to save his people (52:7). As Ball argues, the way that the “*I am*” sayings are formulated in John points the reader to these words in Isaiah. It is obvious that the evangelist by the use of “*I am*” sayings wants his readers to see that the events and words of Jesus’ life are a fulfillment of that day when Israel would see the salvation of Yahweh.

---

<sup>80</sup>J. Richter, “Ani Hu und Ego Eimi” (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Erlangen, 1956), 43.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>82</sup>Ball, *I Am’ in John’s Gospel*, 177.

<sup>83</sup>P. B. Harner observed the following distinctives from the use of *ani hu* in Second Isaiah: (a) *Ani hu* in Second Isaiah is always attributed to Yahweh; (b) the phrase *ani hu* signifies that Yahweh alone is God; (c) For Second Isaiah the belief in Yahweh as Lord of history is closely related to the assertion that he alone is God; (d) For Second Isaiah the belief in Yahweh as redeemer of Israel was closely related to the belief that he is also the creator of the world; (e) One of Second Isaiah’s main tasks was to awaken faith on the part of his fellow exiles in Babylon and reassure them that Yahweh was indeed about to restore them to their homeland; (f) Second Isaiah regarded the phrase “I am he,” as an abbreviation for other expressions, especially “I am Yahweh,” summing up in concise terms everything represented by the longer terms (*The ‘I am’ of the Fourth Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970], 7-14).

When the use of “*I am*” sayings on the lips of Jesus is seen in the thought world of Isaiah, such phrases indicate Jesus’ identity as God, since Jesus takes on himself a phrase that is reserved for Yahweh alone. And he also acts like God in that he assumes an active role in carrying out the plan for salvation toward humanity by himself and that he is the one who completes the salvation history due throughout human history. No one can act like him unless he is God, the Logos who was with God and was God as the prologue proclaims.

In the narrative, the Samaritan woman’s perception of who Jesus is has grown from “a Jew” (v. 9), through “sir or Κύριε” (vv. 11, 15) and “a prophet” (v. 19) to the Messiah (v. 26). With regard to this fact, “her characterization is a foil to the characterization of Jesus and draws out a declaration of his messiahship by means of ἐγὼ εἰμι”<sup>84</sup> This also has a specific implication upon Jesus’ utterance, “ἐγὼ εἰμι” No sooner does the woman hear the utterance of Jesus’ *ego eimi*, than she acts right away, which expresses the content of her belief. This points to the fact that Jesus alone can bring eschatological salvation where all people are drawn as the family of God, because his true identity is the divine Logos who is called ἐγὼ εἰμι. Ἐγὼ εἰμι moves Jesus to the divine plane where he is the co-sharer of the glory and the absolute name of YHWH. The statement of the prologue, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” has been attested through his encounter with the Samaritan woman. Through the ἐγὼ εἰμι saying, the proper name Jesus has realized or recognized its identity which was inscribed from the beginning.

Thus, Jesus’ utterance “I am the living water” is intended to reveal that his name is the absolute “ego eimi” and that what he does is to give life [the living water]. In other words, Jesus reveals not only his divine origin which was inscribed from the beginning but also another divine attribute as the source of life [the living water]. Here as

---

<sup>84</sup> Ball, “*I Am*’ in *John’s Gospel*,” 150. Also see O’Day, *Revelation*, 93-96.

he relates himself with people, another characteristic as the living water is appended to the proper name Jesus.

### Summary

The narrative is developed around the conversational exchange between the woman and Jesus. Among them two features are most noticeable. First is the progression of the Samaritan woman's understanding concerning the identity of Jesus: the identity of Jesus is gradually recognized from "a Jew" (v. 9), through "Sir" (v. 11) and "a prophet" (v. 19) and reaches its climax with Jesus' declaration by means of ἐγώ εἰμι in v. 26.<sup>85</sup> Second is that ἐγώ εἰμι sayings occurs between two questions concerning Jesus' identity (vv. 10, 29).<sup>86</sup> These facts indicate that the plot of the narrative is to reveal Jesus' true identity. This being the case, the role of the Samaritan woman is to further the plot--she functions as a foil for the characterization of Jesus.

In this narrative there is seen a christological tension between the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Jesus. On the one hand, Jesus reveals himself as God by means of the divine name ἐγώ εἰμι. On the other hand Jesus is an ordinary human being who is thirsty and tired. The Samaritan woman, however, affirms this truth of the dialectical nature of Jesus in that she brings up the matter concerning the Messiah, and Jesus replies "ἐγώ εἰμι who speaks to you" in affirmation of his messiahship: God came in flesh to be the Messiah for the world. This fulfills peoples' expectation that the Messiah will be present among them in person, who is divine in origin. The divinity of Jesus is expressed through the "ego eimi" saying while the humanity of Jesus is revealed by his being the Messiah who is present among his people in person. In doing so, the divinity of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus are conjoined in the proper noun, the Messiah. As a result,

---

<sup>85</sup>R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, vol. 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1968), 420.

<sup>86</sup>O'Day, *Revelation*, 72.

another characteristic, the Messiah is appended to the proper name Jesus.

### **Martha and Mary (11:1-44)**

Chapter eleven is located between the Feast of Dedication (10:22) and the week before the Passover (12:1). In terms of the overall structure of the Gospel, it is the climax of the Book of Signs and serves as a bridge section leading to the Book of Passion. John 11:1-44 is usually considered as the story about Lazarus. O'Day, however thinks that it is the story about Lazarus's sisters, Mary and Martha because the story centers on the conversations Jesus has with them as he travels to Lazarus's tomb.<sup>87</sup> It may well be true to say that the miracle of the raising of Lazarus is the climax of this story, but it is not its center. Besides, the fact that Lazarus is defined as their brother (v. 2) supports this understanding because a man was not defined by a woman in their world; it was the other way round.

The following overall structure for the narrative is adapted: verses 1-6 introduces the chief characters, Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Jesus, and the disciples of Jesus and provides spatial settings; verses 7-16 moves Jesus to Judea; verses 17-27 describes Jesus' encounter with Martha; verses 28-37 delineates Jesus' encounter with Mary and "the Jews"; verses 38-44 is the scene at the tomb where Jesus performs the miracle.

### **Characterization by Literary Aspects**

The temporal setting is unspecified except that Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days (v. 17). The evangelist gives a time notice twice, forming an inclusion in verse 17 and repeated in verse 39. "Four days" in the tomb refers to the state of one's complete death, which will be used to confirm the divine identity of Jesus. According to Malina, some ancient Israelite scribes believed that "a person's life force hovered near the cadaver for three days after death, finally departing on the fourth day. After the fourth

---

<sup>87</sup>Gail R. O'Day, "John" in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 297.

day, there was thus nothing of the previous life force around.”<sup>88</sup> The raising of Lazarus will result in not only strengthening the coalition of the core-group members but also describing the quality of loyalty due the head of the group, Jesus--total dedication of time and resources.

The spatial setting finds the main characters such as Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha living in Bethany, which is located in the proximity of Jerusalem.<sup>89</sup> Once again, direct definition is sparsely used. A man named Lazarus was sick and died. He is identified as “the one whom Jesus loved.” He had two siblings, Mary and her sister Martha. Their ages, marital status or social rank are not given. Mary is referred to as the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. Both Martha and Lazarus are identified according to their kinship relationship to Mary. Jesus is directly identified as *ἔγω εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή*. The indirect presentation serves as the primary means of characterization. Although the evangelist made Martha and Mary the chief persons in the Lazarus account, the figure of Lazarus should not be dismissed so lightly. Collins suggests that his very name contains symbolic meaning in that Lazarus is also found to be associated with the resurrection from the dead in Luke 16:19-31. Lazarus is an abbreviated transcription of the Hebrew name, “El-azar,” which means “God helps.”<sup>90</sup> The indirect presentations that Jesus calls him his friend and that he is referred to as “the one whom Jesus loved” suggest that he was one of the inner circle of Jesus.

J. Duncan M. Derrett asserts that the two incidents of Moses’ giving water out of rock (Exod 17:7 and Num 20:11) serve as typological scenes for raising Lazarus. As

---

<sup>88</sup>Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 199.

<sup>89</sup>Reinmuth states that Bethany was located about half an hour’s journey away from Jerusalem (approximately 3 km), (“Lazarus and His Sisters--What was John’s Point?: Narratological Observation on John 11.1-14,” *RTL* 1 [1999]: 10).

<sup>90</sup>Raymond Collins, “The Representative Figures of The Fourth Gospel--1,” *DRev* , 45.

YHWH/Moses (Exod 17:7) or Moses (Num 20:11) stood before the rock, Jesus stood before the tomb. As Moses was supposed to command the rock (Num 20:11) to bring forth water, Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb. As a result, Moses brought forth water which gives life to people, Jesus gives life back to the dead Lazarus. Typologically Lazarus was Eleazar, son of Aaron and nephew of Moses.<sup>91</sup> As the son of Aaron and nephew of Moses, Eleazar is closely related to two miraculous providers of water. He is the witness concerning water, which gives life to people, especially so in the wilderness. Thus, the connection between Water and Life has also been made. And the Israelites must have gained the understanding that YHWH is the source of the perpetual spring of water when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman that he was the living water.

The effort of the evangelist to present his narrative as a powerful testimony concerning the identity of Jesus can be seen in the associated imagery that links Moses's bringing water out of rock and "raising Lazarus."

"What Moses did with the Rock Jesus did with the dead Lazarus who came forth as did those waters when Jesus commands."<sup>92</sup> In spite of many signs, the evangelist seems to choose deliberately the sign related to Lazarus in that the name itself will bring the mind of his audience to the Old Testament scriptures and to their God YHWH who was the source of water, i.e., life itself. With this background in mind, the evangelist intends to direct the reader's attention to Jesus, the counterpart of YHWH in the Old Testament, who is the source of life. At the same time this Old Testament imagery will not only stress God's continuous work through Jesus in salvation history but also leave Lazarus as a powerful witness. Lazarus, like water, will become a spring from which others drink and at the same time will demonstrate continuity between the work of

---

<sup>91</sup>J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Lazarus, The Body, and Water: John 11,44; Isaiah 58,11; Numbers 20, 9-11," *BibOr* 193 (1991): 176.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.

YHWH and that of Jesus in salvation history. Being compared with Moses, Jesus' divinity is stressed in that when people ask Jesus like Mary and Martha, he himself can give life because he is the resurrection and life, while Moses provided what people asked of him through the power of God. Their roles are also contrasted in that Moses provided water without faith, thus many perished in the wilderness, while Jesus offers a perpetual spring of water, leading many to eternal life. This seems to reflect the intention of the evangelist, whose purpose was to remind his readers of the statement declared in the prologue, "In him was life, and that life was the light of men (1:4)" and testify that he is life itself."

The different reaction of both Mary and Martha to Jesus' coming reveals indirect character traits concerning them. Martha goes to meet him, leaving the house while Mary sits at home. In this sense, Martha is described as active and reacting spontaneously. On the other hand, the fact that Mary remains in the house raises ambiguity with regard to the characterization of Mary. If she did not receive the news that Jesus is coming, then the fact that she stayed home does not provide any negative character traits. But if she heard that Jesus was coming and decided to remain in the house in order to continue to mourn herself or to remain with the guests who come to show condolences, she is portrayed as a little withdrawn or restrained by the traditional female roles.<sup>93</sup> This fact also ascribes her with a weaker faith than that of Martha.

The portrayal of Martha as going outside the village alone to meet Jesus and then quietly informing Mary of Jesus' arrival characterizes her as a sensitive woman.<sup>94</sup>

Martha's profession of faith parallels that of Peter in the Synoptics (Matt

---

<sup>93</sup>Women are expected to remain inside the house; to wail in the funeral was also one of the social functions for women.

<sup>94</sup>According to Fehribach, Martha's actions seem to point to the fact that "she is aware of how dangerous it would be for Jesus if certain Jews knew of his presence in the vicinity" (Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 103).

16:16) and characterizes Martha as a main carrier of the evangelist's distinctive theology. When this confession is understood in light of v. 24, this adds another character trait to Martha. In the conversation with Jesus, Martha misunderstands Jesus' words ("your brother will rise again" in v. 23) because she takes it within the context of the traditional Jewish belief in the resurrection on the last day. This being the case, Martha is portrayed as one in process of becoming a believer, as one who is moving from a "below" to an "above" point of view.<sup>95</sup>

In verse 31 the impression that the Jews had--Mary was going to the tomb to mourn there when Mary got up quickly and went out--provides another character trait in that Mary is characterized as more emotional and vulnerable than Martha.<sup>96</sup>

The attitude of the two sisters toward the presence of Jesus is markedly different. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Jesus and engaged in a theological discussion with Jesus. This portrays Martha as a rather aggressive intellectual type of person. On the other hand, Jesus calls Mary through Martha using  $\phi\omega\nu\epsilon\iota$  in verse 28b, which characterizes the voice of Jesus in calling his own sheep in 10:27 (believer). This indicates that Jesus considers Mary as one of his own sheep, although Mary might not have realized it. The fact that Mary rises immediately and goes out responding to the call of Jesus seems to depict her as even more spontaneous than her sister.<sup>97</sup> When Mary saw Jesus, she fell at his feet. The fact that she fell at his feet in response to the voice of Jesus adds a significant aspect to the characterization of Mary: Jesus as the Good Shepherd calls his sheep, she as his sheep, has placed herself in a position of total trust in him.

---

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>96</sup>This supposition of the Jews indicates that Mary had been weeping all day.

<sup>97</sup>Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative: A Feminist, Narrative-Critical Reader-Response," *NTS* 41 (1995): 575.



The evangelist, however adds a positive trait to the portrayal of Mary by using the word, ἤκουσεν (v. 29b) when she hears of his call. Throughout the narrative the reader has become accustomed to the use of ἀκούειν descriptions of a positive response to the word of Jesus, for instance 1:37 and 40; 3:8; 4:42 and 47 etc. Francis Moloney adds,

This verb has been used four times, in the immediate context, of the sheep responding to the voice of the Good Shepherd. However widespread scholarly opinion may be that Mary is the lesser sister, the story itself is pointing in the opposite direction.<sup>98</sup>

### **Characterization by Cultural Aspects**

Several cultural aspects inherent in this passage help to shed light upon the characters. Cultural aspects inform that this family of siblings who live in the vicinity of Jerusalem consists of parentless Judeans. The two sisters Mary and Martha live independently with their brother Lazarus in Bethany. Due to cultural codes, the two sisters appear to be either widowed or divorced, as will be explained below.

**Dyadic contract.** In the first century, all the desired things in life such as land, wealth, prestige, health, friendship and love, honor, respect and safety were limited.<sup>99</sup> Terms such as friend and love point to the dyadic contract formed between men, which was an inherent cultural aspect in the first century since limited goods like these are obtained only through either the vertical or horizontal dyadic relations. These dyadic relations were non-legal contractual obligations based on the principle of reciprocity and the concept of honor and shame.<sup>100</sup> The very fact that the sisters referred to their brother to Jesus as “he whom you love” and that they knew where Jesus was at the present moment indicates that there already existed a dyadic relation between them and Jesus.

---

<sup>98</sup>Francis Moloney, “The Faith of Martha and Mary: A Narrative Approach to John 11, 17-40,” *Bib* 75 (1994): 481.

<sup>99</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 75.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 79-82.

If one considers the Greek word οὐν in verse 3, “an inferential particle that introduces the result of or an inference from what preceded it,”<sup>101</sup> this would also point to the dyadic relation that had been established between Jesus and the siblings of Bethany. The action of the sisters in verse 3 was based on the two sister’s relationship to Jesus and Lazarus’ relationship to them. The Greek word οὐν leads to the conclusion that the request of the sisters to Jesus on behalf of their brother was a natural consequence of their relationship with Jesus.

**Honor/shame.** In ancient village life of the Mediterraneans all social interaction involved the gains and losses of honor on a daily basis. In other words, honor would be subject to challenge in virtually every public interaction. The statement of both sisters--“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” in verses 21 and 32 can be understood in light of the never-ending game of challenge-response in relation to honor. Both Martha and Mary publicly challenged Jesus by questioning his ability to be a true friend and his credibility to be God’s broker as he claimed to be.<sup>102</sup>

Acknowledging the challenge to his honor, Jesus articulates the core motive behind the interpersonal bonding with his followers in verses 25-6, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” By this statement, Jesus specifies a boundary marker between the insiders and the outsiders.

By asking “do you believe this? (26b),” Jesus demands total commitment and devotion from the core-group members. In front of the tomb, Martha’s statement, “for he has been there four days,” reveals both positive and negative character traits of Martha: it reflects a negative trait in that she demonstrates the lack of her commitment to Jesus: it

---

<sup>101</sup>Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 91.

<sup>102</sup>Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 200.

also ascribes a positive character trait to Martha in that she is very sensitive to the cultural code of honor/shame.<sup>103</sup> In other words, she may have been concerned about Jesus losing face over his failure to have averted Lazarus' death. Jesus replies, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God." In light of the honor/shame cultural code, this statement can be said something like, "I will defend my honor as I reveal the honor (glory) of God."

**Personality features of the first century people.** The deliberate attempt of the Evangelist to add honor to Jesus can be observed in his description of Jesus' weeping. To show his emotion was an attribute of the honorable man. Malina writes, "Males who do not show their feelings are suspected of lacking a vital human trait, hence not dependable."<sup>104</sup> The weeping of Jesus and that of Mary and the Jews is differentiated by the use of the different verb: δακρύνω [to weep] is used to speak of the weeping of Jesus, rather than the κλαίω [to wail] used of Mary and the Jews. This points to the different character trait between the protagonist (Jesus) and the minor characters. It signals that the reason Jesus is weeping is different from that of Mary and the Jews. Whatever the reason may be--either for the love of his Bethany family [his sheep] who were overcome by sorrow or for the disappointment that no one has demonstrated faith in him up to this point of the narrative, to express his feeling fits well with the personality traits of the first century Mediterranean world. When his time is approaching near, to express his emotion makes him a truly honorable man according to the socio-cultural background. In addition to that, to express one's feeling has another important dimension in the first century. The emotion generated over any situation serves to increase interpersonal loyalties of any in-group. In the words of Malina,

---

<sup>103</sup>According to Malina, when a woman has the proper sentiment of shame, she is considered as an honorable woman (Malina, *The New Testament World*, 44).

<sup>104</sup> Malina, "Dealing with Biblical Characters," 137.

The emotion generated serves to further bind group members over against outgroups and to fill them with the mutually felt esteem needed to carry on in an often hostile world.<sup>105</sup>

**Kinship/οἶκος.** At the age of twelve and a half, girls attained their majority or entered into marriage. At this age, she was supposed to have obtained some degree of independence from her father legally.<sup>106</sup> Girls seldom remained unmarried [or unbetrothed] much beyond the onset of puberty. Therefore, the period to enjoy their independence was very short or a mere legal technicality, because by the age of twelve and a half girls were already under the authority of a husband.<sup>107</sup> Up until adulthood (twelve and a half years) girls remained strictly secluded within the paternal home and were removed from the public gaze due to the possibility of sin through the sexual advancement of males, since “virginity was regarded as a virtue and its loss outside of marriage was viewed as a pollution of the individual and of the community.”<sup>108</sup> It can also cause the death of girls or divorce. When girls are married, they do not live in their parent’s house unless widowed or divorced. Males carry on the family name and inherit the father’s house with responsibility to support parents in their old age. The fact that both Mary and Martha remain with their brother seems to indicate strongly that they are either divorced or widowed. Their presiding over the funeral service in public, demonstrating each one’s distinctive role in the narrative, rules out the assumption that they are minors (under the age of twelve), and thus have not yet been married. Consider also that only adults could properly perform social functions such as funerals (mourning in public), marriage, and extending invitations. “Only a young woman living at home was exempted from mourning customs which would impair her appearance. An

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>106</sup> Archer, *Her Price*, 44.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 106.

adolescent girl is not allowed to make herself ugly (even) on account of her father's death."<sup>109</sup>

Under these circumstances, their brother Lazarus was the social security to the sisters. He was the defender for their social status and honor. A woman's goodness was assessed by her acquiescence to the cultural code for females. When a woman failed to keep those repressive norms which made her honorable, she was shamed and lost honor. Malina states, "given conditions of economic and institutional poverty, female chastity came to be considered a valuable component of each family's patrimony," affecting not only one's own honor but also the honor of her whole family.<sup>110</sup> This being the case, the two sisters Mary and Martha without the protection of a male are in danger of losing their honor, because they lived in a world where women believed themselves quite vulnerable to male sexuality. In maintaining honor, to prevent the possible sexual transgression by males was one of the primary tasks both for them and their family. The only possible way to prevent males from consummating their sexual urges was male tutelage and surveillance. Losing Lazarus, i.e., the protection of male, was most detrimental to their life in that respect. In addition to that, since their world operated according to a gender division of space, male and female space, and men and women's quarters, losing Lazarus endangered their entire social life.

### **Characterization by Synkrisis**

Characters are often revealed to the reader in terms of the way they relate to each other. The characterization of both Mary and Martha is enhanced when they are compared and contrasted with other characters in the Gospel.

---

<sup>109</sup>S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., "Home and Family," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 784.

<sup>110</sup>Malina, "Mother and Son," 61-62.

**Jesus.** The initial characterization of both Mary and Martha leaves no doubt that they are disciples who have faith in Jesus and belong to the core-group of Jesus. Most scholars classify Martha as having arrived at a stage of partial faith, matching that of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman on the ground that she used acceptable Jewish messianic expressions to express her faith in Jesus (v. 24).<sup>111</sup>

In verse 28 Martha calls Mary and tells her that “the Teacher” is calling for her. Even after having made her confession of faith in Jesus, she addresses Jesus as “the Teacher.” This reflects her limited faith in the word and person of Jesus. Jesus’ interaction with Martha, however, ascribes her with a unique role in the narrative. Since the Johannine signs occupy a central place in John’s Christology, the raising of Lazarus is particularly significant in that it is the climax of all the signs in the Book of Signs. In this crucial section of the Gospel, Martha confesses, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” It is remarkably similar to the confession of Peter in Matthew 16:16. Certainly it is more adequate than the Samaritan woman’s hopeful confession, “Could this be the Christ?” Ben Witherington adds that “Martha’s confession is a fuller and perhaps more satisfactory statement than the Petrine confession in John 6:68-9.”<sup>112</sup> In this sense Martha is portrayed as the most complete believer, though she may have had only limited understanding about the person of Christ. Still, hers is the most complete confession encountered thus far in the narrative. In this Gospel, the evangelist chose various ones of his characters and had them speak of the identity of Jesus in the fashion of a crescendo of confessions alongside the crescendo of the miraculous. It is Martha who constitutes the climax with her confession. The fact that

---

<sup>111</sup>Moloney, “The Faith of Martha and Mary,” 478; Raymond Brown also states that Martha believes in Jesus but inadequately because her confession of faith does not go beyond the orthodox Pharisaic view of resurrection on the last day (Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII* [Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1966], 429).

<sup>112</sup>Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 106.

Jesus took time to reveal who he is indicates that Martha had a special importance in the core-group of Jesus. Brown's view also supports this: "the parallel between Martha's confession here and that of Peter in Matt. 16:16 exemplifies the fourth evangelist's deliberate tendency to give women a role traditionally associated with Peter."<sup>113</sup> He further adds that women were seen as recipients of revelation and therefore were esteemed members of the church. The socio-cultural background also points in this direction: Throughout John there are numerous examples of the interaction over honor (the challenge-response game). The conversation between Jesus and Martha, however, is the one which engaged most successfully and positively in the challenge-response game, thus characterizing Jesus as the resurrection and life.<sup>114</sup>

In terms of the interaction with Jesus, Martha is articulate and active, while Mary is silent and quiet. The fact that Martha took the initiative in going out to Jesus points in this direction. In oriental custom, when one expects someone very important or dear to him or her, upon hearing the arrival of the guest, he or she goes out of the house in order to usher them home. The reason why Mary did not accompany her sister Martha to go out to meet Jesus is not mentioned clearly: she might not have heard of the news that he was coming or she might have been sitting down, being hopelessly overwhelmed by grief. Jesus, however, was concerned about her and calls her, because she is also one of his own sheep. Jesus' calling Mary using the verb φωνέω is reminiscent of the preceding chapter in which he used it to describe his own activity as the caring shepherd in calling his own sheep. This seems to suggest that Mary is identified as one of Jesus' sheep in need of his care and Jesus cares for her; she too had a special relationship with Jesus apart

---

<sup>113</sup> Raymond Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *TS* 36 (1975): 191.

<sup>114</sup>According to Malina, challenge and response is a sort of constant social tug of war. The challenge is intended to enter the social space of another. In this case the challenge is viewed positively because both Jesus and Martha are intended for a positive result. A positive reason for entering the social space of another would be to gain some share in that space or to gain a cooperative mutually beneficial foothold (Malina, *The New Testament World*, 30).

from his relationship to Martha. In response to the call of the shepherd, Mary goes out to see Jesus and falls at his feet. This portrays Mary as having more respect and receptivity toward Jesus than her sister Martha. Compared to Martha, the portrayal of Mary remains ambiguous with regard to the extent of her faith. The readers do not hear her faith statement. Jesus does not respond to her directly. She is only given a role as one of Jesus' own sheep who responds to the call of the shepherd immediately. While falling at his feet denotes her commitment and trust in Jesus, her weeping links her with the Jews and could be seen as pointing an accusatory finger at Jesus, thereby demonstrating an attitude of hopelessness and lack of trust. She is, however, simply portrayed as a person struggling with the meaning of life and death.

Both women are described positively in that they put priority for their life on Jesus transcending all human concerns: putting aside "mourning" which is fit into cultural norms at present, Martha went out to Jesus when she heard he was coming and Mary rose up immediately and went to see Jesus when he called her.

**The twelve.** The disciples are still engaged in an ongoing theological training. They appear to comprehend neither the person of Jesus nor his mission. The irony which they reveal in response to Jesus implies that they still possess a point of view "from below." The fact that the narrator identifies the disciples with the Jews through the literary device of their mutual misunderstanding indicates a lack of trust in Jesus. "In chaps. 5-10, it is always the Jews who are the victims of Johannine satire. It is they who come off the worst in misunderstanding."<sup>115</sup> They are portrayed as people who are unable to understand even the most transparent of metaphors (v. 11). When Jesus stated his intention to go back to Judea, they were fearful of the Jews. If they had grasped the extent of Jesus' ministry that he had come to give life, they would not have rejected him

---

<sup>115</sup>Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 125.



saying, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” (v. 8).

Thomas seems to be the spokesman of the disciples. But he speaks without understanding. His statement in verse 16 characterizes him as a leading disciple who epitomizes both the bravado and the ignorance of the disciples. If he really knew what kind of death was in view he would surely not have said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him (v. 16).” Compared to women such as the Samaritan woman and Martha, they still show far less adequate faith in Jesus even after they have followed him, witnessing many signs.

**Other women.** Both women are unique in that they challenged the honor of Jesus publicly for their own benefit. Both charged Jesus with failure (vv. 21; 32) for not having acted promptly on behalf of his friends in their need and for not being a successful patron as he should have been with his claim to be the Son of God. Although they did not intend to disgrace Jesus, their remark damaged the reputation or honor of Jesus as the Son of God. In terms of a challenge and response within the context of honor, the two sisters were bolder than any other women in the Gospel. By challenging his honor, they left no room for Jesus, but for him to defend his reputation. They knew that Jesus as an honorable man was concerned about his reputation and thus had to act to defend his honor as the Christ, the Son of God.

Up to this point in the Gospel, Mary is portrayed in accordance with the female ideal of the first century Mediterranean world in that she is silent and behaves appropriately according to the social custom; that is, she weeps while confining herself in the house at the occasion of the funeral. All that she does in the narrative of the raising of her brother Lazarus is to weep and to utter only one sentence, which her sister had already said; “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” She is portrayed in sharp contrast with other women in that she gives in easily: Mary the mother of Jesus

stood up in order to make her request, the Samaritan woman did not stop conversing with Jesus until she reached a level of truth and revelation, and an active Martha went out of the house to meet Jesus, thus making a confession of Christ with self-confidence. Therefore, in the words of Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, “John wanted to use Martha to portray the strength of faith; for him, Mary was the weaker of the two, the average woman.”<sup>116</sup>

Martha’s use of the vocative “teacher” in addressing Mary about Jesus seems to portray Mary among Johannine women with the least understanding about the person of Jesus. When Martha came back to get Mary, Martha said, “The teacher is here.” “Teacher is used by those who are not Jesus’ disciples and who have an indefinite opinion.”<sup>117</sup> This seems to suggest that up to this point of the narrative Mary recognized Jesus simply as an honorable teacher without having arrived at knowledge about the identity of Jesus.

Martha also seems to fail in expressing a full faith at the tomb when she responds to Jesus by saying, “Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” This remark seems to characterize Martha with weak faith. The use of the vocative, “Lord” is simply a vocative, not a christological title meaning that Jesus is the Lord who has not only eschatological power but also creative power. This observation can be drawn from verse 39 where she questions Jesus’ intention to have the grave stone removed. In this respect, the vocative “Lord” may point out the elevation of her understanding concerning the person of Jesus, but does not reflect her complete faith in Jesus as the Lord with its full force. The use of the vocative, “Rabbi” and “Lord” on the lips of Martha characterizes Martha as one of Jesus’ own sheep like Mary. But in light of

---

<sup>116</sup>Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 25.

<sup>117</sup>David B. Gowler, “Characterization in Luke: A Socio-Narratological Approach,” *BTB* 19 (1989): 56.

her confession made in verse 27--“I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world,” she seems to be portrayed more positively than Mary--at least in this pericope.

**Other characters.** The text does not record anything about the reactions of either Martha or Mary or perhaps also of the Twelve after they have seen the sign. But there are others called “the Jews” who responded to the signs. Some put their faith in Jesus and later testify publicly in 12:17 while others disbelieve and inform the opponents of Jesus--the chief priests and the Pharisees. The omission of their reaction to the sign indicates that they were insiders of Jesus group, not outsiders; it would take away the excitement of the narrative since the readers know that they are the disciples of Jesus, and thus can predict what their reaction would be. Besides, the evangelist aims at the single goal of leading his readers to make the right decision regarding their faith in Jesus, while learning the negative lesson from those Jews who made the wrong choice concerning Jesus. The evangelist has one goal in his mind as he states the purpose of the Gospel in 20:31; he wants to invite the reader to make a decision--whether to believe or not.

### **Christological Implication**

Since the word “glory” is an ongoing theme of the Gospel in relation to the person of Jesus and his works (signs), it seems appropriate to search for the meaning of the word כְּבוֹד in Hebrew, or δόξα in Greek. The word gives us a description of God’s nature, of his character. It carries the sense of God being a God of substance. According to the research done by Ursula Niebuhr, the readers can gain some helpful insights concerning “glory.”<sup>118</sup> In the pre-Exilic texts written before 586 B.C., the Glory of God was manifested in the context of a divine call. In the calling of both Isaiah and Ezekiel, they beheld the glory of God while conversing with Him. In the case of the prophet

---

<sup>118</sup>Ursula M. Niebuhr, “Glory,” *BTB* 14 (1984): 49-53.

Isaiah, the presence of the Lord is described in the visible Glory of God. “The effect of the revelation of Glory was Isaiah’s consciousness and confession of sin, personal and social. The concomitant occasion of Glory is the realization of sin.”<sup>119</sup> On the other hand the prophet Ezekiel in his vision delineates the very face of God in “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”

Exodus describes the visible glory of God: The glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai; who shall be sanctified by the Glory (9:43); the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (40:34); the glory is like a devouring fire, on the top of the Mount in the eyes of the Children of Israel (24:17). The glory of God was also visible in the context of validating and authenticating the calling as in the case of Moses in Exodus 34:18, “show me your glory.” In this case beholding God’s glory is equated with seeing the face of God. This experience assures God’s favor and approval for himself, for his call, and for his people.

According to the Septuagint, the Greek δόξα means either “opinion” or else “reputation.”<sup>120</sup> The Greek δόξα is a more developed concept of glory in that it expresses both the Hebrew כבוד and the meaning for מִשְׁכָּן which point to the tabernacle and the dwelling of God. For example, δόξα in association with light is found when God manifests His power in Isaiah 58:8 and 60:1-3.

In the Aramaic Targums, מִשְׁכָּן (dwelling) which derives from שָׁכַן (to dwell) is used to express the attributes of the Almighty. The equivalent Aramaic paraphrase for Exodus 25:8, “I may dwell in your midst” reads: I may cause my מִשְׁכָּן to dwell in your midst.<sup>121</sup>

What is noticeable in the Johannine usage of “glory” is that it is associated

---

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 53.

with light, φῶς, which expresses life in the natural world as well, being also the medium by which we can be aware of phenomena.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, Niebuhr concludes, “in the Fourth Gospel, glory is interwoven with life and the judgment. To have faith--a recurring theme in this Gospel--is to see the glory of God manifest in Christ.”<sup>123</sup>

It is apparent that “glory” was an outward and visible sign of the presence of Yahweh. The glory of God represents Him and his very substance. The glory of God represents the power of God when it is manifested as in Isaiah 58:8 and 60:1-3. It results in the recognition of sinfulness and sanctification (Exod 94:3; Isa 6:5-7) or both sanctification and restoration as in Isaiah 40: 2-5.

With this background in mind, the reader can now turn to the meaning of the “glory” in the Gospel. The glory of both God and the Son is mentioned in verse 4, the illness of Lazarus is for God’s glory, that the Son of God may be glorified by it; and the glory of God is to be revealed in verse 40.

The Johannine use of “glory” seems to denote both the dwelling of God and the manifestation of the divine power in salvation history. When Jesus raises Lazarus, God is honored, for the power of God is manifested in the sign. Jesus receives the honor due God, because the sign wrought by him points to the dwelling of the divine among his people, i.e., Jesus himself.

Cadman suggests a different perspective with regard to the glory of God. To him, δόξα is a Johannine term for the love-relation between God and the Logos.<sup>124</sup> Thus

---

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

<sup>124</sup>Cadman considers δόξα as a Johannine term for the love-relation between God and the Logos in the beginning (v. 1). Thus he equates “to reveal Jesus’ glory” with “to reveal his oneness with the Father or his union with him in love” (W. H. Cadman, “The Raising of Lazarus: (John 10, 40-11, 53),” *SE* 1 [1957]: 422-25).

in this context “to be glorified” through the raising of Lazarus is to be understood as “to be given glory” in relation to the crucifixion. He is glorified, because the raising of Lazarus would bring Jesus to the Cross and because of his dying Jesus would be given glory, the union between him and the believers.

The evangelist warns the reader that the raising of Lazarus has something to do with the crucifixion: the disciples fear the death of Jesus by the Jews in v. 8, and Thomas responds to Jesus “Let us also go, that we may die with him”(v. 16). In fact, this sign as the climax of all the signs leads to the decision of killing Jesus.<sup>125</sup> Through his dying Jesus draws all who believe in him into the union with him. In this sense, Cadman argues that to be glorified is to be given glory, the union between Jesus and all who believe in him. At the crucifixion, Jesus is glorified because the union between Jesus and all who believe in him is consummated on the cross. God is also glorified in that event because through Jesus the relationship between believers and God is established and finalized. Because they are one, the glory of the Father and that of the Son are inseparable: when one is glorified so is the other.

While this perspective is a valid one, the “glory” in verse 40 is not to be understood in the same line. When Jesus said to Martha that her own believing would result in witnessing the glory of God, this glory includes both aspects of glory: God is honored by the manifestation of his power and Jesus will be honored as he is equated with the dwelling of God, because the sign wrought by him points to his divinity. Thus, “to see the glory of God” is to mean that people involved in the sign will honor God as they witness the power of God; Jesus will be honored as the dwelling of God, whose dwelling stands for the resurrection and the life. It is an opportunity where Jesus reveals his divine attributes as “the resurrection and life,” and this character trait is appended to the proper name Jesus.

---

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 423.

In terms of the socio-cultural background, Jesus defended his divine reputation or honor which he already possessed in the beginning by revealing the power of God. Since the Father and the Son are one, so is their glory. When the raising of Lazarus reveals God's glory, so it reveals the glory of the Son. The difference between the sign of Cana and this sign is that in 2:12 the Evangelist expresses the glory from the side of Jesus saying, "he revealed his glory," while in this sign the Evangelist has Jesus mention the glory from the side of the Father.

The next issue that is to be taken into consideration is the role of the "I am" saying. The evangelist intricately links an "I am" saying with his sign. While ἐγώ εἰμι points to Jesus' identity, since it symbolizes the name of God, the sign reveals not only the divine presence and power but also spells out the divine attribute of Jesus. As the Evangelist linked quenching the spiritual thirst of the Samaritan woman to his claim to be the living water, he now links the raising of Lazarus to the claim to be the Resurrection and the Life (v. 25). The proper name Jesus, which serves like his identification tag, affirms his identity once more through the lips of Martha that he is the Son of God (the incarnate Logos). His attribute as the Messiah (the Christ) is restated along with his identity; the Son of God after his role as the Messiah was confirmed through the encounter with the Samaritan woman. In this narrative, however, the proper name Jesus receives another attribute in relation to the sign that Jesus performs, that is, he is "the resurrection and the life." Besides, the words ἐγώ εἰμι function in such a way that whenever they occur, they remind the reader of all that Jesus has already claimed for himself through these words. What is clearly notable in this passage is that both his divinity (raising Lazarus from the dead) and his humanity (weeping and the fact that he is deeply moved in spirit and troubled) are presented in tension. This observation indicates that the evangelist portrays Jesus according to his own understanding and that his own understanding concerning Jesus is a dialectical one, namely holding apparent contradictions of truth in tension.

## Summary

The raising of Lazarus is placed at this point of the Gospel by no means randomly but by the deliberate design of the author. “The Lazarus story as the last sign brings to a conclusion the story of Jesus’ revelation to the world and, at the same time, points forward to Jesus’ passion.”<sup>126</sup>

The working-out of such intention of the Evangelist can be observed in the following manner. First, the theme of glory forms an *inclusio* not only for the seven signs of the Gospel but also for the narrative in discussion--Jesus revealed his glory through the first sign, the wedding in Cana and so does he in the last sign, the raising of Lazarus.<sup>127</sup> Thus the theme of glory provides an *inclusio* for the signs of the Gospel in the Book of Signs. In the raising of Lazarus, the theme of glory forms an *inclusio* as well: in the beginning of the narrative, the illness of Lazarus is said to be for God’s glory (v. 4) and toward the end it is said that by the raising of Lazarus from the dead the glory of God will be manifested (v. 40). Therefore the *inclusio* indicates the plot of the narrative, that is to reveal who Jesus is. As mentioned earlier, δόξα expresses both the Hebrew כְּבוֹד and the meaning for מִשְׁכַּן. כְּבוֹד stands for the qualities and appurtenances of God while מִשְׁכַּן means the tabernacle and the dwelling of God. To reveal God’s glory is to reveal the glory of Jesus because the demonstration of God’s glory by him through the sign would point to the divine glory which he possesses. The “I am” saying in v. 25 coupled with the sign spells out who Jesus is: “ego eimi” affirms the divinity of Jesus (the qualities of God) while the physical existence of Jesus is being identified with “the tabernacle and the dwelling of God.” Once again the Evangelist clearly states that God came in flesh having

---

<sup>126</sup>Raimo Hakola, “A Character Resurrected: Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel and Afterwards,” in *Characterization in the Gospel*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, JSNT Supplement series 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 230.

<sup>127</sup>Although there are differences of opinion with regard to the number of the signs in the Gospel, scholars such as Stibbe and Grassi agree in that the first sign is the wedding in Cana and the last sign is the raising of Lazarus at least in the Book of Signs (Stibbe, *John*, 121; Joseph A. Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels: Female Counterparts of Jesus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 117-18.



the proper name Jesus. Reading the narrative through the concept of glory highlights Johannine Christology in this narrative because Jesus is identified with God by the “I am” saying and referred to the tabernacle where the very substance of being God resides. Another characteristic of Jesus as being “the tabernacle or the dwelling of God” is revealed and this divine attribute is appended to the proper name Jesus.

Second, the raising of Lazarus brings to a climax the hostile attitudes of Jesus’ enemies, thus serves a crucial role to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus. As the raising of Lazarus functions as the prelude to the Book of Passion, it contributes to further the plot of the whole Gospel. Right after the last sign, the Pharisees have sought decisively to kill Jesus.

Both Martha and Mary are a foil to the Evangelist’s characterization of Jesus. The plot of the narrative to reveal who Jesus is has been developed through the interplay of the two sisters with Jesus. Martha’s role is to draw out the claim concerning who he is, which is stated in verse 25. Mary’s role is to draw out the implications of the claim in terms of this specific situation because her weeping motivates Jesus to act. Besides, Mary’s role seems to be very important in that she brings the Jews to Jesus. Some of these Jews go on to report him to the Pharisees, which carries great consequences in the larger narrative: the Pharisees are now determined to put Jesus to death.

### **Mary of Bethany (12:1-8)**

This scene contains no miraculous sign performed by Jesus and no sustained discourse between Jesus and the women. It just describes the act of woman done to Jesus. This scene is placed right after the climactic presentation of Jesus as the resurrection and life which result in the consequent decision of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus. Although many scholars divide the Gospel from chapters 1-12 and 13-20, it may seem necessary to reconsider the structure of the Gospel. In terms of literary perspective, the sign of the raising of Lazarus is the ultimate revelation of who Jesus is, and after that

the Gospel does not record signs any more in order to reveal the identity of Jesus.<sup>128</sup>

From chapter 12, begins the fulfillment of all the signs. That is, the very reality of all the signs appears. Furthermore, the fact that this anointing appears right after the climax of the signs within the time frame of Passover seems to hint that it starts another phase in the life of Jesus. Besides, the fact that the motif of “believing” and “unbelieving” is missing and that the dinner was given only with Jesus’ inner circle without mentioning the outsiders indicates that Jesus shifts his focus from public to private, which is characteristic of the second half of the Gospel. In the preceding narrative the evangelist indicates to the readers that the hour of Jesus has drawn near by mentioning that the high priests and the Pharisees decided to kill Jesus (11:57). The anointing of Mary in chapter 12 declares that the hour of Jesus has arrived by mentioning the specific time phase of Passover, i.e., “six days before the Passover.”

### **Characterization by Literary Aspects**

The temporal setting specifies that Jesus arrived at Bethany “six days before the Passover.” D. A. Carson thinks that John represents Passover as beginning Thursday evening, like the Synoptics. Thus he asserts that “six days before the Passover” most likely refers to the preceding Saturday, which began on Friday evening. He, however,

---

<sup>128</sup>Although there has not been established a consensus with regard to the numbers of the Johannine signs, the argument of Andreas Köstenberger, which says that there is no sign after the climactic sign of the raising of Lazarus seems to be logical. Of the possible alternatives for other Johannine signs, included are the anointing of Jesus (12:1-8), the triumphal entry (12:12-16), Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection (chaps. 18-19), his resurrection appearances (20-21), and the miraculous catch of fish (21:1-14). Köstenberger rules them out as signs on the following grounds: (1) they are not performed by Jesus as part of his public ministry; (2) they are not explicitly identified as a “sign” in the Gospel; (3) they do not symbolically point to God’s glory displayed in Jesus, thus revealing Jesus as God’s true representative. In other words, these alternatives are not presented as evidence that Jesus is God’s authentic representative, which is characteristic of all of Johannine signs. With regard to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection and the resurrection appearances, he adds: “rather than symbolizing anything, they are significant in and of themselves”; in the words of Barrett, “in the death and resurrection of Jesus, sign and its meaning coincide (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955], 78),” they are the very reality to which the earlier signs had referred. They are the fulfillment of the earlier sign, “the raising of Lazarus” which symbolized Jesus as the “the resurrection and the life” (Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John’s Christology,” *BBR* 5 [1991]: 87-102.

argues that “The dinner was given probably on the close of the Sabbath, the Saturday evening when Sabbath had officially ended. It is less likely that the ‘six days’ have symbolic force.”<sup>129</sup>

If the dinner was given on Saturday evening in honor of Jesus within the specific time framework of Passover, Carson’s statement that “six days” does not have symbolic force is questionable. It does appear to have a symbolic meaning when Jesus facing his death on the cross is compared to the paschal lamb slaughtered before the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. In Exodus 12:1-6, God commanded the Israelites to take a lamb on the tenth day of the month and keep it until the fourteenth day of the month, taking good care of it. Then they slaughtered them at twilight. It clearly says that the lamb was taken five days before the Passover and was killed at twilight, which is the beginning of the Passover. This being the case, Jesus was identified as a paschal lamb by the anointing of Mary because Jesus interprets the act in relation to His burial. The parallel passage of both Matthew and Mark, in spite of some differences in description, also provides additional support for this view in that Jesus defends the woman and makes a reference to his burial. The fact that the paschal lamb was taken good care of until the day of its death applies to Jesus as well. Jesus recognized his death for the sin of humanity five days before the Passover and was pampered like the lamb until the hour. A special dinner was given in his name. The next day his triumphal entry was ushered by a large crowd, and he was still left alone until the hour. When his hour came, he was captured at twilight like the paschal lamb slaughtered at twilight.

By the time phrase, “six days before the Passover,” the theological intention of the evangelist is clearly revealed: by connecting the paschal lamb who was taken five days before the Passover and pampered with Jesus, who recognized his death and was

---

<sup>129</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 427.

lavishly pampered by the anointing, John wanted to place a special emphasis on Jesus' salvation-historical and personal uniqueness. John wanted to indicate the identity and mission of Jesus as the Messiah whom people were anxiously awaiting and to show that he had now come and would depart, as had been prophesied.

The special setting finds Jesus dining in a home of Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Although it is not clearly mentioned, it most likely refers to the Bethany home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Leon Morris, however, argues otherwise, saying, "If Lazarus would have been the host, his presence among the guests would not be the sort of thing to be commented on. He appears to be a guest, as was Jesus."<sup>130</sup> In terms of eastern custom, when there is a feast, all the women in the neighborhood come and help to prepare the food. Men of the house sit with the guests at the table to make sure that there is enough food on the table and that the guests are having a good time and in a pleasant mood. Therefore, the mentioning of Lazarus in this way is more likely to indicate that he was playing the role of the male host.

Direct definitions are scarcely used again. Lazarus, who was identified as "the one whom Jesus loved" in the previous chapter is now characterized as, "the one whom Jesus had raised from the dead." It seems to be intended to remind the reader of the character traits of Jesus as "the resurrection and the life."

Judas Iscariot, one of the main characters who makes a sharp contrast with Mary in their relationship to Jesus, is characterized as a "thief" and the one who was later to betray Jesus.

Indirect presentation, however, paints a vivid picture. At the dinner table Jesus and his male disciples were either reclining their back against the wall while stretching out their feet or leaning on their elbows, placing the lower parts of their body on the floor

---

<sup>130</sup>Leon Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John: John 11-16* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 427.

with their legs stretched out. Mary approaches the feet of Jesus silently with a flask of very expensive perfume. Then she pours it over the feet of Jesus and wipes his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

In her story of anointing, Mary did not consult with her sister Martha nor ask permission from Lazarus who was the head of the house. She voluntarily entered the male space and poured an expensive perfume worth a year's wages over the feet of Jesus. In this scene, Mary is characterized as independent and bold. In this story of anointing, Mary becomes herself. The reader is given a portrayal of Mary as one who makes decisions by herself regarding what she can do or cannot do.

The evangelist lists the price of the perfume as a year's wage, which is enough to indicate that it was not the kind of thing that everybody had somewhere about the house and that would be used on just any occasion. Besides, mentioning the perfume twice (vv. 3 and 5) and using the adjective "pure," hints that it was very special, an oil that had cost a great deal and would be used only on some great occasion. This indicates that she was a wealthy woman. The fact she used it for Jesus seems to imply that she has now faced a turning point in her life because of Jesus.

While Mary has the central role, Martha is described as "serving (*διοκονέω*). This verb (*διοκονέω*) is used for the first time in John and describes a role of serving. Altogether it appears only three times, all three in John 12. Based on the fact that *διοκονέω* and its cognates *διάκονος* had taken on a special connotation associated with particular offices of ministry by the time the Gospel was compiled, Scott contends that *διοκονέω* implied more than table service. In relation to its use in 12.26, Scott further adds that Martha's serving of dinner in verse 2 embodies Jesus' idea of discipleship.<sup>131</sup> Sandra Schneiders also suggests even a possibility that *διάκονος* (servant) might have been an official title for those who served the Johannine community. In her words,

---

<sup>131</sup>M. Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus*, JSNTSup 71 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1992), 177.

By the time John's Gospel was written at the end of the first century the term *diakonos* (servant) had become the title of a recognized ministerial office in some Christian communities and waiting on table a function conferred by the laying on of hands has made the interesting suggestion that if any established ministry existed in the Johannine community it was probably that of deacon.<sup>132</sup>

Although it is not certain that Martha held an official position, the Greek word *διάκονος* suggests the portrayal of Martha as a public servant who serves the community of faith. First of all, when Jesus teaches his disciples about being his true servant, he uses the same root twice (*διακονέω*, *διάκονος*). The fact that the evangelist uses *διακονέω* referring to Martha's serving seems to suggest that Martha has already demonstrated the quality of being a disciple who truly serves and follows. Although she served believing in Jesus without "seeing," after "seeing," i.e., seeing the glory of God through the raising of Lazarus, she now has become a follower who truly serves Jesus. Now after "seeing," she is publicly recognized as Jesus' follower who truly serves him, and that may have been the reason why the evangelist uses *διακονέω* in referring to Martha's serving in chapter 12. Besides, her own initiative to go out and see Jesus also seems to support this view in that Martha was publicly acknowledged in the community of faith by participating in the ministry of Jesus whenever the opportunity was given.

Martha's public confession, like that of Peter in Matthew 16:16, seems to imply that Martha was a public figure among the followers of Jesus like Peter. If she was not before, she was so at least after the raising of Lazarus.

### **Characterization by Cultural Aspects**

The main cultural aspects that will enhance the characterization are limited good, kinship and dyadic personality.

**Kinship/οἶκος.** Jesus sits at table with his beloved friend Lazarus and his disciples. The meal was given in honor of Jesus. Meals and table-fellowship are often

---

<sup>132</sup>Sandra M. Schneiders, "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church," *BTB* 12 (1982): 42.

contracts and exchanges operated on the system of reciprocity. Reciprocity which involves back and forth exchanges between parties utilizes three main forms of exchanges:

1. Generalized reciprocity--an altruistic social interaction which focuses completely on the interests of another party. This type of reciprocity includes hospitality, gifts, and various types of assistance given to kin and friends especially and tends to occur among family members or members of one's clan or fictive family.
2. Balanced reciprocity--a social interaction aimed at a symmetrical concern for equivalent benefit for both parties. The gifts exchanged are judged to be equivalent. This type of reciprocity includes hospitality between neighbors.
3. Negative reciprocity--A social interaction which focuses completely on one's social self-interest. One party tries to get something from another without giving anything in return. This type of reciprocity includes cheating, theft, robbery and various sorts of appropriation or seizure of another's goods and would be practiced in dealing with outsiders, strangers, or enemies.

The relationship between Jesus and Mary was operating upon a system of generalized reciprocity. Mary's anointing symbolizes her sacrificial gift for Jesus and strengthens fictive family relationship between them.<sup>133</sup>

It is clear that up to this point Judas Iscariot has been involved only in negative reciprocity with Jesus. As the word "thief" indicates his personality trait, he was never concerned with the interests of either Jesus or his group as a whole, only maximizing his profits at the expense of Jesus' group.

The implicit comparison between Mary and Judas challenges Judas to live according to the system of generalized reciprocity if he really wants to belong to the group.

**Limited goods.** The above characterization can be reinforced when the scarcity of available goods is recognized. The goal of life in the first century Mediterranean world was to preserve one's status, not to improve one's status by

---

<sup>133</sup>In "fictive kinship" which is also called "ritual kinship," the pseudo-kinsman acquires a status similar to that of the natural kinsman (Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Pseudo-Kinship," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills [New York: Macmillan & Co. and The Free Press, 1968], 8:408-13).

accumulating wealth. Since goods were limited in their world, the Mediterraneans operated on a belief that a person could not accumulate wealth except through the loss and injury suffered by another. Therefore, the honorable man would not strive to accumulate wealth, since such actions were construed as greedy and such persons labeled by the negative epithet, thief.<sup>134</sup> Thus being a thief was a threat to the community and the community balance because thieves profit at the expense of others. They were considered godless because they trusted in their own devices and did not trust in God's care. The negative epithet "thief" given by the narrator characterizes Judas Iscariot as a godless person who profited from and caused suffering for the community of faith. If Jesus and his disciples depended upon the offering given by people for their ministry, they may have suffered from the lack of money when Judas took some of the money away from the money bag.

His statement "why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" when read in the cultural context of a limited-good society, reveals personality traits of Judas. His concern for the poor reveals his character traits as faithless and cunning. Being poor does not indicate one's economic status, because money was not the determinant of class ranking as it is in modern society. Malina writes,

Being classified as poor was the result of unfortunate personal history or circumstances. A poor person seems to be one who cannot maintain his inherited status due to circumstances that befall him and his family, like debt, being in a foreign land, sickness, death, or some personal physical accident. . . . Thus day laborers, landless peasants, and beggars born into such situations are not poor persons in the first-century society, and poor would not be an economic designation.<sup>135</sup>

The state of being poor seems to indicate helpless or hopeless conditions which result from unfortunate circumstances that fell on persons. Money does not seem to do much good for those who are poor in the first-century Mediterranean world. They need divine

---

<sup>134</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 83-84.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, 85.



help, miracles to improve their unfortunate conditions more than money. The Fourth Gospel witnesses that many who were or were about to fall into poor conditions were saved by Jesus: The bridegroom who was about to fall into a poor condition due to the lack of wine was saved and preserved his honorable status; the poor man, the man born blind, was made whole and recovered his honorable status as a human being; Lazarus was made alive and restored to the sisters who were in a poor condition due to the loss of their only male protection, thus removing the poor life situation of the two sisters. All those times that Judas had been with Jesus had no effect on his person. An irony is revealed in that he himself was truly poor, but he considers others as poor. He was in a total loss in that he could not even speak out for the need of Jesus' help both for himself and the poor. The narrator's description about Judas Iscariot is absolutely right--he was only a self-serving thief who had no concern either for Jesus or the poor.

**Dyadic personality.** People of dyadic personality need others in order to know how to perceive of themselves. What others think and feel about themselves is crucial to the formation of one's identity. In this sense, "a meaningful human existence depends upon the individual's full awareness of what others think and feel about him and his realization or implementation of that awareness."<sup>136</sup> Therefore a person of dyadic personality presents himself according to outward behaviors which comprise three zones of activities: they use eyes and heart to see, feel, love and hate; they use mouth and ears to speak and hear and can be either talkative or silent; they use hands and feet to act, do, accomplish, execute and go. "Although all human activities and behaviors can be chunked in terms of these three zones, when all three zones are explicitly mentioned, then the speaker or writer is alluding to a total and complete human experience."<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup>Bruce Malina, "The Individual and the Community--Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity," *BTB* 9 (1979): 128.

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, 134.

In this sense Mary's act of anointing is significant in that it completes her personal experience concerning Jesus, which points to the status of her mature faith. After the raising of Lazarus, she has seen the glory of God and perceived who Jesus is. She expresses herself not in speech, but in silence. She confirms her complete experience with Jesus by acting--she pours an expensive perfume over the feet of Jesus and wipes them with her hair using her hands. She has now become an ideal disciple: She knows Jesus, talks about him and completes her faith with action.

As to Jesus, having his feet anointed symbolizes that he is about to carry out a decisive act which would complete his experience as the Messiah. In the signs, the divine identity of Jesus was revealed, because his signs comprised these three zones of activity. When these three zones work in harmony, it points to divinity, because that is the difference between God and man. All the way up to this point, Jesus perceived his destiny on the cross and had spoken about it. But it was never closer to the reality. For the first time in this narrative his imminent death comes into full view. The fact that two of the zones are specifically mentioned gives emphasis--his mouth speaks of his burial and his feet have already been anointed in preparation for his burial, making agreement between speech and action. The anointing of his feet implies that it will be done very soon.

### **Characterization by Synkrisis**

The most distinctive feature of John's portrait of Mary of Bethany is her prophetic quality that recognizes Jesus as the paschal lamb even before other disciples of Jesus had come close to such awareness. In addition to that, her sacrificial love for and complete devotion to Jesus are most unique among the Johannine women. These characteristics influence most of the way she compares with other characters in the narrative.

**Jesus.** In this narrative a woman takes an active role to do something for Jesus, not vice versa. Jesus is most honored by his women followers. Among the services done to Jesus, Mary's action is most radical in that she anoints the feet of Jesus with an expensive perfume worth a year's wages and wipes them with her hair. Her unconventional behavior--letting down her hair in the presence of unrelated men and entering the male space--made her shameless. The shameless person is one who does not recognize the rules of human interaction, who does not recognize social boundaries, and is thus considered as dishonorable. To show courtesy to such a person makes one a fool.<sup>138</sup> Jesus, however, defends her when Mary is approached by Judas. He justifies Mary's behavior by interpreting it in relation to his death and burial, thus ascribing a prophetic quality to her. Jesus honors Mary, who is seen as shameless in the eyes of the public at the expense of a Jewish man's honor.

Mary not only recognizes but also embraces the suffering and death which Jesus views as essential to his ministry. At a critical juncture of Jesus' life, a woman does something for Jesus, not vice versa--she prepares his body for burial.

**Other women.** In the raising of Lazarus, Mary was portrayed as a quiet person and a feminine ideal of her time, because she remained in the house, did not initiate an action until she was expressly called by a male, Jesus, and displayed modest feminine conduct such as weeping and falling before Jesus helplessly. Her picture in Luke 10 also describes her along this line: While her sister Martha is busy preparing for food, she sits at Jesus' feet to listen to him. This can yield two different presentations of Mary: in terms of the women's perspective of her world, she cannot take an action to find her own work to do in order to help other women; according to the male's perspective, she is an ideal woman who listens humbly at the feet of the man and honors

---

<sup>138</sup>Malina, *The New Testament World*, 44.

him by her presence, which displays her intention ready to serve him.

The fact that she fell before Jesus describes that she had deeper feelings than her sister Martha, which emphasizes her femininity. In the previous reading, however, the readers are not so sure about her commitment to Jesus because she weeps along with the Jews who are either representative of unbelief or a group of people who are continuously invited but never make a decision with regard to commitment to Jesus.

In this narrative, however, Mary shows a complete commitment and devotion to Jesus. She pours an expensive perfume worth a year's wages over the feet of Jesus and wipes them out with her hair. Since this amount of costly perfume is not the kind of thing that everybody had somewhere about the house, she must have had a complete trust in Jesus. The possession of the costly perfume as her own seems to suggest that the Bethany family could possibly have a free servant. In that case, she could have had the family servant wipe the feet of Jesus with a cloth. But she performed this servile task by herself, which adds another character trait of "deep devotion" to Mary toward Jesus.

After "seeing" in the previous chapter, she has now reached a full understanding about who Jesus is and believes, and is thus ready to serve him. Finally Mary is portrayed as possessing the same degree of faith which Martha had in the previous narrative in which she without seeing believed in the words of Jesus. She has now fully joined the group of Johannine women who are presented as bold, independent, taking action and doing the decision-making by themselves.

**The twelve.** Mary's action provoked the male disciple in that they were put in a sharp contrast with her. They have followed Jesus, calling "Rabbi" or "Lord," but they never showed due respect and honor to Jesus. Mary, however, shows the love and respect due Jesus. That is why Mary's action provokes conflict. The one who is most offended among the male disciples seems to be Judas. He is contrasted with her the most by the observation that he would betray Jesus and that he could not benefit from the money

which would go into the money bag from the sale of the perfume. So he takes the role of their spokesperson and charges her by saying, “Why was this oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

His motivation and thinking is revealed by the narrator’s explicit commentary, “He did not say this because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.” Thus, Mary and Judas are put in sharp contrast. Against the dark foil of Judas the character of Mary shines even more brightly. Jesus’ reaction, siding with Mary and defending her against her accuser, confirms the impression of the characterization concerning both Judas and Mary and marks the contrast even more strongly.

The central focus of this passage concerns the contrast between the woman who understands and appreciates Jesus’ coming death and the ones who scheme to bring it about, while the disciples fall into neither category.

### **Christological Implication**

Up to this point of the Gospel, the divine identity of Jesus was revealed through the signs. After Jesus was witnessed as the resurrection and the life, which is the ultimate sign of all, no more signs are needed to reveal who Jesus is.

From this narrative on, the Evangelist moves Jesus towards the hour of death and glorification. The fact that the Evangelist is no longer interested in revealing the divine identity of Jesus seems apparent, since he shifts the focus of the narrative from the public ministry of Jesus, which was centered on drawing both his followers and unbelievers to believe in him, to the private ministry, which focuses only on the inner circle of Jesus. That is, no further characteristics of the divine Logos are appended to the proper name Jesus. The reader can observe that there are no more ἐγώ εἰμι sayings which is the divine name for the incarnate Logos. Only Jesus--not the divine ἐγώ εἰμι--plays the central role as he takes on the role of the paschal lamb. This fact legitimizes the

use of the proper name Jesus which includes his humanity and is the prerequisite for claiming messiahship according to God's terms. In Eternity the divine Logos, whose name is ἐγώ εἰμι, was without flesh and can not die. But the Logos became flesh in Jesus and his name includes the characteristics of humanity and thus can die as the paschal lamb. The fact that the proper name Jesus is identified with the paschal lamb implies that now the time has come for the completion of the salvation history, thus it is now time for Jesus to die. It is Jesus who come in flesh will complete the salvation history because it is this name Jesus given to all humanity for their deliverance. Thus, "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God" (1: 12). Now the proper name, Jesus, plays the central role, because in this name both the identity of the divine Logos and that of the fleshly paschal lamb can be joined. The proper name Jesus is the key which holds the dialectical tension, but also the key for resolving the tension. Therefore it is natural throughout the Gospel for the proper name Jesus to be linked with all the christological titles mentioned in the Gospel, either with the divine designation alone (e.g., ἐγώ εἰμι or God) or the human designation alone (e.g., teacher or κύριε) and both (e.g., the Son of man, the Son of God or the combinational phrase, "the Christ and the Son of God"). In this narrative, through the anointing of Mary the proper name Jesus, having already been identified as the Messiah, obtains another characteristic--that of the paschal lamb who must die.

Through the anointing, the evangelist seems to suggest two things: first, the role and status of Jesus as the paschal lamb is confirmed in that breaking the jar of expensive pure *nard* symbolizes the death of Jesus;<sup>139</sup> second, continuity in belief in the person of Jesus as the divine Messiah is stressed in that as Mary experienced Jesus as the

---

<sup>139</sup> Goins, citing Ben Witherington, states that Mary's anointing illustrates "the funeral custom of anointing a corpse with fragrant perfume and her breaking of the perfume jar recalls the Hellenistic practice of breaking an ointment flask and placing it in the grave with the deceased" (Kevin D. Goins, "The Narrative Function of the Women in Mark" [Ph.D. diss. Southern Baptist Seminary, 1995], 220).

resurrection and the life in the previous chapter and now recognizes the inevitable reality of Jesus' death as the paschal lamb, the disciples are also challenged to accept the dialectical presentation of Jesus both as to his divine identity as the resurrection and the life and as the lowly paschal lamb who is about to be executed. This hidden mystery is revealed to insiders only, and they are challenged to comprehend the effect of Jesus' death while it is hidden to outsiders because they are unable to comprehend. Therefore they want to crown Jesus as the royal king of Israel as Jesus enters Jerusalem.

This intention of the evangelist becomes clearer considering the following facts. John has a great interest in the Jewish feasts and specifically in the Passover. The anointing occurs in relation to a specific time-frame of Passover and right before Jesus enters Jerusalem to the royal acclamation of the people, which reverses the Markan order that aims to reveal Jesus as anointed royal king. The intention of the Evangelist in placing the anointing right before Jesus enters Jerusalem to the royal acclamation of the people seems to suggest that through the anointing on the feet he wants to identify Jesus as a paschal lamb.

Being anointed on the feet rather than on the head marks the transition of his status and role--accepting his destiny as the paschal lamb. The fact that he is anointed by a person who does not have special authority to confer indicates that the anointing does not carry royal overtones, but self-denial in service for others.

### **Summary**

In terms of the overall structure of the Gospel, chapter twelve provides a solid link between chapter 11 and 13. The anointing of Mary is strategically placed at this point of the Gospel to signal not only the close of Jesus' public ministry but also the beginning of the Passion narrative. The story about Mary's anointing Jesus' feet occurs between two activities of the Judeans (11:55-57 and 12:9-11). In chapter 11:55-57, the chief priests and Pharisees gave an order to report where Jesus was so that they might

apprehend him. In chapter 12:9-11, a large crowd of Jews found where Jesus was and came to him. The former describes the final preliminary step toward Jesus' Passion while the latter signals that Jesus' passion has already begun. Chapter 12:9-11 makes a clear indication that Jesus is the paschal lamb. The readers are informed that the Passover is approaching and the Judeans are preparing for Passover. At this critical moment, Mary identifies Jesus as the paschal lamb which will be slaughtered as her act of breaking the jar would symbolize. The Judeans who are about to celebrate the Passover are in need of the paschal lamb to slaughter. The fact that they found Jesus and came to him facing the Passover emphasizes the role of Jesus as the paschal lamb.

The role of Mary is to draw out the claim on Jesus as the paschal lamb. As Mary's anointing sets the beginning stage for Jesus' passion, Jesus' Passion narrative runs its course and is developed further. Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet emphasizes the physical existence of Jesus more strongly. "In Israelite society the feet were the body zone symbolizing action; thus, the story points to a ritual of forthcoming transformative action. Jesus is about to do something of singular significance."<sup>140</sup> Jesus takes the role of the paschal lamb as he was anointed acquiescently and affirms it in v. 7 in reaction to Judas. In doing so, another characteristic as the paschal lamb is appended to the proper name Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

The first half of the Gospel, the Book of Signs contains four episodes featuring women. Compared to the women in Synoptics, the characterization of Johannine women is more developed in that they not only take advantage of the power of Jesus but also they end up doing something special for Jesus on their own. In terms of the crucifixion scene, Mary the mother of Jesus is portrayed as one of Jesus' inner circle who will do something

---

<sup>140</sup>Malina and Rohbraugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 205.



for Jesus after his death and resurrection. The Samaritan woman, transcending her feminine role to fetch the water, went to the public and preached the good news on behalf of Jesus. Martha prepares a meal in honor of Jesus and proclaims to the unbelieving world that he is the Christ and the Son of God who was going to come into the world. Her sister Mary pours out the expensive perfume over the feet of Jesus and prepares him for his burial.

These women are unique in that none of them except the mother of Jesus and Mary of Clopas who were presented as mother or wife is in any way essentially defined in relationship to men. They are also unique in that they are foils for the characterization of Jesus. They all participate in the revelation of Jesus as the divine Logos and serve as witnesses for Jesus' coming as the divine Messiah. In the Cana pericope, Jesus revealed his glory, which points to the divine identity of Jesus. As a biological mother, Mary the mother of Jesus functions as the sole witness in that through her the divine Logos came in flesh. Through the Samaritan woman, Jesus' divine name, ἐγώ εἰμι is confirmed and his character trait as the universal Messiah is witnessed. Her bringing people to Jesus indicates that now the time has come when all the people will gather as a family of God under one name, Jesus, and worship God in spirit and truth. Martha confirms the Messianic status of Jesus, and through her another character trait of the divine Logos as "the resurrection and the life" is appended to the proper name Jesus. Mary's showing her love for Jesus in an unconventional way seems to signify the depth of his suffering and agony on the cross. At the same time, she identifies Jesus as the paschal lamb, which points to the saving act of Jesus as Messiah. Their participation in the revelation of Jesus' divine identity as the Messiah can be summarized as an act of a broker in that they are the ones who reveal and confirm Jesus as the Messiah, thus drawing people to Jesus and leading them to establish their relationship with him.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE WOMEN IN THE BOOK OF PASSION

The first half of John's Gospel brings before the reader several distinctive female characters who serve as foils to further the narrator's characterization of Jesus. They draw the claims of Jesus concerning who he is and the implications of the claim in terms of their own specific situation, thus ascribing the divine attributes to the proper name Jesus. Each woman concludes by showing faith in Jesus and her relationship with him leaves her own unique contribution on the portrayal of the Johannine Jesus.

The role of female characters shifts in the latter half of John, where they now participate in Jesus' passion and resurrection narratives. They play essential roles of witnessing concerning his death and resurrection. None of them comes to Jesus seeking anything for themselves; what they do seek is for the sake of Jesus.

#### **The Women at the Cross (19:25-7)**

This passage is the central episode of the third major division of the Johannine Passion Narrative, 19:16b-42, which describes Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial.<sup>1</sup> Its importance can be noted in the literary structure designed by the evangelist. Brown sees in the presentation of Jesus' crucifixion seven scenes in a chiastic arrangement placing 19:25-27 on the center stage.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Raymond Brown divides the Johannine Passion Narrative into three major sections: 18:1-27 consisting of the arrest of Jesus and of his interrogation by the Jewish authorities, 18:28-19:16a consisting of the trial of Jesus by Pilate, and 19:16b-42 consisting of the episodes surrounding the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus (Brown, *The Gospel According to John, Anchor Bible Commentary*, vol. 29A [New York: Doubleday, 1970], 802).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 911.

Introduction (16b-18) The crucifixion Elevation of Jesus on the cross	=	Conclusion (38-42) The burial Deposition of Jesus from the cross
Episode 1 (19-22) Inscription: Jesus as king Pilate refuses Jews' request	=	Episode 5 (31-37) Flow of blood and water (the Spirit) Pilate grants Jews' request
Episode 2 (23-24) Seamless tunic: Jesus as priest (?) Executioners divide Jesus' clothes	=	Episode 4 (28-30) Jesus' thirst; handing over spirit Executioners offer Jesus wine

Episode 3 (25-27)  
Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple  
Jesus' provision for the future

On the other hand, setting aside the introduction (16b-18) and the conclusion (38-42), Malina recognizes five scenes, placing 19:25-27 on the center stage: "In the first scene (19:19-22), it is Pilate's unwitting articulation of who Jesus truly is, not unlike Caiaphas' prophecy. In the second scene (19:23-24), it is the citation from Psalms 22:18 (19:24). In the third and central scene (19:25-27), it is Jesus' own revelation of the relationship with his community and the beloved disciple. In the fourth scene (19:28-30), it is a citation from Psalms 69:22 (19:28). In the fifth and final scene (19:31-37), there are citations from Exodus 12:46 and Zechariah 12:10."<sup>3</sup>

The structure that both Brown and Malina offer leaves 19:25-27 as the central scene. Malina's structure makes it more clear that 19:25-27 is the focal point of this narrative section since he considers two other scenes before and after the central scene (19:25-27) as the Old Testament citations, and the central scene is sandwiched between

---

<sup>3</sup>Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 268.

the citations. These observations seem to point out that 19:25-27 is the culminating point of Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial scene, in the theological intention of the evangelist.

John describes the women at the cross: *ei`sth,keisan de. para. tw/| staurw/| tou/ VIhsou/ h` mh,thr auvtou/ kai. h` avdelfh. th/j mhtro.j auvtou/( Mari,a h` tou/ Klwpa/ kai. Mari,a h` Magdalnhh, (Jn 19:25). Ambiguity arises concerning the exact number of women. It is possible to see two, three or four women numbered. Interpreted as two women, they are “the mother of Jesus (named Mary of Clopas) and her sister (named Mary Magdalene).” This translation is highly unlikely. There is no evidence elsewhere to support Jesus' mother being called Mary of Clopas, or for Mary Magdalene being Jesus' aunt.<sup>4</sup> Interpreted as three women, they are “the mother of Jesus and his mother's sister (Mary the wife of Clopas) and Mary Magdalene.” This interpretation is also questionable since it requires two sisters to share the same name. If four women are there, they are “the mother of Jesus, her sister, Mary of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.” This interpretation is preferable. It is grammatically the most likely and it best corresponds with the Markan and Matthean parallels. With reasonable confidence, the identity of these women is proposed: (1) Jesus' mother, (2) his aunt (maternal), (3) Mary of Clopas (possibly a relative) (4) Mary Magdalene.<sup>5</sup>*

### **Literary Aspects of Characterization**

The spatial setting finds the scene in “Golgotha,” “The Place of the Skull.” This designation suggests a somewhat macabre scenery. The reader finds Jesus crucified in the middle of two others. Near the cross, we find the women standing.

The temporal setting is presented to the reader in v. 14: Jesus was crucified on

---

<sup>4</sup>Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony is True: Women as Witnesses According to John* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 185.

<sup>5</sup>According to E. F. F. Bishop, the identification of Mary of Clopas as wife of Jesus' father's brother is supported by Arabic MSS and by the Diatessaron (E. F. F. Bishop, “Mary (of) Clopas and Her Father,” *ExpTim* 73 (1961-62): 339.

the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. The crucifixion day is more important for John since it is not only the day before Sabbath but also the day before Passover.<sup>6</sup>

“The sixth hour” literally means noon. Mark fixes the crucifixion at 9 A.M. Following B. F. Westcott, Norman Walker supports the 9 A.M. chronology arguing that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels used the Jewish method of beginning the day at sunrise. According to this method, the “third hour” in Mark 15:25 would mean about 9 A.M. Then, he makes an attempt to reconcile the contradiction with regard to the hour of crucifixion between the Synoptics and the Gospel of John by saying that the Fourth Evangelist followed the modern method of reckoning time (the Roman method of computing time), with the day began at midnight, as with us. The sixth hour would, then, be about 6 A.M. In the words of Walker, “Modern reckoning makes ‘the sixth hour’ in Jn 19:14 to be ‘6 A.M.,’ giving plenty of time for the mockings and scourgings, final handing over of Jesus by Pilate for crucifixion, and for all the details of the Via Dolorosa, ending with the crucifixion at 9 A.M.”<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Brown believes that “noon” is historically more probable because the session of the Sanhedrin is not supposed to have begun until about 6 A.M. Following Mark’s horarium, it is difficult to allow for all the events up to the point of the crucifixion scene happening within three hours. Brown also supports this view based on the statement of the three Synoptic Gospels (Mark 15:33; Matt 27:45; Luke 23:44) that darkness fell over the whole land from noon until 3 P.M., which would seem to indicate

---

<sup>6</sup>The Fourth Evangelist’s special interest about Jesus’ crucifixion can be noted by the different account between the Synoptics and the Gospel of John. First the day of the crucifixion is different: According to the Synoptics, Jesus was arrested and tried on Nisan 15, and crucified in the course of the next (solar) day while the Fourth Evangelist describes the crucifixion on Nisan 14, the day before the Passover. Second, the hour of crucifixion is different: Mark 15:25 states that Jesus was crucified at “the third hour (9 A.M)” while the Fourth Evangelist informs in 19:14 that Jesus was crucified around “the sixth hour” (noon) (Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 882).

<sup>7</sup>Norman Walker, “The Reckoning of Hours in the Fourth Gospel,” *NT 4* (1960): 69-70.

the time period when Jesus was on the cross.<sup>8</sup> This argument, however, is not altogether convincing if one allows that the Synoptic tradition depicts Jesus as already being on the cross for some time before the darkness fell over the whole land. Thus, the exact time for Jesus' crucifixion is still in debate. One thing that can be deduced from this difference of the time frame, however, is that it seems to reflect the differing theological intentions of the evangelists. At least in John, the christological intention of the evangelist is to portray Jesus as the paschal lamb by having Jesus crucified on the cross at noon. Brown states that "the hour of noon on the Preparation Day for the Passover was the hour for beginning the slaughter of the paschal lambs." By Jesus' time the slaughtering was no longer done at home by the heads of the families but in the temple precincts by the priests.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of literary aspects, as far as time is concerned, the repeated references to the Day of Preparation (19:14, 31, 42) create an element of suspense because Jesus must be dead and his body removed before the Sabbath begins at sunset on the Friday evening.<sup>10</sup>

No direct definition of the women occurs except that Mary is still defined as mother in relation to Jesus as she was at the wedding in Cana. The Beloved Disciple is characterized as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Thus, the reader must rely exclusively on indirect presentation to appreciate the presence of the minor characters.

The evangelist states that the four women were standing by the cross of Jesus. This statement may raise an issue historically because it apparently conflicts with the Synoptic narratives, Mark 15:40, Matt 27:55, and Luke 23:49, which portray the women

---

<sup>8</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 883.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 195. The reason for this is stated in v. 31, "Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath. . . ."

as watching from a distance.

On the other hand, this statement can illuminate the characterization of the four women involved. The fact that the Johannine characters heard what Jesus said while being on the cross may indicate that they must have stood closer to the cross than do any of the characters in the Synoptic crucifixion scene. This description seems to indicate the women's very close relationship with Jesus. This seems to fit more with John's list of the four women. As Maccini notes, except for Mary Magdalene, three women are related to Jesus: two women are blood relatives (his mother and his maternal aunt) and possibly the other (Mary of Clopas)<sup>11</sup> This view is supported by E. Stauffer whose research indicates that crucified men at the place of execution were often surrounded by relatives, close friends and enemies, and that they spoke a good deal during the long and painful hours of waiting for death, being permitted to stand near a crucifixion.<sup>12</sup>

The statement of "standing near the cross" portrays the women as faithful disciples of Jesus. In spite of the macabre scenery, not only were the women present, but they remained *παρὰ* the cross (*παρὰ* with dative case [nearly always of the persons] denotes nearness in space "at" or "by"[the side of], beside, near, with, or in the presence)<sup>13</sup> The character trait of being faithful to their master until the very end characterizes the women as loyal disciples.

The presence of the women near the cross seems to be significant when compared to the women in the Synoptics, where they are said to have watched the crucifixion at a distance (Matt 27:55, Mark 15:40 and Luke 23: 49) The fact that the

---

<sup>11</sup>Maccini proposes that Mary of Clopas is to be either a blood relative or a marriage relative to Jesus brought by way of the marriage of his parents (Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 187).

<sup>12</sup>Stauffer cites ancient sources such as J Git. 48 c and Tos. Git. 7, I (E. Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* [London: SCM Press, 1960], 136).

<sup>13</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. "*παρὰ*."

women stand close to the cross and that the Fourth Evangelist mentions them in the center of the crucifixion seems to reveal the intention of the writer who wants to present the women with a significant role in the narrative. At the foot of the cross, the women neither cry nor talk, but are silent. To be silent is a characteristic of observing, which would place them in the role of witness. They observe many things. First, they witness the mother and son relationship between Mary the mother of Jesus and Jesus himself (vv. 25-27), thus assuring that the Jesus on the cross is the same Jesus as the one who claimed to have come to save the world from the beginning of his ministry. This fact will add significant meaning to Jesus' seemingly helpless death on the cross and point to the mission which only his death can accomplish. Second, they observe water and blood coming out of Jesus' side after the spear pierced (v. 34). The Fourth Evangelist may have intended to connect the unusual flow of watery blood from Jesus' side with the "sign of the blood" of the Passover lamb that God had promised to the people (Exod 12:13), thus establishing the motif of the Passover lamb ritual in the death of Jesus. Third, they witness the fulfillment of the Scriptures in regard to the Passover lamb ritual in the death of Jesus: "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (19:36).<sup>14</sup>

These observations seem to indicate that the Fourth Evangelist wishes to stress that the meaning of Jesus' death is found in the fulfillment of the Passover ritual. With regard to this intention, women play a role as key eyewitnesses. The fact that their names are mentioned adds historical truth and credibility concerning their witness. Thomas Docherty identifies three functions of names: "The first is as an indication of authority, the second is as a locus for the gathering of traits and qualities to facilitate characterization, and the last is to provide the reader with a point of view from which to observe the narrative world."<sup>15</sup> Although the names of two women at the foot of the cross

---

<sup>14</sup>The Scriptural references with regard to John 19:36 are found in Exodus 12:46, "Do not break any of the bones" and Numbers 9:12, "they must not break any of its bones." See also Joseph A. Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 119.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas Docherty, *Reading (Absent) Character: Toward a Theory of Characterization in*



appear this one time, they fulfill a distinct purpose at this point of the narrative. What the women observed will serve as an eyewitness account concerning the nature of Jesus' death as the true Passover sacrificial lamb. Thus, the Fourth Evangelist seems to orient the reader to read his story with this point of view concerning the crucifixion scene.

This truth was recognized and accepted first by Mary of Bethany through her anointing in that her anointing identifies Jesus as the holy lamb of God, and her sacrifice points to the sacrifice which Jesus will make by way of his death. This point of view concerning the nature of Jesus' death was carried on by the employment of the women characters. The women at the foot of the cross confirm this point of view and will provide an eyewitness account with regard to why and how Jesus died as long as the narrative will be read.

Verse 26 mentions the presence of the disciple whom Jesus loved standing nearby. Jesus identifies him as “the son of his mother” and his mother as “the mother of the disciple whom he loved.” What is noticeable in this passage is that he is the only male disciple who was nearby the cross. The perfect tense of the verb *παρεστῶτα* to suggest that he has been standing there throughout the crucifixion. He was standing near the cross as close as the women were. That is why Jesus on the cross talked to both of them. This detail adds a unique characteristic to the beloved disciple in that he has deep attachment to Jesus as his epithet, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” signifies.

The presence of the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross is crucial in establishing authenticity and authority as to his testimony. In chapter 21:24, the Gospel concludes with a declaration that the Beloved Disciple bears testimony to Jesus and his testimony is true. Then, a question arises as to where the Fourth Evangelist draws such authority as to claim that his testimony is true. It seems obvious that the Fourth Evangelist draws authenticity and authority concerning his testimony of Jesus Christ

based on intimacy. Chapter thirteen, the scene at the Last Supper, bears witness to this intimacy. He is called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23). He is close to the Lord and reclines on his breast. Therefore, his presence at the foot of the cross reveals his intimacy and faithfulness to the Lord, thus enabling him to testify with authority and credibility. Grassi goes further to state,

At the cross, Jesus’ last testament establishes the relationship of Mary and the Beloved Disciple as a continuation of his own relationship with them. This certifies the Beloved Disciple as an inner successor to Jesus and also gives special credibility to his understanding of Jesus’ death as a new Passover sacrifice.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that he stood close enough to hear what Jesus says reveals that he must have enjoyed a special position with Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, his unique relationship with Jesus qualifies him to be the inheritor of the most intimate tradition of Jesus.

The privilege of his being near the cross, when he is not a blood relative of Jesus, leads to an interesting observation about him that he might have enjoyed a privileged relationship with people of high authority. Therefore, he was not considered to be a threat either to the Jews or to the Roman soldiers. Especially note that the four Roman soldiers carrying out the sentence in this scene did not mind his standing near the cross. This seems to imply that the four Roman soldiers either might have been acquainted with the Beloved Disciple or perhaps might have received an order that he was safe enough to be allowed near the cross of Jesus. This indirect presentation of the Beloved Disciple might favor his identification with the “other disciple” mentioned in 18:16. Some scholars reject this identification on the ground that the Beloved Disciple as a poor, uneducated Galilean fisherman would not have had a close relationship with the high priest.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Carson argues that the traditional identification should not be ruled out too quickly due to a different social structure of the Mediterranean world

---

<sup>16</sup>Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels*, 125.

<sup>17</sup>John F. O’Grady, “The Role of the Beloved Disciple,” *BTB* 9 (1979): 61.

<sup>18</sup>Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 822.

in the first century.<sup>19</sup> Their world operated on a system of patronage in which a person must engage either in vertical or horizontal patron-client contracts to ensure help and security in time of need. Thus, the key to men's success was to learn how to manipulate the available persons. Persons of higher rank could influence all below them at will. Therefore, the high priest was considered to be a highly qualified patron, next to God and the emperor. Both the reputation and honor of the patrons are measured not only by the number of clients that they possess but also by the social identity of clients. If the reader accepts the possibility that John the son of Zebedee is the Beloved Disciple, the reader will realize from Mark 1:19-20 that his father was wealthy enough to have hired hands. This being the case, in a society where goods are limited, the father of the Beloved Disciple must enter into a patron-client contract. On the other hand, to have a wealthy client would be prestigious to the patron, in this case the high priest. Thus the Beloved Disciple must have known the high priest and his household fairly well. That is why he was not only able to walk into the high priest's courtyard without being questioned, he was also able to speak to the servant-girl attending the gate and ensure that Peter was admitted as well. This disciple must have followed Jesus from his capture to the scene of crucifixion. Gaining a favor from the superior on the basis of the vertical dyadic relation established formerly, he was able to stand near the cross. This disciple is loyal to the end and serves as an essential witness along with the mother of Jesus.

### **Characterization by Cultural Aspects**

The primary cultural script that elucidates characterization in this scene is the concept of kinship. In the first century Mediterranean world, kinship was the most cherished social institution in life. Therefore, "one great goal in life is the maintenance and strengthening of the kinship group and its honor. Those personality traits which tend

---

<sup>19</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 582.

to strengthen group cohesion are encouraged and upheld as ideals in adulthood.<sup>20</sup> In this society, family cohesion demanded boundless and unconditional loyalty to fellow family members.

**Kinship/οἶκος.** Among all relations, the mother-son bond is the closest of all affective relations. In spite of this social value innate within himself, Jesus addressed his physical mother as “woman.” Both Jesus and Mary were in danger of losing honor: Mary as a mother was not given the honor due parents, and Jesus as a male behaved against the social obligations of his world. Thus he risked loss of honor, since his action would not result in the granting of reputation by others. Now at the scene of his crucifixion, he addresses his mother again as “woman.” At the last moment of his life, addressing his mother distantly seems to suggest the termination of the familial relationship between mother and son. It is the moment of their complete dis-identification from each other. Mary can no longer expect Jesus to be her physical son. This intention of Jesus is revealed by his action of putting Mary in the care of the disciple whom he loved. What is noticeable in this scene is that both Mary and Jesus recover lost honor: Jesus restores the honor of Mary as a mother. Handing over his mother to a disciple increases her honor in that even at the moment of death her son continues to think of his mother and honors her by making a future provision for her. Jesus is seen as a truly honorable man in that even death did not keep him from doing what he as a son ought to do.

In terms of the concept of οἶκος, Jesus’ handing over his mother to a disciple seems to reflect a profound theological intention of the evangelist. At the last phase of his ministry, Jesus establishes a new οἶκος, a household of God (in a narrow sense a Johannine community) which is the community of “brothers and sisters in the faith.” As far as the Johannine community is concerned, the following statement of Grassi seems

---

<sup>20</sup>Bruce Malina, “Mother and Son,” *BTB* 20 (1990): 59.

well justified,

At the cross, Jesus' last testament establishes the relationship of Mary and the Beloved Disciple as a continuation of his own relationship with them. This certifies the Beloved Disciple as an inner successor to Jesus and also gives special credibility to his understanding of Jesus' death as a new Passover sacrifice.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of a broader perspective, the act of Jesus gives a much deeper theological overtone to the crucifixion scene. Jesus establishes a new concept of the household of God, i.e., "the community of brothers and sisters in the faith" in which Jesus actually breaks down the closed familial structure based on human blood and forms a household of God based on his blood. As his blood stands for the universal salvation available to everyone, a new household of God now includes everybody who believes in him. The Synoptic concept of the family of God based on "doing the will of God" is more concretized in this Gospel because it is based on faith in Jesus and because the Johannine concept of the family of God substantiates Jesus' claim in the Synoptic Gospels, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29).

It is also the fulfillment of his words in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." By crucifixion Jesus replaced the existing Temple with the new Temple of his body, a better and final meeting-point between God and human beings. With the replacement of the existing Temple, a new household of God, i.e., a household of God with fictive kinship relations is formed. The new Temple is different from the old Temple which as the household of God was the object of exploitation and abandonment. Under the system of the old Temple, social organization was run by a powerful elite or temple hierarchy based on political rather than kinship institutions. The Temple was far from fulfilling God's intention because of its maintaining exclusivist

---

<sup>21</sup>Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes*, 125.

holiness ideology, a hierarchically stratified social order, and exploitative economic interests.<sup>22</sup> The Temple as a system proved incapable of mediating the inclusive salvation envisioned by the prophets. Under the new Temple, a household of God consists of “brothers and sisters in the faith.” They relate to one another with fidelity in obligations as a matter of familial loyalty and friendship. This system exercises generosity and commitment on the basis of traditional norms of mutual sharing. Thus, Jesus’ handing over his mother to his disciple embodies such social norms as are to be replicated among the household of God, “the community of brothers and sisters in the faith.” The Beloved Disciple sets a precedent by accepting Mary as his mother, not according to blood relations, but according to the fictive kinship relation based on loyalty and commitment to Jesus.

### **Characterization by Synkrisis**

The most distinctive feature of the characters at the scene of the cross is that they are silent. Yet their affinity with Jesus is highly noted. They also exhibit courage unlike any of the other Johannine characters: They stand near the cross in spite of fear of death. They are characterized by the hallmark of all true disciples of Jesus, loyalty and commitment to the end in spite of fear of death and the uncertainty of the situation.

**Jesus.** At the cross, the role of Mary as the mother of Jesus is more appreciated than that of her being Jesus’ disciple. This is contrary to the Cana story, where Mary is rebuked when she tried to identify herself with Jesus as his mother. When Mary expected Jesus to replenish wine for the wedding based on maternal claims, Jesus responded to her negatively, saying “My hour has not yet come.” Now at the cross Jesus honors Mary his mother by handing her over to his disciple. The hour has come for both Jesus and Mary: It is at this hour that Mary as a mother is honored, and she acquires a

---

<sup>22</sup>John H. Elliott, “Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 231.

proper understanding about Jesus because Jesus shows his true relationship with the Father and with his people. In this sense, she functions as a foil to indicate that his hour, which had not yet come in the beginning of his ministry, has finally arrived. This seems to suggest that his death on the cross was the course set beforehand from the beginning of Jesus' ministry and it is the indispensable means to consummate his mission, i.e., to bring about salvation to humanity.

While other Johannine women were active agents in revealing the divine attributes of Jesus, the mother of Jesus becomes an active agent in witnessing the flesh-and-bone reality of Jesus as she participates in the suffering of Jesus on the cross. Her very presence is in a sense a witness to the fact that the giving of Jesus' life was a divine plan and at the same time the absolute means to bring about salvation for humanity.

**Mary.** What is noticeable in the Johannine crucifixion scene is that women are present at the center of the crucifixion as opposed to women in the Synoptics, who stood at a distance watching the crucifixion. Therefore, they serve as eyewitnesses as to how Jesus died. The fact that their names are mentioned specifically guarantees authenticity concerning their testimony. The naming of a character has power to set those named characters apart from the narrative environment. They have power to deny the subjectivity of both the narrator and the reader. Therefore, historical names in the Gospel possess historical truth in themselves.<sup>23</sup> Among the women at the foot of the cross, the role of Mary the mother of Jesus seems to be significant. Only the Johannine Gospel mentions the presence of the mother of Jesus at the crucifixion scene. Except for her, none of the Johannine women who were specifically involved in the revelation of Jesus stood near the cross. She, however, does not say or do anything to further the plot. She is not assertive at all, but seems to be passive as she was acted upon by Jesus.

---

<sup>23</sup>David Beck, "The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization," *Semeia* 63 (1993): 146-47.

The role of Jesus' mother is more unique than those of the Johannine women. Scholars seem to agree that the main function of Jesus' mother beneath the cross is to witness the key events in Jesus' life.<sup>24</sup> To stand silently is a characteristic of observing. From the birth, from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to his death, she is an essential witness about both Jesus' divinity and his humanity. In other words, she is the witness about Jesus' identity, his death and the effects of his death. As to the identity of Jesus, the Word came into the world to be born in the flesh by his own choice in order to become the Messiah, and he walked on earth having the proper name Jesus to achieve that purpose. As to his death, in order to accomplish the purpose, he dies like a paschal lamb by his own choice. As to the effects of his death, his dying on the day of Preparation like a paschal lamb signals that his death has the same effect as the paschal lamb being slaughtered for the Passover and serves as a sign that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. As a witness to one's life, what could be more powerful than the witness of a mother? In the first century Mediterranean world, the bond between mother and a son was the most affective human relation. Thus, Mary the mother of Jesus is the most effective witness about the flesh-and-blood reality of Jesus since she delivered him into the world. At the same time, she is also a powerful witness about the reality of his divinity along with the Beloved Disciple because they both saw that Jesus was in control of the whole situation, fulfilling the Scriptural prophecy concerning him.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>Stibbe states that Mary the mother of Jesus witnesses how Jesus adopted the Beloved Disciple effectively as his successor (Stibbe, *John*, 194); according to Grassi, Jesus' mother along with the Beloved Disciple is seen as an essential witness of how Jesus died (Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels*, 120).

<sup>25</sup>Grassi asserts that the crucifixion scene reveals something supra-human in Jesus' death. Jesus is in control of his death: he knows exactly when he is going to die (19:28); he says that it is all finished (19:30); and finally he seems deliberately to bow his head and expire (Joseph A. Grassi, "The Role of Jesus' Mother in John's Gospel: A Reappraisal," *CBQ* 48 [1986]: 74).



**Beloved Disciple.** Standing by the cross with the mother of Jesus and taking her into his home illuminates the characterization of the Beloved Disciple against which other Johannine characters can be evaluated. This disciple makes his first appearance in 13:23 and is identified as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Although there is one more figure, Lazarus whom Jesus addresses as “the one whom Jesus loved,” the evangelist does not identify him as one of Jesus’ disciples, but as a friend. Unlike Lazarus, characterizing him as a disciple adds distinctive personality traits to the Beloved Disciple, such as loyalty, faithfulness and commitment. No wonder at the macabre scene of the cross he is depicted as the only male, one who is not only present, but also near the cross. The fact that he is the only male disciple present at the crucifixion seems to indicate that his devotion and loyalty is superior to the other male disciples. With this regard, the Beloved Disciple is more closely associated with the female characters than with the males.

His act of loyalty and commitment to the end illustrates the depth of his relationship with Jesus. His intimacy with Jesus exceeds even that of Lazarus, whom Jesus also loved: He is the one who was lying close to the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper (13:25); Jesus entrusts his mother to him, not to his blood brothers. This bond of intimacy between the Beloved Disciple and Jesus establishes the disciple not only as the authoritative figure to interpret Jesus but also as one qualified to be a witness unto others that they too might believe and have eternal life.<sup>26</sup> Within the Johannine tradition, the Beloved Disciple is characterized as the disciple of Jesus par excellence.

**The twelve.** Up to the crucifixion, most of the twelve disciples still did not realize the meaning of Jesus’ death and remained aloof during the administration of Jesus’ execution. Judas Iscariot abandoned Jesus on the night of the last supper.

---

<sup>26</sup>Raymond F. Collins, “The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel--I,” *DRev* 94 (1991): 130.

Although the rest of the disciples accompanied Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane, the place of his arrest, there they forsook Jesus in the darkest hour of his life, thus failing to prove that they had faith in him at all. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus as he was led to the courtyard of the high priest. Peter the head disciple denied Jesus three times right in this courtyard and did not make his way to the scene of the cross. John records that only the Beloved Disciple and four women stood beneath the cross during the crucifixion. The presence of the Beloved Disciple is contrasted with the absence of the head disciple Peter, thus characterizing him as the epitome of discipleship. Compared with the presence of the women, however, the meaning of his presence near Jesus' cross seems to be less striking than that of the women because it is in keeping with his characterization--"the disciple whom Jesus loved." Therefore, the presence of those women who witnessed the crucifixion makes the failure of discipleship and the fact of their desertion on the part of the Twelve even more glaring.

### **Christological Implication**

The Johannine portrayal of Jesus pictured in the passion narrative absolutely depends on how he dies. What makes the Johannine Jesus unique compared to that of the Synoptics in the passion narrative? An attempt to answer this question will provide a good starting point in grasping the understanding of the Johannine Jesus. The following differences are observed:

The Synoptic Gospels: At the scene of Jesus' arrest, Jesus is passively identified by Judas and the arresting party. (Matt 26:49, Mark 14:44 and Luke 22:48)<sup>27</sup>

Simon from Cyrene carried the cross for Jesus. (Matt 27:32, Mark 15:21, and Luke 23:26)

Jesus prayed that this hour and this cup might pass from him. (Matt 26:39, Mark 14:36 and Luke 22:42)

---

<sup>27</sup>In the words of Brown, Jesus is surprised by Judas and the arresting party in the Synoptic stories of Gethsemane (Raymond Brown, "The Passion According to John: Chapters 18 and 19," *Worship* 49 [1993]: 127).

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last (Matt 27:46, Mark 15:34, and Luke 23:46)

Jesus' death is marked by miraculous signs. (Matt 27:51-2, Mark 15:38; Luke 23:44-5)

The Johannine Gospel: Jesus goes forth to meet Judas, whom he has been expecting actively identifies himself by the three-fold repetition of the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι (18:5, 6, and 8)

Jesus carries his cross by himself. (19:17)

Jesus has not been prostrate, praying that this hour and this cup pass from him. ( While this is mentioned in Matt 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, John does not mention it at all)

While saying, "It is finished," Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (19:30)

John alone mentions the cry of Jesus' thirst in accordance with the fulfillment of the Scripture. (19:28)

At the cross, Jesus thinks not of his own pain but of the needs of his mother. (19:26-7)

Concerning the scene of the crucifixion, John emphasizes the fulfillment of Scripture: Only John adduces Scripture, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." (Ps 22: 18 in John 19:24)

When Jesus' body is pierced, there comes forth blood and water. (19:34)

These observations from the Johannine Gospel tell the reader that the evangelist is very much concerned with the presentation of Jesus in terms of both his divinity and humanity.

First of all, his divinity is stressed in the threefold use of "ego eimi." While the phrases "ego eimi" must be taken as self-identification, the reaction of the arresting party also urges the reader to look for a deeper meaning than that of the simple self-identification--the evangelist records the reaction of the onlookers saying, "they drew back and fell to the ground" (18:6). Besides, the phrase "ego eimi" points to the divine element of Jesus' omniscience in that it reminds the disciples of Jesus' prediction of his betrayal in 13:19.

In the words of Ball,

The stark comment that Judas was among the captors when Jesus declared himself through the words *ego eimi* must surely point the reader back to Jesus' prediction of his betrayal in which he stated "I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that *ego eimi*" (13: 19).<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>David Mark Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 143.

The fact that Jesus knows exactly when he is going to die also reveals the divine nature of Jesus. The verb *paradidonai* (“deliver, entrust”), with a force of voluntary giving, implies that he seems to deliberately bow his head and expire (19: 30). In other words, he dies by his own choice. “This sign indicates something suprahuman in Jesus’ death. It is a real death, yet no human being has the power to determine when life will come and when it will go. In the Bible, only God had this power.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to that, his concern for his physical mother while on the cross discloses the suprahuman element in Jesus. The different use of the verbs (πληρώω in vv. 24 and 36 and τελειώω in v. 28) seems to bear a significant theological import in that the evangelist appears intentionally to switch the verb. Πληρώω, meaning “to fulfill,” is used to refer to the fulfillment of the Scripture while τελειώω, meaning “to complete,” is used in reference to the completion of Jesus’ work. In this passion narrative, the reader may notice the difference of their meaning in that τελειώω has the fuller meaning of completion--it is used where the body of Jesus is directly involved and signals the end of his physical existence. The perfect completion of the whole prophetic image would not be complete unless Jesus himself receives the drink, and the final completion of the work of salvation could not be achieved unless Jesus himself gives up his spirit. This would indicate that although Jesus works in obedience to God’s plan, he is characterized as sovereign in his own right: he willingly gives up his spirit in order to complete the salvation history, and only in his dying will the work of salvation be finished (τελειώω).

While revealing the divinity of Jesus is an important agenda in the mind of the evangelist, the evangelist also stresses the humanity of Jesus in order to bring the message of salvation home to people. That is why to the fourth evangelist the crucifixion is the hour of Jesus’ glorification; it reveals who Jesus is. He is not a figure in a fairy tale, but a flesh-and-bone person who goes through the grim crucifixion in order to secure

---

<sup>29</sup>Grassi, *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels*, 121.

salvation for humanity. The evangelist wants to tell that the prophecy of Messiah's coming throughout the history of Israel has been fulfilled and completed in the flesh-and-bone person of Jesus, thus securing the message of salvation. The presence of his mother at the cross serves as a living proof of the flesh-and-blood reality of Jesus; she is both the biological evidence and the strongest evidence in terms of cultural background since the relation between a mother and her son is the most affectionate bond of all in their world. The fact that Jesus carries his own cross on his shoulder (v. 17) also suggests that he was a person of flesh-and-blood. Both to express his being thirsty and to show love for his mother makes Jesus all the more a flesh-and-bone person granted with honor. According to the personality features in the first century Mediterranean world, to express one's feeling is a vital human trait and an attribute of the honorable man. Thus these facts will stress that Jesus is a person of flesh-and-blood indeed.

Compared to the description of the Synoptic Gospels, the fourth evangelist localizes the sign in the body of Jesus itself: When he was pierced, there came forth blood and water (19:34). This is the sign that Jesus has passed from this world to the Father and has been glorified, thus emphasizing Jesus' death as a real death.

The passion narrative seems to portray Jesus as Godman (he is not hyphenated God-man or Man-God) from the point of his arrest to his end on the cross. In this narrative, the divine Jesus was identified as the royal king and died as a paschal lamb along with his sovereignty.<sup>30</sup> What is similar to other signs in the Gospel is that he identifies himself by the phrase, ἐγώ εἰμι (18:8), a name which was reserved only for Yahweh in the Old Testament. The formulation of ἐγώ εἰμι and the Scriptural quotations seem to point that Jesus' action must be taken as the saving action of Yahweh. This

---

<sup>30</sup>The sovereignty of Jesus is displayed: Jesus' kingship is declared universally written in Aramaic (the common language of Judea), Latin (the official language of the army), and Greek (the lingua franca of the Empire). His intended moment of greatest shame by his enemies results in his glorified moment, which shows that Jesus is in control; the Scriptural quotation reveals that the minor characters do not act of their own accord but in accordance with the divine playwright; Jesus controls the hour of his life; Jesus voluntarily takes his own life by giving up his spirit.

points to the ontological unity of God and Jesus.

In this narrative Jesus is identified as a paschal lamb who fulfills the prophecy of the Old Testament which is confirmed by the fact that his legs were not broken like an ordinary paschal lamb. Especially hyssop that is used to offer a drink to the crucified Jesus (v. 19:29) renders support in that it was not only used in association with killing a paschal lamb (Exod 12:22) but also as an instrument to cleanse sins (Ps 51:7). The proper name Jesus is identified with the paschal lamb. The christological focus of this passion narrative is not to reveal the divine attribute of Jesus as ἐγὼ εἰμι, but to identify Jesus with the divine paschal lamb, because it is Jesus who will play the central role.

### Summary

John's passion account consists of a sequence of three acts--act one (18:1-27), act two (18:28-19:16a) and act three (19:16b-42).<sup>31</sup> In act one, Jesus is arrested, but secures safety for his disciples successfully by stepping forward (18:4-9), which evokes the shepherd image of Jesus. Then he was led to the high priest, which sets the stage for act two. Act two comprises the story of Jesus' trial before Pilate. Although Jesus was sentenced to the crucifixion at last, he was crowned and hailed a s king during his trial. In act three Jesus carries his own cross to the place of execution. Here three women stand at the center of the crucifixion and Jesus makes a provision for his mother and the Beloved Disciple. According to Stibbe, the two themes of Jesus-as-shepherd (i.e., laying down his life) in act one and Jesus-as-king in act two are continued and fulfilled by the narrative details of act three.<sup>32</sup>

By standing at the foot of the cross, the women are privileged to observe the characteristics of Jesus' death. First, they witness that Jesus was crucified around the

---

<sup>31</sup>John Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 96.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 117.

sixth hour on the day of Preparation (v. 14). Second, when Pilate places a *titulus* above Jesus' head in Aramaic, Latin and Greek, they witness the universal kingship of Jesus (v. 20). Third, they witness the Scriptural fulfillment concerning the Passover lamb ritual in the death of Jesus that not a bone shall be broken (v. 36). Fourth, they witness the selfless heroism of a divine figure in that Jesus thinks not of his own pain but of the needs of his mother (vv. 25-27).<sup>33</sup> Fifth, they witness that Jesus is in control of the whole situation in that he chooses the moment to die (v. 30).

These details which the women witness create an implicit commentary on the character Jesus and his death. The repeated mentioning of narrative chronology as “the day of Preparation of Passover (vv. 14, 31 and 42) leaves no doubt that the narrator is synchronizing the death of Jesus with the slaughter of the Passover lambs in the Temple. These details also characterize Jesus with divine attributes in that his word “it is finished” (v. 29a) brings the Scriptural prophecy into its fulfillment; he also chooses the moment of dying by giving up his spirit voluntarily (v. 29b). The women are the essential eyewitnesses concerning the death of Jesus. The fact that they stand at the center of the crucifixion qualifies them to be key eyewitnesses. The fact that women are named specifically adds authenticity and historical truth to their testimonies.

### **Mary Magdalene (20:1-18)**

Chapter 20 is divided into two parts. The first, verses 1-18 describes events at the tomb of Jesus. The main focus of this section is to witness the empty tomb and the risen Lord. The second, verses 19-29 depicts events in the house where the disciples are hiding for fear of the Jews. The main focus of the second section, however, seems to witness the forming and commissioning of the community of the New Covenant.

Here the writer will be concerned with the first part where Mary Magdalene is involved. The first section, verses 1-18 can be divided into three parts. Verses 1-2

---

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 197.

introduce Mary Magdalene. She came to the tomb and saw the stone rolled away. Presuming that the body of Jesus was stolen, she ran immediately to notify the other principals, Peter and the other disciple. Verses 3-10 record the reaction of the two disciples. After hearing Mary's report, both ran to the tomb. Both entered the empty tomb. While the status concerning Peter's faith is not mentioned, the Beloved Disciple is said to have believed when he saw the interior of the tomb. Upon viewing the empty tomb, the disciples returned home. Verses 11-18 reveal the resurrection, the return of Jesus to his own through the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. It is constructed in a tripartite sequence, each governed by a thematic participle: verses 11-15 stands under the sign of "weeping," as Mary stands outside the tomb, weeping; verse 16 is governed by Mary's "turning" in response to Jesus, which signifies a conversion of the pre-Easter disciple; verses 17-18 culminates in "announcing." Mary goes to the community to proclaim that she has seen the Lord.<sup>34</sup>

### **Characterization by Literary Aspects**

The comparison of the Easter event narrated by all four evangelists seems to be crucial because it may not only reveal the christological-theological emphases of the Fourth Evangelist but also helps to draw the characterization of Mary Magdalene in the Fourth Gospel.

The Easter events of the four Gospels include: Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-13.<sup>35</sup> The precise time of the visit to the tomb is described variously: very early on the first day of week, just after sunrise (Mark 16:2), after the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week (Matt 28:1), on the first day of the week,

---

<sup>34</sup>Sandra M. Schneiders, "The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene--A Transformative Feminist Reading," in *What is John*, vol. 2, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 159.

<sup>35</sup>Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 5.



very early in the morning (Luke 24:1), and early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark (John 20:1).

The number of the women is mentioned: Mark names three: Mary Magdalene, Mary of James, and Salome. Matthew lists two: Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary.” Luke mentions several women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary of James and “the others with them.” John gives only one, Mary Magdalene.

The purpose of the visit is stated: Matthew states that the women came to see the tomb (28:1). Both Mark (16:1) and Luke (24:1) state that the women came in order to anoint the body. John does not state the motivation for Mary’s visit to the tomb. Mary informs Peter and the other disciple saying, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him” (20:2).

The angelic appearance is mentioned: In Mark a young man dressed in a white robe sits at the right. In Matthew an angel sits upon the stone and invites the women to enter the tomb. In Luke, the women enter the tomb and find two men standing by them. In John Mary Magdalene upon her second visit looks into the tomb to see two angels-- one at the head, the other at the feet of where Jesus’ body had lain.

The message of the angel is stated: In Mark and Matthew the message begins with a typical biblical admonition against fear. The women were commanded to tell the disciples that they will see Jesus in Galilee. In Luke the women were struck with fear and are reminded of a prophecy of Jesus made in Galilee, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again” (24:7). In John the angels merely question Mary about the reason for her crying. Jesus later commands her to tell his brothers that he is ascending to God (20:17).

The women’s reaction to the message varies: In Mark the women say nothing to anyone due to fear. In Matthew they go with fear and joy to carry out the command of the angel. Upon returning, the women tell the eleven and the others. In John after making her first visit Mary Magdalene informs Peter and the beloved disciple that the

body of the Lord has been taken away. Upon her second visit, the angel asks her the reason for crying. Mary Magdalene responds, saying, “they have taken my Lord away and I don’t know where they have put him” (20:13). Even when Jesus asks her why she is crying, she answers by saying, “Sir if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him” (20:15). At that moment, the risen Jesus reveals himself to Mary Magdalene.<sup>36</sup>

These comparisons reveal the uniqueness of the Johannine resurrection narrative. The Synoptic accounts seem to be more concerned about the proclamation of the news about the risen Lord as the way to show divine vindication after a shameful execution on the cross, while John appears to be more occupied with the theological significance of the Easter events.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the Fourth Evangelist seems to be more focused on revealing christological-theological implications which the resurrection narrative contains. This observation can be supported by the unique role of Mary Magdalene when she states three times that she does not know where Jesus is (vv. 2, 13 and 15). It has been suggested that Mary’s triple statement carries a christological-theological overtone for the Fourth Evangelist. According to Schneiders, the question, “Where is the Lord?” is the governing theme for verses 1-18, which contains a theological importance for the Fourth Evangelist. In her words,

Mary Magdalene voices the question of all disciples caught in the pre-dawn darkness of the scandal of the cross, “Where is the Lord?” In fact the “where” of Jesus in John is not primarily spatial or geographical location. It denotes indwelling, the communion between Jesus and God and between Jesus and his

---

<sup>36</sup>These summaries are provided by Bode, *First Easter Morning*, 13-17.

<sup>37</sup>Schneiders states, “The death/exaltation completes the mystery of the revelatory Incarnation in such a way that there seems to be no need for a Resurrection” (Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Johannine Resurrection Narrative: An Exegetical and Theological Study of John 20 As a Synthesis of Johannine Spirituality,” vol. 1 (Ph.D. diss., Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1975), 68. Evans also argues that there is no place in the Fourth Gospel for resurrection stories since “lift up” means both physical elevation in space and spiritual exaltation to the Father, thus the ascent or exaltation has already taken place by Jesus’ being lifted up on the cross (C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1970], 116).

disciples.<sup>38</sup>

In line with Schneiders, Paul Minear also argues that the question of “where” has a theological significance. He states that “Mary’s triple confession in chapter 20 functions as the coda to a major symphonic theme that runs through the Gospel.”<sup>39</sup> It seems that the intention of the Fourth Evangelist to reveal the origin and destiny of Jesus is tied up with knowing where he came from and where he is going: In other words, to get to know where Jesus is going is to follow him, since that knowledge reveals who the Father is and who Jesus really is. According to Minear, this is the reason why the theme of seeking the redeemer is prominent in such verses as 1:39; 5:44; 7:34, 36; 11:56; 12:20; 13:33; 18: 4, 7, 8. Thus, Mary’s seeking is in tune with the theme of seeking the redeemer, and Jesus gives the final answer in 20:17, “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”<sup>40</sup>

The resurrection narrative is crucial in light of the whole Gospel because it anticipates Jesus’ ascension to the Father. This ascension completes the total event of Jesus’ life, i.e., his death and return to the Father. Only when this total event of Jesus’ life is completed, then comes the Spirit.

Chapter 20:1-18 reveals where Jesus is going and what it means to his disciples. For such revelation, Mary Magdalene is the main carrier in this passage. After the crucifixion, the disciples lose a sense of direction in their faith journey. They do not know what to do. “Where Jesus is” is the major concern of the confused disciples. It is Mary who voices that concern on behalf of the disciples and the readers.

Verse 1 establishes the temporal setting of the scene: “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark. . . .” That is, early on Sunday morning Mary Magdalene approaches the tomb alone. Agreeing with the observation of many Johannine

---

<sup>38</sup>Schneiders, “John 20:11-18,” 156-57.

<sup>39</sup>Paul S. Minear, “We Don’t Know Where. . . John 20:2,” *Int* 30 (1976): 131-32.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 129-30.

commentators that the “week” is a structural principle in the Fourth Gospel, Schneiders believes that the work of the New Creation [the total event of Jesus’ life] is accomplished in a symbolic week of weeks, recalling the week of the first Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:4.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, she asserts that John’s mentioning of the Resurrection “on the first day of the week” possesses a symbolic meaning. John’s designation of Easter not as “the third day” but as “the first day of the Week” presents it as the day of the New Covenant. She further explains,

The purpose of the New Creation was specifically to prepare a new people who would be espoused eternally by the glorified Jesus. In this light ch. 20 does constitute a week. It is the week of the Church in which the entire history of the New Covenant is lived proleptically. It begins on Easter with the inauguration of the New Covenant.<sup>42</sup>

With regard to the time specified, John emphasizes that it was still dark, while the Synoptics describe that the women approached the tomb in the light of early dawn. Schneiders also believes that “darkness” also has a symbolic meaning. According to the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:4, when darkness still covers the face of the earth, the New Creation is about to begin. In the same manner, “darkness” symbolically points to the fact that the glorification of Jesus has not yet touched his disciples, including Mary; thus Mary visits the tomb in darkness. The Light of the World has been handed over to enemies. The “night” has begun, and it lasts until the disciples see the Light of the World, the glorified Jesus. But “darkness” in this chapter refers to the early morning darkness, which signifies hope. After a while at dawn Mary Magdalene will see the Light, the glorified Jesus.<sup>43</sup> Her role is, then, to witness the presence of the risen Lord and communicate the Easter message to the believing community.

As the last sentence of John 19 places the reader at the new tomb in the garden where Jesus is buried, the spatial setting of John 20 finds Mary Magdalene approaching

---

<sup>41</sup>Schneiders, *The Johannine Resurrection*, 194.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 268-69.

the same tomb. The narrator has not disclosed any direct definition of the characters that would clarify how the reader should view them. Indirect presentation is, once again, the means of characterization for Mary Magdalene.

Up to the opening verse of John 20, the reader recognizes Mary Magdalene as a woman of faith because she has shown herself faithful to the end at the foot of the cross. The fact that all four Gospels list her name in witnessing the resurrection of Jesus and that both Peter and the other disciple believe her report concerning the witness of the empty tomb in John portrays her both as a faithful disciple and as an authoritative eyewitness concerning the resurrection of the Lord.

Mary's characterization as a faithful disciple is enhanced by v. 16, which constitutes a recognition scene. The insight, "To name is to reveal to a person his or her identity by relating to the person in terms of who he or she really is" is at work in this verse.<sup>44</sup> Here Jesus said to her, "Mary." Turning she cries out, "Rabboni." Not the voice of Jesus, but the use of name "Mary" enables her to recognize Jesus as "Rabboni," which characterizes her as Jesus' own sheep and Jesus as the Good Shepherd.<sup>45</sup> According to W. F. Albright, Mary's understanding of who Jesus really is is equivalent to that of Thomas' confession in 20:28 arguing that "rabbuni" corresponds to the rabbinic caritative of "rabbi," "ribboni," which was used almost exclusively for God.<sup>46</sup> If this perspective is appreciated, it not only emphasizes the faith of Mary but also strengthens the characterization of Mary as a disciple who has enjoyed a special relationship with Jesus and a revelation concerning the identity of Jesus.

The most important characterization with regard to Mary appears that she

---

<sup>44</sup>Schneiders, *The Johannine Resurrection*, 435.

<sup>45</sup>This theme is clearly treated in 10:3-5: Jesus calls his own sheep by name and they know his voice and they follow him.

<sup>46</sup>W. F. Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John," in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: In Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 158.

serves a representative role to reveal the Fourth Evangelist's theological understanding concerning the death and ascent of Jesus in relation to his community of faith, the church, as viewed from a broad perspective. This argument can be supported by the following observations. First, Mary's seeming misunderstanding about the empty tomb portrayed in her thrice-stated confessions (vv. 2, 13, 15) seems to emphasize the theological significance of Jesus' ascension in verse 17. Why did she not enter the tomb to make sure whether the body of Jesus was gone or not? If the Evangelist wanted to use Mary as an eyewitness to the empty tomb, he would have had Mary enter the tomb. Verse 2 seems to reveal the intention of the Evangelist by showing that he is more concerned with the fact that Jesus is not in the tomb than having Mary witness the empty tomb. Even after the Beloved Disciple saw the face cloth and believed, the Evangelist does not allow the disciple to respond to her statement and lets her continue to search for Jesus. Besides, what is the role of the angels who appear suddenly and disappear as suddenly only after a single query, "Woman, why are you crying" (v. 13)? Their query reveals the reason for Mary's crying, i.e., her desire to know "where is the Lord?" The two questions of the gardener, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" clinch the Evangelist's interest in Mary's preoccupation (where is the Lord?), which leads to a final answer in verse 17. The observations stated thus far point out that the interest of the Evangelist in Mary's preoccupation is to reveal where Jesus is. Both Minear and Schneiders argue that "where" (vv. 2, 13, 15) has a thematic importance in John's Gospel.<sup>47</sup> This theme has been developed from the beginning on up to chapter 20. In chapter 1:38, the first two disciples asked Jesus, "Rabbi, where do you dwell?" After that, the theme of "where" is addressed in many verses, 7:34, 36; 8:21, 22; 14:3, 4; 17:24. The question of "Where is the Lord?" is significant because it reveals the knowledge of the father and knowledge of where a person is himself going (12:35). This knowledge provides the light of life by

---

<sup>47</sup>Minear, "We Don't Know," 131; Schneider, "John 20:11-18," 157.

which followers may walk; otherwise they stumble along in the darkness.<sup>48</sup> This knowledge is characteristic of those who belong to Jesus: “His enemies cannot go where he goes (e.g., 7:34, 36; 8:21, 22), but his true disciples and servants can (e.g., 14:3, 4; 17:24).”<sup>49</sup> The answer for “where is the Lord?” is given in verse 17. “His going to his Father and their Father is an action by which he also comes to them and abides with them.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Mary appears to be employed to tell the effect on and meaning for believers of Jesus’ ascent after his glorification, not to explore what happened to Jesus after his death.

Second, it is significant to note the Fourth Evangelist’s unique presentation of the resurrection account. Mary is singled out to encounter the risen Lord in John.<sup>51</sup> Besides, only John places the tomb of Jesus in a garden and describes Mary’s ironic mistaking of Jesus for the gardener. The Easter message itself is reminiscent of the covenant language used in the Old Testament.<sup>52</sup> Based on this observation, Schneiders and others suggest that the garden has symbolic value, which is intended to evoke the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:4.<sup>53</sup> In the garden of Eden, God created his creatures and established the covenant. In the same way, through Easter Jesus established a New Covenant between himself and his disciples (the believing community). The content of the New Covenant is stated in 17, “Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” That is, according to

---

<sup>48</sup>Minear, “We Don’t Know,” 132.

<sup>49</sup>Schneiders, “John 20:11-18,” 157.

<sup>50</sup>Minear, “We Don’t Know,” 130.

<sup>51</sup>Based on the Synoptic accounts, “we don’t know” in John 20:2 is taken to be a true plural, which indicates the presence of other women.

<sup>52</sup>According to Schneiders, v. 17 recalls the covenantal formula of both Ruth 1:16 and Jer 31:34 (Schneiders, “John 20:11-18,” 166).

<sup>53</sup>Schneiders, *The Johannine Resurrection*, 205-06; E. C. Hoskyns, “Genesis I-III and St. John’s Gospel,” *JTS* 21 (1920): 215.

the Fourth Evangelist, the gift of God in Jesus is divine filiation, eternal life in the Spirit springing up from within the believers. The meaning and particular Johannine formulation of the Easter message is given only to Mary Magdalene, and she communicates it to the believing community. In this sense, Mary is charged with a mediating role for both parties, the believers and Jesus. She brings the lost disciples in contact with their Lord. She is the carrier of the New Covenant to the believing community.

### **Characterization by Cultural Aspects**

The two main cultural codes operative in this section are kinship and patron-client. The words of Jesus addressed to Mary in verse 17 spell out characteristics of the newly formed family of God. Its characteristics are expressed through the cultural codes of kinship and patron-client.

**Kinship/οἶκος.** At the crucifixion scene, Jesus puts his mother Mary in the care of his disciple, instead of his biological brothers. This act of Jesus gives a much deeper theological overtone to the crucifixion scene. Jesus establishes a new concept of the household of God, i.e., “the community of brothers and sisters in the faith” in which Jesus actually breaks down the closed familial structure based on human blood and forms a household of God based on his blood. For this newly formed family of God in faith to be truly effective, it needs some common bonds to tie them together as a family. Malina states, “without some sort of perception that a given individual and the person with whom she or he interacts are somehow attached to each other, somehow related to each other, interpersonal relational behavior remains extremely wary.”<sup>54</sup> This being the case, the use of words on the lips of Jesus such as “my brothers” and “my father and your father” is very significant in that they ascribe kinship status to the members of the community of

---

<sup>54</sup>Bruce Malina, “Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide for U.S. Consumers,” *BTB* 19 (1989): 134.



faith. Because of this proclamation of new relationship, the members have come to see that they are now related as kinsmen having the same father, God. To have the same father God will now serve as a centripetal force which will bind them together. As the word “kin” indicates, the members acquire a status similar to that of the natural kinsman and are supposed to act according to the ideal of brotherly love. In other words, Jesus wants his disciples to replicate the same value which biological kinship upholds, and to practice also its attendant role, relations, and responsibilities in the faith community, i.e., the family of God. This kind of relationship is called “fictive-kinship” because the status of kin is given not by birth but by attribution. Pitt-Rivers calls it “ritual kinship or ritualized forms of friendship.”<sup>55</sup> In this case the ritual rite is the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus went through the ritual rite of death and resurrection. Whoever goes through this ritual rite by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus is given the privilege that Jesus becomes brother, and God, whom he calls Father, becomes Father to them.

**Patron-client.** Jesus’ referring to the disciples as “my brothers” and to God as “my Father and your Father,” and “my God and your God” (v. 17) confers the unmistakable imprint of a patron-client cultural code upon this passage. This verse suggests that all the disciples of Jesus can be brokers as he has been thus far. This is indicated by Jesus’ placing himself on an equal status with his disciples by calling them his brothers and sisters and calling God his father and their father.

This passage also represents an important transformation of the very basis for the existing patronage system. First of all, women are included as legitimate candidates for brokerage within the community of faith. A woman’s claim to brokerage is based on favoritism displayed by her patron Jesus. “Showing favoritism is a main means of

---

<sup>55</sup>Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Pseudo-Kinship,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan & Co. and The Free Press, 1968), 8:408.

maintaining the personal attachment that patron-client relations requires.”<sup>56</sup> Mary is viewed as a superior broker because she is favored by the patron Jesus, thus communicating with him directly. The fact that she was given a special mission directly by Jesus indicates that she was chosen for a specific mission on behalf of the patron Jesus.. She functions as a broker in that she brings the lost disciples in connection with the risen Lord, being commissioned directly by Jesus to do so. She is the broker who leads the way to hope and excitement for the lost disciples.

Secondly, since the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is addressed with kinship terms, such as “brothers and sisters,” the community of faith is to be based on egalitarian relations. In other words, their social relations are supposed to function on the basis of an equal status as fictive kin in God’s household, differences in resources notwithstanding. Within the community of faith, the new patron-client relationships are commanded to be practiced: all the members are both patrons and clients. But each must act as a patron without any expectations of reciprocity in terms of gratitude and loyalty from one’s client. It is a radical departure from the concept of existing patron-client relationship where wealth, status, and power determine social relations. Within God’s household established through Jesus, “giving’ is no longer to be used to create clients; there are only patrons without clients.<sup>57</sup>

### **Characterization by Synkrisis**

The only character in John’s Gospel who is devoted to Jesus both during and after his crucifixion is the woman identified as Mary Magdalene. Her act of devotion not only illustrates the depth of her relationship with Jesus, it also provides an ideal of discipleship commitment which ought to be emulated by other Johannine characters.

---

<sup>56</sup>Bruce Malina, “Patron and Client,” *Foundations & Facets Forum* 4 (1988): 11.

<sup>57</sup>Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relation and the New Community in Luke-Acts,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 263-67.

**Jesus.** The unique aspect of Mary's relationship to Jesus is her willingness to serve Jesus even after his death. Her unique relationship to Jesus is clearly revealed in that she risks the danger of going by herself to the tomb while it is still dark, because identifying oneself as the follower of the crucified one involves taking a risk against one's security. Jesus also demonstrates his unique concern about Mary Magdalene in that he calls her by name, identifying her as his own sheep, and giving her the privilege to see the risen Lord first. Above all, Jesus himself commissioned Mary to tell his disciples an Easter message. This experience of Mary qualifies her to become an apostle to the apostles. Her experience meets two Pauline essentials of apostleship: (1) she had seen the Lord, and (2) she had been sent to proclaim him.<sup>58</sup>

**The twelve.** The contrast between Mary Magdalene and the other two disciples--Peter and the Beloved Disciple--leaves unmistakable imprint upon their characterization. While Mary weeps upon finding Jesus' tomb empty, the response of the two disciples is rather dull. Mary's grief and persistence in seeking the Lord is set against Peter's lack of faith and the beloved disciple's silence. Both disciples saw the empty tomb and went back home. The narrator, however, does not mention anything about Peter's belief. He rather states in verse 9 that they did not understand the Scriptures.

Although the narrator says that the Beloved Disciple believed, his response to the situation raises doubts about the notion that he represents the ideal of discipleship. First of all, although he believes more than Peter, what that "more" is we do not yet know. The text does not state what it is that the disciple sees and believes. Does the Beloved Disciple believe in the resurrection on the basis of the σουδάριον, or does he merely believe Magdalene's report of the empty tomb?<sup>59</sup> Second, verse 9 speaks against

---

<sup>58</sup>Stephen E. Dollar, "The Significance of Women in the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. Diss., The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983), 157. See also Brown, "Roles of Women," 692.

<sup>59</sup>Dorothy A. Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in

the view that the disciples had come to resurrection faith. It implies that neither disciple knew what to make of the empty tomb because they did not yet understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. Third, the fact that he evidently spoke to no one about either the empty tomb or the risen Lord and left Magdalene in her uncertainty and grief raises doubts about his being the first to believe in the resurrection.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps readers should wait until chapter 21 in order to confirm Peter and the Beloved Disciple's faith in the risen Lord. This observation seems to portray Mary Magdalene as the first disciple who came to faith in the risen Lord because she is the first to confess, "I have seen the Lord" while faithfully fulfilling her commission given by Jesus (v. 18).

The use of the title "the Lord" on the lips of Mary is significant in that Mary is the first person who uses this title to address Jesus. Later it appears on the lips of Thomas (20:28), and is then used by the Beloved Disciple (21:7). These three statements reflect their conviction about Jesus. This being the case, Mary seems to be the first one who came to Easter faith.

**Other women.** Personality traits of Mary Magdalene stand above those of the other Johannine women. Although Mary the mother of Jesus stood near the cross, she did not demonstrate her desire to seek the Lord, and thus failed to receive the Easter Christophany. Though the Samaritan woman had a quality of persistence in seeking the Messiah, hers is not comparable to that of Mary Magdalene who continued to search for the Lord in spite of the darkness and the danger of being identified as the follower of the crucified one. Both Mary of Bethany and her sister Martha were characterized as women of faith and devotion toward Jesus. Thus they might have come to the scene of the

---

John 20," *JSNT* 58 (1995): 39; Colleen M. Conway, *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel: Gender and Johannine Characterization* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 189; Minear, "We Don't Know," 127.

<sup>60</sup>Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith," 39; Minear, "We Don't Know," 127-28.

crucifixion, but they evidently did not stand as near to the cross as Mary Magdalene did. Neither does the reader hear of their presence at the empty tomb.

The fact that both disciples ran to the empty tomb upon hearing the report of Mary indicates that Mary Magdalene had established credentials and authority as a disciple of Jesus before and during the crucifixion. The role of Mary Magdalene in John stands out when compared to that of the Synoptics. First, the Fourth Evangelist does not state Mary's motivation for coming to the tomb, while Mark (16:1) and Luke (24:1) state that the women came in order to anoint the body, and Matthew (28:1) has the women coming to see the tomb. Second, Mary is singled out among many women for witnessing the empty tomb in John. The Synoptics clearly state that she was accompanied by other women. Besides, the plural verb *οἶδαμεν* (John 20:2) indicates that Mary Magdalene was speaking for more than one person when she told Peter and the Beloved Disciple of her discovery.<sup>61</sup> This observation infers that Mary is speaking for the group of women. In light of these facts, Mary's role in the Johannine account of the empty tomb is as the representative of the women in being a witness to their risen Lord. The commission she is given directly by the Lord qualifies her to be an eyewitness concerning the presence of the risen Lord. Her witness, however, entails a significant meaning. As an actual witness she was being sent to announce to the community the significance of the event (v. 18). In other words, she functions as an authoritative foil to unfold the inner meaning of Jesus' risen presence in relation to his ascension and the establishing of a new, covenant community through the Spirit. She prepares the reader of the Gospel for the giving of the Spirit in the following scene, by which Jesus' ascension is completed.<sup>62</sup>

### **Christological Implication**

The Fourth Evangelist clearly claims Jesus as  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  in John 1:1, 18 and

---

<sup>61</sup>Dollar, "The Significance of Women," 149.

<sup>62</sup>Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith," 46.

20:28.<sup>63</sup> The understanding of the Fourth Evangelist that Jesus is God has been attested during his earthly ministry and summed up in the statement of faith--“My Lord and my God” in John 20:28. The evangelist’s understanding that Jesus is God is also attested by the structure of the Gospel. There are two examples of *inclusios*--1:1 and 1:18 at the beginning and end of the Prologue, and 1:1 and 20:28 at the beginning and end of the Gospel.<sup>64</sup> The first *inclusio* is concerned about the nature of the pre-existent Logos as God and reveals the pre-existent Logos as the incarnate Logos. Thus, its ending marks the transition from the Prologue to the account of Jesus’ earthly ministry. In other words, the transition bridges the gap between the pre-existent Logos as God and the incarnate Logos; the transition provides the logical explanation of how and why the pre-existent Logos became the incarnate Logos, and attaches to him the proper noun Jesus as his identification. From this moment the incarnate Logos is to be identified as Jesus.

The second *inclusio* frames the whole Gospel. Here the life of Jesus involves a progression from pre-existence to his earthly life and then to his risen state as God; Jesus started out as pre-existent God, has been attested as God through his earthly ministry, and is again hailed as God after death and resurrection. The main motif of the ascension narrative (20:17) seems to confirm what has already been claimed in the Prologue (1:1-18) and proved during the earthly ministry of Jesus concerning who Jesus really is. First of all, the phrase “I am returning to my Father” brings the reader back to the Prologue 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” thus connecting Jesus to the pre-existent Logos. Jesus, after completing his work, now returns to the Father. Returning to the Father clearly states who Jesus really is, since

---

<sup>63</sup>Although 1:18 is debatable--whether it should be read as μονογενῆς θεός or μονογενῆς υἱός, Mastin makes a convincing argument that μονογενῆς θεός has a better claim to be the original text (B. A. Mastin, “A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 22 [1976]: 37-39).

<sup>64</sup>Mastin argues that three verses--1:1, 18 and 20:28 are placed at strategic points in the gospel to reveal Jesus as God from three different points of view. He goes further, saying that these two *inclusios* are formed in order to give the prominence to the term θεός by the Evangelist (ibid., 42-43).

the Father is identified as God. The divine being who was with God in the beginning was the Logos. And the only divine being who is said to return to the Father is Jesus, the incarnate Logos. Therefore Jesus is equated with the pre-existent Logos, who is God. Second, the theme of returning to the Father ties itself with the mission of the coming of the incarnate Logos (1:12-13), which would identify Jesus as the pre-existent Logos. Especially verse 12 states, “yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Returning to the Father clearly implies that Jesus is the one who came from God, thus he now returns to the Father where he was before. Only in this ascension could Jesus speak of the disciples as brothers because his ascension ushers the coming of the life-giving spirit (16:7), which will enable “those who believe in his name” to enjoy sonship of God due to the fact that they now have the same life as Jesus’ own. This event is seen as the fulfillment of the promise of sonship announced in 1:12. Only those who possess the life-giving Spirit, which comes from both the Father and the Son have the power to become the children of God because they share the same life with both of them. In other words, the birth as sons and brothers is directly associated with the creative sufflation of the Holy Spirit (20:22).<sup>65</sup> In this sense, the ascension motif is seen directly connected with the theme of “having the power to become the children of God” in 1:12. This connection can easily identify Jesus as the pre-existent Logos, who came in flesh in order to give the right to become the children of God to those who believe in his name. These observations mentioned so far, therefore, seem to indicate that these three verses (1:1, 18 and 20:28) are placed at a significant point in the Gospel in order to draw out the theological intention of the Fourth Evangelist that Jesus is God.

While presenting Jesus as the incarnate Logos or God appears to be the

---

<sup>65</sup>Minear’s observation that the ascension marks the fulfillment of the promise of sonship is correct because only after ascension, the life-giving Spirit will come (16:7) and give eternal life which enables “those who believe in his name” to enjoy sonship of God (Miner, “We Don’t Know, 133).

underlying theme for the christological scheme which the Fourth Evangelist undertakes in the Gospel, to ascribe the divine attribute of “Lord” to Jesus seems to be the christological emphasis in this resurrection narrative. The meaning of the word κύριος is defined as “having power,” or “having legal power,” “authorized,” “empowered” ; also “decisive,” “important,” and “principal.”<sup>66</sup> According to Hellenistic background, the term κύριος was used both in religious and secular contexts to refer to gods/godesses and rulers such as kings and masters. As far as the Jewish background is concerned, it is used in place of the proper name of God in the Septuagint. When κύριος is used as a designation for Yahweh, it denotes a summation of the beliefs of the Old Testament that Yahweh is the exclusive holder of power over the cosmos and all men, the Creator of the world and the Master of life and earth.<sup>67</sup>

The Johannine use of ὁ κύριος seems to ascribe the lordship of God to Jesus. First, although no other characters confess Jesus as Lord until chapter 20, the narrator clearly identifies Jesus as Lord (6:23; 11:2). The knowledge of the narrator is most trustworthy because he is omniscient, and thus has access to the knowledge of Jesus. Second, the term appears on the lips of Jesus (13:13-4), which proves that the disciple-rabbi relationship can give the designation “Lord” in particular situations a significance which far exceeds the dignity of an ordinary teacher. Verse 14, “now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.” demonstrates that this rabbi compels the disciple to absolute voluntary obedience by virtue of his special authority. In this case it is clear that the title κύριος goes beyond a polite form of address and actually becomes the expression of an absolute claim.<sup>68</sup> Third,

---

<sup>66</sup>G. Quell, “κύριος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing 1965), s. v. 1041-42.

<sup>67</sup>Yahweh as “Lord” of the whole earth is stated in Mi 4:13; Zech 4:14; 6:5; Ps 97:5; Josh 3:11, 13 (G. Quell, “κύριος,” 1062).

<sup>68</sup>Cullmann supports this second point of understanding (Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959], 205).



another piece of evidence which may support this line of reasoning is the use of slave and master language in referring to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples (John 15:15, 20). Jesus can actually make the disciples his servants, which grants him absolute authority over the disciples. This seems to endow Jesus with special authority, which far exceeds that of an ordinary teacher.<sup>69</sup> Fourth, the fact that Mary Magdalene ascribes a christological title “Lord” to Jesus after the resurrection is significant. Witherington observes,

While the ultimate ground for the confession of Jesus as Lord seems to go back to something Jesus alluded to during his ministry, the formal point of departure for such a confession by the disciples was their experiences of their risen Lord on and after Easter Sunday, as well as their reception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>70</sup>

This is the understanding in which the significance of the resurrection narrative lies. His resurrection can justify undoubtedly the lordship of Jesus over everything. Two fundamental attributes of God are His having both creative and eschatological power.<sup>71</sup> Creative power creates being out of non-being, while eschatological power raises the dead, judges, and refers to having life in oneself.<sup>72</sup> The initial claim that Jesus has God’s complete eschatological power is specifically made in 5:18, 21-29. What was claimed in 5:21-29 is formally demonstrated through Jesus’ self-resurrection. It is the greatest proof that he has “life” in himself, which demonstrates that Jesus has God’s eschatological power.<sup>73</sup> It is also the proof that Jesus will dwell among the disciples through the Holy Spirit exercising executive leadership over them. He is the sustaining power of the

---

<sup>69</sup>Although Witherington argues that the title “Lord” is more likely used as a term of respect, in light of the observation made above, it can mean more than a polite form of address (Ben Witherington III, “Lord,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992], 487).

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>71</sup>See the section on “Lord” in chapter two of Johannine key christological themes.

<sup>72</sup>Neyrey states that eschatological power refers to “raising the dead,” “judging,” and “having life in oneself.” This eschatological power characterizes God as “Lord” (Jerome H. Neyrey, “My Lord and My God”: The Divinity of Jesus in John’s Gospel,” in *SBL 1986 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1986), 156.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 159.

believing community in the sense that Jesus unites them as one in Spirit and leads them, so that they can be able to manifest Himself through them to the world.. He is the legitimate Lord because it is he who prevents them from perishing and gives them eternal life through his death and resurrection. Then, the title “Lord” is the appropriate name for Jesus. It is after this demonstration that the evangelist records that the title “Lord” is properly given to Jesus through the lips of his disciples. First of all, Mary Magdalene proclaims that she has seen the Lord (20:18). Jesus’ lordship reaches its climax on the lips of Thomas, “My Lord and my God” (20:28). From then on, the title “Lord” finds its way on the lips of other disciples (21:15-21). In this way, the christological title “Lord” is given to Jesus, and the divine attribute of lordship over all creation is appended to the proper noun Jesus.

### **Summary**

Chapter 20:1-18 consists of three scenes that are woven together by the presence of Mary Magdalene: Mary’s discovery of the empty tomb (vv. 1-2), the scene of Peter and the Beloved Disciples at the empty tomb (vv. 3-10) and Mary’s encounter with the risen Jesus at the tomb (vv. 11-18). The first scene leads to the second scene as Mary discovers the empty tomb and reports to the principal disciples, i.e., Peter and the Beloved Disciple. At the second scene, upon hearing Mary’s report, Peter and the Beloved Disciple set out running to the tomb and find it empty. According to Minear, the basic function of the second scene is to corroborate Mary’s discovery of Jesus’ missing body.<sup>74</sup> Thus the disciples’ encounter with the empty tomb in the second scene sets up the third scene between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. At the third scene, Mary encounters the risen Lord and receives a special commission to tell the disciples that he is returning to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God (v. 17).

Mary’s role is both to witness the presence of the risen Lord and to receive the

---

<sup>74</sup>Minear, “We Don’t Know,” 127-28.

revelation contained in verse 17. The revelation is the establishment of a new relationship for the believing community through Easter. Through the Easter events, Jesus dwells in the disciples through the Spirit, thus giving the power for the disciples to become the children of God. Thus, the God whom Jesus calls Father is the Father of both the disciples and Jesus. The phrase, “my Father and your Father” supports the strong sense of identification between Jesus and the disciples. The term “my brothers” expresses that the disciples are Jesus’ brothers and sisters.<sup>75</sup> Only after the resurrection are the disciples of Jesus called “my brothers.”<sup>76</sup> The other revelation--that Jesus is from above--is revealed by his ascent to where he was before creation (1:1). The Johannine ascent presupposes the descent. Jesus is ascending to be with God where he was as the pre-existent Logos. His ascent establishes a new believing community united with Jesus through the Spirit. Although the disciples have received a new grace that they can now be called brothers and sisters of Jesus through Easter, they recognize him as “Lord,” which becomes a christological title with its full force, acclaiming Jesus as a divine figure.

Apart from the divine identity revealed in this passage, the glorified Lord is still human. He can be mistaken for a gardener (v. 15). The fact that Mary clings to the resurrected Lord attests his tangible body (v. 17). Later he is revealed to Thomas as the divine Logos-become-flesh by letting him touch his hands and side (v. 27).

Thus in this final section, the divine identity of Jesus both as God and the pre-existent Logos is confirmed. As Jesus the pre-existent Logos comes back to dwell in the disciples through the Spirit: his lordship over the believing community is revealed. The woman Mary Magdalene plays a key role in establishing that identity.

---

<sup>75</sup>Schneiders, “John 20:11-18,” 166; Lee, “Partnership in Easter Faith,” 45.

<sup>76</sup>In fact, this is the first time in John’s Gospel, the disciples of Jesus are called brother (v. 17).

## CONCLUSION

Chapter one of this dissertation acknowledged the neglect within Johannine scholarship for the part played by the Gospel's women characters in the development of the christological theme. Chapter two sought to describe major christological themes prevalent in the Gospel, which provided the background for understanding the Christology in each episode involving women. Employing a methodology outlined in chapter one, the episodes involving women were examined in chapters three and four to determine the main features of their characterization and their role for the development of christological themes. It is now time to review the results of this analysis in an attempt to ascertain how the women contribute to the development of christological themes. Since the basis for the determination of the women's narrative function will be the character analyses of chapters three and four, the categories of analysis employed there will also be used here.

### **Characterization by Literary Aspects**

As mentioned in the chapter on methodology, direct characterization provides the most accurate information about the characters because it is given by the omniscient narrator of the Gospel, who is most reliable.<sup>1</sup> Indirect characterization, on the other hand demands the involvement of the readers as they are led to ponder what the women's speech, actions, and choices might mean. The Fourth Evangelist scarcely utilizes the direct means of characterization. Thus he depends on the indirect means of characterization mostly for the presentation of his women characters in the Gospel. What the indirect means of characterization utilizes most is the character traits of the women.

---

<sup>1</sup>Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 19-20.

Most often, the Evangelist let the actions and the speech of the women speak for themselves. In the public place of a wedding ceremony, Mary with the authority of mother makes a request to her son Jesus without consulting his opinion and gives the servants an instruction to follow. This character trait characterizes Mary fulfilling her role as the “mother of an important son” because her request was the catalyst for Jesus’ giving the sign, which revealed his glory (i.e., he is honored in public). The Samaritan woman is characterized as a morally loose woman not because she married five times, but because the man whom she now lives with is not her legal husband (4:18). The focus of the narrative along with the social context of her day, however, does not seem to favor this portrayal, but rather characterizes her as a poor widow who is in need of comfort and the deliverance of hope. The fact that she has a long theological debate with Jesus portrays her to be an educated woman possessing common-sense knowledge about her religion. As a result, she draws out the characterization of Jesus as the Messiah.

As far as Martha and Mary are concerned, they are characterized as the friends of Jesus. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Jesus, leaving the house while Mary sat at home. This character trait describes her as acting and reacting spontaneously. Above all, the profession of faith equivalent to that of Peter (Matt 16:16) is placed on her lips. This seems to characterize Martha to be one of the main carriers of the Fourth Evangelist’s distinctive theology. Although the reader may not recognize a significant role on the part of Mary in this pericope, Mary is characterized as Jesus’ own sheep. The fact that she fell at his feet in response to the voice of Jesus (11:32) aids such characterization. It describes Jesus as the Good Shepherd calling his own sheep and Mary as his own sheep placing herself in a position of total trust in him.<sup>2</sup>

In chapter 12, Mary is characterized as independent and bold. Without consulting either with her sister Martha or her brother Lazarus, she pours an expensive

---

<sup>2</sup>See 93 above.

perfume worth a year's wages over the feet of Jesus. The reader is given a portrayal of Mary as one who makes decisions by herself regarding what she can do or cannot do. Pouring an expensive perfume worth a year's wages over the feet of Jesus reveals the character traits of Mary: She is faithful and devoted to Jesus. At the same time the amount of perfume used up seems to indicate that Mary is a person of means. As Jesus interprets her act of anointing in relation to his death, her role is to emphasize the implication of his death as the paschal lamb. The amount of the perfume used aids the characterization of Jesus that he is not an ordinary rabbi nor is his death ordinary. The noticeable character trait concerning Martha in this pericope is found in her action of serving. The Evangelist uses διακονέω, referring to Martha's serving. This seems to reveal a character trait that Martha has already demonstrated--the quality of being a disciple who truly serves and follows.

In chapter 19, women stand near the cross. In spite of the macabre scenery, the women are not only present but also stand beneath the cross. This portrays the women as faithful disciples of Jesus. The role of the mother of Jesus together with two named women is to give a historical account concerning the death of Jesus. Besides, they have become the participants witnessing the formation of the believing community. That is, the fact that the mother of Jesus was given to the care of the Beloved Disciple reveals the establishment of a new concept of the family of God. Faith in Jesus transcends biological relationships.

In chapter 20, Mary Magdalene is given the first christophony. She is also given a specific commission by the risen Lord to bring the Easter message to the disciples. In terms of the commission delivered to the disciples, she seems to be given a quasi-apostolic role. She is the first one ascribing the title "the Lord" to Jesus, thus characterizing Jesus as the Lord of the believing community.

### **Characterization by Cultural Aspects**

The analysis of cultural aspects found in each pericope demonstrates that they elucidate implicit communication that modern readers would not necessarily glean from ancient texts. The cultural context is indispensable for evaluating characters where direct presentation is not offered for them. Actions and words in texts may imply different things, depending upon the cultural context. For example, a knowledge of patron-client relations reveals a characteristic trait of the Johannine women as effective brokers of God's blessings. It is by fulfilling the request of his mother that Jesus performs the first of his signs and in so doing defends his honor as the divine patron. Following this revelation, the disciples become the first characters who can be identified as children of God.<sup>3</sup> The mother of Jesus at the crucifixion scene hints further that she would be an effective broker in the fact that she as an authoritative eyewitness will draw many into the believing community. Through the mediation of the Samaritan woman, the Samaritans are brought to Jesus. Many of the Samaritans believed in him and recognized Jesus as the Savior of the world. The woman performs an effective brokerage on behalf of her people and Jesus successfully defends his honor as the divine Messiah of the world. Martha and Mary act as brokers on behalf of their brother, who needs the help of the divine patron. Through raising Lazarus, Jesus revealed his glory, and many Jews who had come to visit Mary believed in him. Here Jesus successfully defends his claim as "the life and the resurrection," thus sustaining his honor. In so doing he proves himself to be the divine patron who exceeds far more than an ordinary patron. Mary Magdalene is also given a privilege to be a broker on behalf of Jesus. She brings the Easter message, which symbolizes hope and joy to the disciples who are caught in the darkness of the pre-dawn Easter due to the crucifixion.

---

<sup>3</sup>According to 1:12, the belief of the disciples indicated in 2:11 characterize them as the children of God.

### Characterization by Synkrisis

The central focus of the materials related to women seems to be devoted mainly to the revelation of who Jesus is. Thus, the way a character relates to Jesus reveals a christological understanding of the Fourth Evangelist. Since every character in John interacts with Jesus, the comparison and contrast of those characters becomes a proper means for coming to an understanding of who Jesus is.

The mother of Jesus is specifically chosen to further the characterization of Jesus. After the Prologue, the Evangelist seems to embark on a goal of proving his claims about the person of Jesus point by point, which would lead people to faith in him, so that they may receive eternal life. The best way to achieve such a goal is to give an eyewitness account concerning who he is through what he does. His intention in employing women characters for such a christological scheme is seen in the roles which the women play. The mother of Jesus as a character is unique compared to other characters, which may point out that she is a character with a specific purpose. First, her maternal role is a central aspect of her character. The narrator refers to her only as “the mother of Jesus,” i.e., her identity is always established by her relationship to Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Second, the mother of Jesus appears both at the beginning (2:1-12) and the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry (19:25-27). This points out that her role as the mother is to give a historical eyewitness account both to the first and final revelation of Jesus’ glory. Her role as the mother to be an eyewitness concerning who Jesus is is intensified when one considers that “in neither of these scenes is the mother of Jesus confronted with the choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus, a point that distinguishes her from virtually all the characters in the Gospel except John the Baptist.”<sup>5</sup> Third, the mother of Jesus is

---

<sup>4</sup>Colleen M. Conway, *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 69.

<sup>5</sup>Adele Reinhartz, “The Gospel of John,” in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 2:569.



constructed as a uniquely knowledgeable character in the sense that she shares insight with the narrator that the wine ran out, which causes the plot to move forward. In spite of the refusal of Jesus (v. 4), she addresses the servants at the wedding with the command, “Do whatever he tells you” (v. 5). This fact contributes to the characterization of “the mother of Jesus” as the persistent mother. No one can replace her role in the sense that she pushes Jesus to act in terms of her maternal authority.

Like the mother of Jesus who plays a crucial part in the initial revelation of Jesus’ divine glory, the Samaritan woman has a role in revealing his true identity as the Messiah. The intention of the Evangelist to choose this specific woman with a specific purpose is clearly revealed. First, ἔδει [it was necessary] points out the divine necessity for Jesus to go through Samaria.<sup>6</sup> Second, the Evangelist chooses a Samaritan woman with whom the Jews do not associate themselves. Third, unlike the mother of Jesus, it is Jesus who shows initial interest to reveal his identity as the Messiah, evoking the theme of the incarnate Logos who came into the world with the divine initiation in order to give people the power to become the children of God.

The Samaritan woman reveals her own unique character traits. She is characterized as an independent woman. In other words, she is not identified in her relationship to a male for she does not have a husband (v. 17). She also shares the same character trait as another woman, i.e., the mother of Jesus, in that her persistency leads to the revelation of Jesus. As a result, the Samaritan woman takes up the role played by the mother of Jesus in chapter two. As the mother of Jesus helped the disciples to become the children of God through faith in Jesus, the Samaritan woman also leads her own people to Jesus, which will give them the power to become the children of God. On the other hand, this woman is contrasted with male disciples, i.e., their silence before Jesus

---

<sup>6</sup>Brown argues that δεῖν in v. 4 like those in chapter three (vv. 7, 14 and 30) expresses God’s will or plan is involved (Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:169. Also see Conway, *Men and Women*, 105.

(v. 27) stands in contrast to the woman's persistent questions (vv. 20 and 25). O'Day notes the lack of engagement and participation on the part of the male disciples, which are central elements in the revelatory process. By not asking Jesus at this juncture, they keep themselves removed from immediate engagement with Jesus.<sup>7</sup> This fact may indicate that revelation and women are closely and intentionally connected in this Gospel.

In terms of interaction with Jesus, Martha is articulate and active, while Mary is silent and quiet. Martha is portrayed as a typical Johannine woman like the mother of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in terms of her active engagement with Jesus. Putting aside "mourning," which is fit into cultural norms at present, Martha took the initiative in going out to Jesus. Her active engagement with Jesus ascribes her with a unique role in the narrative. Martha confesses, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." According to Ben Witherington, Martha's confession is a fuller and perhaps more satisfactory statement than the Petrine confession in John 6:68-9. In this sense, Martha is portrayed as the most complete believer, though she may have had only limited understanding about the person of Christ.<sup>8</sup> Noting the parallel between Martha's confession here and that of Peter in Matthew 16:16, Brown goes further to state that it exemplifies the Fourth Evangelist's deliberate tendency to give women a role traditionally associated with Peter.<sup>9</sup> This observation seems to indicate that the Fourth Evangelist chooses women intentionally to propagate his christological scheme that he has in mind. Here again the woman is the recipient of revelation concerning who Jesus is.

Unlike other women, Mary seems to be withdrawn when relating herself to Jesus. All she does in the narrative of the raising of Lazarus is to weep and to utter only

---

<sup>7</sup>Gail O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 74.

<sup>8</sup>See 99 above.

<sup>9</sup>Raymond Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *TS* 36 (1975): 191.

one sentence, copying what her sister Martha said, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (11:32). She is also portrayed as a woman overwhelmed by grief. She, however, also demonstrates a positive character trait in that she rose up immediately and obediently went to see Jesus when he called her. As a result, Mary leads the Jews who followed her to belief in Jesus (11:45), which would identify her positively with other women in their role of leading others to belief in Jesus.

It is remarkable to note that the Fourth Evangelist does not let go of even one woman without fulfilling a role in his portrayal of Jesus. In chapter 12, the focus of the narrative is on Mary. In this chapter, Mary actively engages herself with Jesus. Mary’s act of anointing the feet of Jesus and wiping it off with her hair demonstrates the qualities of a good disciple in her. Unlike other women, Mary is portrayed as the counterpart of a male disciple Judas. Judas participates negatively in the revelation of Jesus while Mary assumes the leading positive role. Judas’ negative role provides Jesus with an opportunity to interpret Mary’s action in relation to his death, thus intensifying the characterization of Jesus as the paschal lamb. Mary’s anointing foreshadows Jesus’ burial, which highlights the paschal ministry of Jesus. That is, anointing points to the revelation that like the paschal lamb Jesus is set apart to be sacrificed for the world. Like other revelations, this revelation is also given to the woman. Throughout this anticipation of the paschal mystery Mary of Bethany plays a leading role not only as a witness but also as faithful participant. At the crucifixion scene, four women stand beneath the cross. In fact they are so near to the cross that Jesus can actually speak to one of them, his mother. As she is taken to the care of the Beloved Disciple (19:27b), her role as the mother of Jesus in the narrative ends. Her role is most unique in that she is the physical mother of Jesus. Her role as the mother of Jesus necessitates her presence at the crucifixion scene. She must be present at the time of her son’s death. Besides, she must be present at the crucifixion scene in order to witness his final hour of glory just as she

witnessed the initial revelation of Jesus' glory. In chapter two, Jesus felt that his hour had not yet come. It is Mary, however, who set the journey toward that hour in motion. Her presence is thus all the more appropriate when the journey is complete, at the moment of the hour itself. The revelation that the glory of Jesus is the divine glory is given to the mother of Jesus both in the beginning and at the end of his earthly ministry, at the hour of his glorification.

The role of Mary Magdalene as a herald of the resurrection is so unique, that no other character can replace her. The significance of her role lies in the fact that the ascension news that she proclaims reveals not only the divine origin of Jesus but also the beginning of a new covenant community established by the Holy Spirit.

### **Christological Implication**

Although many scholars have tried to grasp Johannine Christology one way or another, they eventually had to deal with what is called "high/low christology" or "the christological unity/disunity."

For instance, admitting the christological tension inherent in the Gospel, C. K. Barrett attributed the problem to a reflection of the evangelist's creative mind, able to consider an idea from one angle and then from another. This suggests that the approach that the evangelist took to define the truth embodied in Jesus was a dialectical one. He argues that "a dialectical Christology, such as John's, is not a dissection of a static Christ, but the analysis of a living, moving, speaking Christ. . . ,"<sup>10</sup> which would imply that there is not a fixed set of christological tenets found in the Gospel of John. Thus he does not try to diminish the tensions or to harmonize the discord. Rather, he attempts to provide an explanation for how such apparently contradictory styles of thinking may have occurred.

---

<sup>10</sup>For further insights, see C. K. Barrett, *New Testament Essays* (London: S. P. C. K., 1972), 65. In "dialectic" approach, "concepts are looked at first from one side then from another, definitions are proposed, attacked, defended, abandoned, or improved, opposite points of view are canvassed and, sometimes at least combined" (ibid., 49).

The dialectic noted by Barrett is very evident in the Johannine materials involving women. The first sign [the wedding in Cana] appears to be placed strategically, not only to complete the testimony about the incarnate Logos but also to mark a new beginning in the life of the incarnate Logos as he performs a miraculous sign. This first sign validates the work of Jesus as the mission of the incarnate Logos by revealing his true identity. It is his glory which highlights the divine origin of Jesus, thus establishing a key christological theme in this passage. This glory is not an ordinary glory or honor which humans possess, but the glory of the incarnate Logos, which draws people into faith in what he claims to be--the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father (1:14). The incarnate Logos shares the glory with the Father because his glory originates from the Father. The glory of the Son is the glory of the Father. The unity of their glory is evident in John 17:1, "Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." Because of the nature of this glory, the Evangelist claims that the pre-existent Logos came in flesh in the person of Jesus. On the other hand the mother of Jesus is understood as the medium by which the divine Logos came in flesh and began to dwell among his people. In the beginning of the passage, Jesus is presented as the son of Mary and performs the miraculous signs through the mediation of his mother. She is the surest confirmation on which the Evangelist can base his claim that the divine Logos came in flesh. But through the miracle he performs, his true identity which transcends his human identity as the son of Mary is revealed. In so doing, his mission is validated. Through the first sign, the divine attribute as the incarnate Logos is firmly appended to the proper noun Jesus.

It is the Samaritan woman's persistent effort in getting to know the truth which draws out the characterization of Jesus. Jesus is referred to as the water of life (4:14), the prophet (v. 19) and the Messiah (v. 26). The key christological emphasis falls on the title of Messiah. The attribute of Jesus as "the water of life" can be subsumed under the title of the Messiah since to give "life" is characteristic of the Messiah. The purpose of the

Messiah's coming is to give life as it is attested in the conclusion of the whole Gospel (20:31).

The christological title as the prophet who can teach about the true worship finds its fulfillment in the greater title of the Messiah, who can tell everything to the people. As the summation of who he is, Jesus reveals himself to the Samaritan woman using the emphatic phrase *ἐγὼ εἰμὶ*. As mentioned previously in the exegesis of the Samaritan woman, the "I am" saying is interpreted in the context of Isaiah 52, where almost a direct parallel is found. In Isaiah 52, the Lord had said that in that day the people would know that it is he who speaks. In this case, Jesus' words seem to make him out to be the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that the people would know his name, and also know that it is he who speaks. As a result, although the predicate of the "I am" saying is supplied from the context in 4:26, Jesus reveals himself as Messiah by using the "I am" saying. In other words, Jesus takes the words of Yahweh upon himself. This indicates that Jesus' identity as the Messiah is therefore an identity which includes an identification with Yahweh.

The title "Messiah," however, expresses the humanity of Jesus. The divine God can not establish a human contact unless he himself becomes one of us. We humans learn only humanly. In fact the Scripture records that the Messiah will come like one of us (1:45). Therefore, the divine identity of Jesus is revealed through the "I am" saying, which identifies him with Yahweh, while the Messiah emphasizes the humanity of Jesus who can be tired and thirsty as well. Thus, the proper noun Jesus obtains both attributes: One is the divine name "I am" and the other is the Messiah who relates himself to humans in order to offer them eternal life. The "I am" saying validates not only the divine identity of the Messiah but also his work as the Messiah.

In the raising of Lazarus, two women (Martha and Mary) function again as the mediators of the signs wrought by Jesus because they are the ones who asked Jesus for

help. This passage demonstrates its heavy emphasis on the revelation of Jesus, as the christological titles are juxtaposed to interpret each other mutually. Martha confesses, “you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” The combination of the titles clearly indicates that Jesus is not the Messiah whom the Jews expect to come as the son of David, but the Messiah whom Christians believed had come as the Son of God.

This Messianic aspect expresses the divine origin of Jesus, whose origin is not of this world, but above the world. Furthermore, Jesus’ claim through the “I am” saying that he is the resurrection and life indicates the identification of himself with Yahweh.<sup>11</sup> The attributes of “the resurrection and life” is not characteristic of an ordinary Rabbi, but rather of the divine Messiah, because only the divine Logos is said to be the source of life (1:4-5) and this life is also shared with the Father (5:27). Therefore, the divine attribute as “the resurrection and life” directly connects Jesus with the pre-existent Logos. Thus, Jesus takes the name, “I am,” which is reserved only for God himself. It is his name shared with God the Father, and no other name will be fitted for expressing his nature of God.

The christological theme of “glory” also supports this understanding. In the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he performs his first sign at the wedding of Cana in Galilee. There, when Jesus performs the first sign, he is said to reveal his glory. In the raising of Lazarus, Jesus couples God’s glory and his sign. In other words, when Jesus raises the dead Lazarus, it not only reveals God’s glory but also his glory.<sup>12</sup> To see the glory of the Son is at the same time to see the glory of God. It is impossible to see the one without the other. He who sees the Son sees the Father also (14:9). The first sign together with the sign of the raising of Lazarus, therefore, makes it clear that the signs are

---

<sup>11</sup>See “Ego Eimi” in chapter two of the christological features.

<sup>12</sup>Verse 4 in chapter 11 states, “It is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” Its implication is that when God’s glory is manifested, so is the Son’s glory. For more detail, see the section of “the Glory of God” in chapter two of christological features.

demonstrations of Jesus' glory on earth. This glory points to Jesus as the incarnate Logos who shares the same nature as God the Father.

The christological title "Christ" in combination with that of "Son of God" reveals the humanity of Jesus, i.e., the human bears the divine, while the "I am" saying in conjunction with "life" points out the divinity of Jesus. It is the divine nature of glory that connects Jesus with the incarnate Logos who is said to reveal his glory among his people in the Prologue (1:14). Through this passage, the christological titles, "the Christ" and "the Son of God" are firmly attached to the proper name Jesus. Thus the proper name Jesus becomes the symbol for the complete Christian confession of faith. Yet his divine attribute as "I am" and "the resurrection and the life" is also appended to the proper name Jesus, thus equating him with the pre-existent Logos, who is the source of life. And his glory is to give evidence to Jesus as one who shares both the same life and the same glory with God the Father.

As far as the anointing by Mary of Bethany is concerned, the evangelist does not reveal any further characteristics of the divine Logos, but rather seems to focus on the role of the divine Logos. Only the proper noun "Jesus" plays the central role, as he is identified with the paschal lamb.<sup>13</sup> In this passage the role of Mary is not only to hint the arrival of the hour of Jesus' death and glorification by identifying Jesus with the paschal lamb through anointing but also to draw the characterization of the name "Jesus." The messiahship will be completed only when Jesus is glorified on the cross. This work takes the name "Jesus," which combines the characteristics of both the divinity and the humanity. It is accorded with the Johannine theology of salvation in that only the divine Messiah [the role of both the incarnate Logos and Messiah] can secure the salvation for humanity. The Evangelist seems to draw the attention of readers to the name Jesus alone

---

<sup>13</sup>For identifying Jesus as the paschal lamb, see above the introductory section on "Mary of Bethany (12:1-8).



because it is through this name that salvation is given to humanity. Acts 4:12 summarizes well the meaning of the name Jesus, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." In this same manner, the name Jesus represents the key christological emphasis which the Fourth Evangelist draws, and through her anointing Mary of Bethany anticipates the salvific effect which the name Jesus will bear after his death.

In the crucifixion scene the declaration for the salvific effect of the name Jesus finds its justification. The passion narrative, beginning from chapter 18 to the end, highlights the meaning which the name Jesus represents. Except for the christological "I am" saying at the beginning of the passion narrative (18:5, 6, and 8), no other titles are used to characterize Jesus. The "I am" saying, however, is the self-identification of Jesus, which reveals his divinity. The "I am" saying itself does not add any other divine attribute to the proper name Jesus. Therefore, the role of the "I am" saying appears here to further the characterization of Jesus as God. Thus, the Evangelist can make the claim of the supra-human quality of Jesus depicted later in the crucifixion scene.

At the same time, the Evangelist does not forget that Jesus is human. His biological mother stands beneath the cross of Jesus. Other women also give testimony concerning his human suffering. They together witness the humanity of Jesus in that they saw a sudden flow of blood and water coming from his side (19:34). The mother of Jesus together with the Evangelist is the eye-witness from the beginning to the end--the beginning of his work as the Messiah, and the fulfillment of his claim on Messiahship. The "I am" saying is set alongside the humanity of Jesus, thus coupling both the divinity and the humanity in the name Jesus. Thus the name Jesus, as in the previous section, also bears the christological emphasis in this passage, and the highlight of the section falls on the characterization of the name Jesus, which is finally in effect to give salvation through his death.

In the resurrection narrative, Mary draws out the characterization of Jesus as the Lord over all believers. She is the first one who refers to Jesus with the title “Lord” in a confessional sense. The *inclusio* formed by 1:1 and 20:28 indicates that the risen Jesus as pre-existent Logos is God. In the following verse, the divine attribute of the pre-existent Logos is given as the source of life, the Lord of all creation. After the resurrection, the Evangelist reclaims the lordship of the pre-existent Logos over all creation in the name Jesus. What the Evangelist intends to say is that the lordship of Jesus over all creation is more true for the believers. Jesus has a stronger claim on the believers because it is he who gives them life through his death and resurrection. That is why after the resurrection the disciples start to call him “the Lord.” The role of Mary is significant in that she is the first one who ascribes the divine attribute of “Lord” to Jesus. She is the first one who acknowledges his lordship over the believers (20:18). She brings this Easter message to the disciples in obedience. To say it in a different way, she is given the privilege of being the first one who recognize the lordship of Jesus over the believing community and proclaims it to them on behalf of Jesus.

The observations concerning the materials related to women demonstrates both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. Women not only depict the human Jesus but also are engaged with Jesus in order to draw out the divine attributes of Jesus. In so doing, they connect the divine Logos with the human Jesus by drawing out the divine attributes of the pre-existent Logos. In other words, they function as agents who conjoin the divinity and the humanity under the proper noun Jesus.

The proper name Jesus embraces both aspects, “God as the Logos” and “God in flesh” (the incarnate Logos). For example, the divine name ἐγὼ εἰμί, and the divine attributes, such as the source of the living water, the bread of life, the resurrection and life and Lord, identify Jesus with God, while God in flesh is subjected to the plane of humanity: he is the son of Mary, tired and thirsty, and is handed over to the Romans to

be crucified as the Messiah. As these two noun phrases--the pre-existent Logos (the divine God) and the incarnate Logos (God in flesh)--are joined in the proper name Jesus, their own unique attributes become inseparable. Thus the Fourth Gospel demonstrates a constant tension upheld in the portrayal of the Johannine Jesus. The women confirm the humanity of Jesus. At the same time, they play a mediating role in the narrative, so that the human Jesus is transcended to the divine Jesus. This helps readers to formulate an underlying principle on which Johannine theology seems to be built; namely, that Jesus is the God-man.

### **Conclusion**

A socio-narratological approach opens a new avenue for the examination of the biblical texts to modern interpreters. Compared to the studies done on Luke-Acts, the Gospel of John witnesses less fruitful research in the avenue of a socio-narratological approach of its texts (a narrative-critical approach combined with both sociological and cultural anthropological insights). If the Gospel of John is examined by a narrative-critical approach along with cultural codes, the natures of characters and the implications of their actions will become clearer, thus enhancing the understanding of the Gospel as a whole. Future studies might include: (1) investigating other cultural codes that may be inherent in the texts; and (2) integrating these available cultural codes for examining other biblical texts and characters. For example, a socio-narratological approach can be applied to the Johannine signs alone. The signs generally recognized are: (1) the changing of water into wine (2:1-11); (2) the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54); (3) the healing of the lame (6:1-15); (4) the healing of the blind man (chapter 9); and (6) the raising of Lazarus (chapter 11). The same method can also be applied to a specific literary unit such as a section, pericope, or paragraph. For example, the Fourth Gospel is full of inclusions: the Prologue (1:1-18) and the conclusion (20:31) seem to be intended to form an inclusion in terms of the identical terms found in both sections (the term "life"

is found in both 1:4 and 20:31 and “to believe” both in 1:7 and 20:31). The fact that the Prologue itself is a single pericope is indicated by an inclusion. The multiple occurrences of the title “God” in the first two verses and its double occurrences in the last verse certainly form an inclusion.<sup>14</sup>

The materials in discussion clearly demonstrate that there is a constant tension between the portrayal of the humanity of Jesus and the divinity of Jesus. His very own existence on the earth [God in flesh] is itself dialectical in nature. In the passages in discussion, the emphasis on the humanity of Jesus appears from the first. The women’s engagement with Jesus confirms the humanity of Jesus most vividly: Jesus is the son of Mary; Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that he is thirsty; Jesus cries before Mary of Bethany; Jesus’ body is anointed.

The Johannine Jesus, who does not express his pain on the cross, is also presented as the son of Mary; and Mary Magdalene clings to Jesus after the resurrection. The women’s engagement with Jesus also leads to the revelation of Jesus’ divine identity. Jesus’ sign reveals both his glory and the glory of God the Father. When Jesus is glorified, so is God. Their glory points to the oneness of both Jesus and God the Father (17:1). Jesus takes the name “I am,” which is reserved for Yahweh himself. The materials related to the women start with the presentation of the human Jesus and through the mediating roles of the women conclude with the implication that Jesus is God. These observations provide the reader with an underlying principle that the Johannine presentation of Jesus is a God-man Christology. The women function to draw out this underlying principle of Christology. This dissertation confirms the dialectical nature which the proper name Jesus bears. The proper name Jesus is the key which holds the dialectical tension, but also the key for resolving the tension. Therefore, this fact helps to

---

<sup>14</sup>For the multiple attestations of inclusions in the Fourth Gospel, see George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1987), 93-97.

recognize an underlying principle (Jesus is God-man) from which other christological themes spring fourth. As a result, the contribution of this writing seems to lie in the fact that it may have confirmed a fundamental principle that can serve as the window from which one's understanding of other interests of the Gospel related to Christology may be ventured.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Anderson, Paul. *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996.
- Archer, Leonie J. *Her Price is beyond Rubies: The Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.
- Ashton, John. *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Translated by Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.
- Ball, David Mark. *'I Am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Bar-Efrat, Shimon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. Bible and Literature Series, 17. Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1989.
- Barrett, C. K. *The Gospel According to St. John*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *New Testament Essays*. London, S.P.C.K., 1972.
- Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Translated by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987.
- Berlin, Adele. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1983.
- Bode, Edward L. *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970.

- Boers, H. *Neither on this Mountain Nor in Jerusalem: A Study of John 4*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Booth, Wayne. *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Borchert, Gerald L. *John 1-11*. The New American Commentary, vol. 25a. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996.
- Botha, J. Eugene. *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*. New York: E.J. Brill, 1991.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to John I-XII*. The Anchor Bible, vol. 29a. New York: Doubleday, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*. The Anchor Bible. Vol. 29b. New York: Doubleday, 1970.
- Bultmann, R. *Theology of the New Testament*. Edited by K. Grobel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.
- Campbell, J. K. *Honor, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Carroll, Michael P. *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Conway, Colleen M. *Men and Women in the Fourth Gospel: Gender and Johannine Characterization*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Conzelmann, Hans. *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969.
- Cullmann, Oscar. *The Christology of the New Testament*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959.
- Culpepper, Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

- Davies, M. *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament--Supplement Series, 69. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992.
- Davis, John. *The People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.
- Docherty, Thomas. *Reading (Absent) Character: Toward a Theory of Characterization in Fiction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: University Press, 1963.
- Dollar, Stephen. "The Significance of Women in the Fourth Gospel." Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983.
- Fehribach, Adeline. *Women in the life of the Bridegroom: A Feminist Historical Literary Analysis of the Female Characters in the Fourth Gospel*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Fiorenza, Elizabeth Schussler. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad, 1983.
- Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955.
- Fowler, J. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.
- Goins, Kevin D. "The Narrative Function of the Women in Mark." Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995.
- Gowler, David. *Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts*. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.
- Grassi, Carolyn M., and Joseph A. Grassi. *Mary Magdalene and the Women in Jesus' Life*. Kansas City, KS: Sheed & Ward, 1986.
- Grassi, Joseph A. *The Hidden Heroes of the Gospels: Female Counterparts of Jesus*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989.
- Harner, P. B. *The 'I Am' of the Fourth Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Harvey, W. J. *Character and the Novel*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1965.
- Hendriksen, W. *The Gospel of John*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976.



- Higbie, Robert. *Character and Structure in the English Novel*. Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984.
- Hochman, Baruch. *Character in Literature*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Ilan, Tal. *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Loader, William. *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989.
- Macauley, Robin, and George Lanning. *Technique in Fiction*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- Maccini, Robert Gordon. *Her Testimony is True: Women as Witnesses according to John*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
- Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Malina, Bruce, and Jerome Neyrey. *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew*. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1988.
- Malina, Bruce J., and Richard L Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Meeks, Wayne. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Mlakuzhyil, George. *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1987.
- Moltmann-Wendel, Elisabeth. *The Women Around Jesus*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reflection on the Gospel of John*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988.

- O'Day, Gail R. *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Petersen, Norman. *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993.
- Poffet, Jean Michel. et al. *Jesus et la Samaritaine (Jean 4,1-42)*. Suppléments aux Cahiers Evangile. Paris: Cerf, 1995.
- Powell, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Rhoads, David, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.
- Richter, J. "Ani Hu und Ego Eimi." Ph.D. diss., University of Erlangen, 1956.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shalomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. New York: Methuen & Co., 1983.
- Schillebeeckx, E. *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World*. London: SCM Press, 1980.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolph. *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 2. New York: Crossroad, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 3. New York: Crossroad, 1990.
- Schneiders, Sandra. "The Johannine Resurrection narrative: An Exegetical and Theological Study of John 20 as a Synthesis of Johannine Spirituality," 2 vols. Ph.D. diss., Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1975.
- Shelton, Jo-An. *As the Romans Did: A Source Book in Roman Social History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Smith, Moody. *The Theology of the Gospel of John*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Springer, Mary Doyle. *A Rhetoric of Literary Character: Some Women of Henry James*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

- Stagg, Evelyn, and Frank Stagg. *Women in the World of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.
- Stibbe, Mark W. G. *John*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *John's Gospel*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Swidler, Leonard. *Biblical Affirmations of Women*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979.
- Thompson, Marianne M. *Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Tovey, Derek. *Narrative Art and Act in the Fourth Gospel*. JSNT Supplement Series, 151. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Williams, Joel F. *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

### Articles

- Albright, W. F. "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John." In *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: In Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, 153-171. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956.
- Alen, S. "Glory." In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. Exeter, U.K.: The Paternoster Press, 1976.
- Bauer, D. R. "Son of God." In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992: 769-75.
- Beattie, T. "A Discipleship of Love: Mary of Bethany and the Ministry of Women." *Month* 30 (May 95): 171-75.

- Beck, David R. "The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization." *Semeia* 63 (1993): 143-56.
- Bietenhard, H. "Lord." In *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*. Edited by Colin Brown. Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1986.
- Bishop, E. F. F. "Mary (of) Clopas and Her Father." *Expository Times* 73 (1961-62): 339.
- Brown, Raymond E. "The Gospel according to John--An Overview." *Chicago Study* 37 (January 98): 5-15.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Passion according to John: Chapters 18 and 19." *Worship* 49 (1993): 127-134.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel." *Theological Studies* 36 (1975): 688-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Characterization and Christology in Matthew: Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew." In *Society of Biblical Literature: 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. David Lull, 588-603. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Burnett, Fred W. "Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels." *Semeia* 63 (1993): 1-28.
- Cadman, W. H. "The Raising of Lazarus." In *Studia Evangelica* 1, Texte und Untersuchungen 73. Edited by F. L. Cross, 423-34. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959.
- Caird, G. B. "The Glory of God in the Fourth Gospel: An Exercise in Biblical Semantics." *New Testament Studies* 15 (1968-69): 265-77.
- Carmichael, C. M. "Marriage and the Samaritan Woman." *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980): 332-46.
- Collins, Matthew S. "The Question of Doxa: A Socioliterary Reading of the Wedding at Cana." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 (1995): 100-09.
- Collins, R. F. "Characters Proclaim the Good News." *Chicago Study* 37 (January 98): 47-57.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mary in the Fourth Gospel: A Decade of Johannine Studies." *Louvain Studies* 3 (1970): 99-142.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Representative Figures in the Fourth Gospel." *Downside Review* 94 (1976): 26-46 and 118-32.
- Culpepper, Alan. "Reading Johannine Irony." In *Exploring the Gospel of John*. Edited by Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Story and History in the Gospels." *Review and Expositor* 81 (1984): 467-79.
- Danove, Paul. "The Characterization and Narrative Function of the Women at the Tomb (Mark 15, 40-41.47; 16, 1-8)." *Biblica* 77 (1996): 375-97.
- Derrett, J. Duncan M.. "Lazarus, The Body, and Water: John 11, 44; Isaiah 58, 11; Numbers 20, 9-11." *Biblica et Orientalia* 193 (1991): 169-82.
- De Jonge, M. "Jewish Expectations About the 'Messiah' According to the Fourth Gospel." *New Testament Studies* 19 (1985): 246-70.
- Domeris, W. R. "The Johannine Drama." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 42 (1983): 29-35.
- Du Rand, J. A. "The Characterization of Jesus as Depicted in the Narrative of the Fourth Gospel." *Neotestamentica* 19 (1985): 18-36.
- Eslinger, L. "The Wooing of the Woman at the Well: Jesus, the Reader and Reader-Response Criticism." *Literature and Theology* 12 (1987): 173-82.
- Exum, J. Cheryl. "'Mother in Israel': A Familiar Figure Reconsidered." In *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty Russell, 73-82. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985.
- Fishelov, David. "Types of Character, Characteristics of Types." *Style* 24 (1990): 422-39.
- Foster, George. "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good." *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965): 293-315.
- Freed, Edwin D. "The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 401-09.
- Hoskyns, E. C. "Genesis I-III and St John's Gospel." *The Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1920): 210-218.

- Giblin, C. H. "What Was Everything He Told Her She Did? (John 4.17-18, 29, 39)." *New Testament Studies* 45 (1, 99): 148-52.
- Gilmore, David. "Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982): 175-205.
- Gowler, David. "Characterization in Luke: A Socio-Narratological Approach." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19 (1989): 54-62.
- Grassi, Joseph A. "The Role of Jesus' Mother in John's Gospel: A Reappraisal." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 67-80.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Women's Leadership Roles in John's Gospel." *Bible Today* 35 (May 97): 312-17.
- Hakola, Raimo. "A Character Resurrected: Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel and Afterwards." In *Characterization in the Gospel*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, 221-63. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement series 184. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
- Hengel, Martin. "Maria Magdalena und die Frauen als Zeugen." In *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel*, ed. O Betz et al.: 243-56. Leiden: Brill, 1963.
- Johnson, D. H. "Life." In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Edited by. Kenneth DeRuiter et al. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Jose, Paul. "The Role of Gender and Gender Role Similarity in Reader's Identification with Story Characters." *Sex Roles* 21 (1989): 697-713.
- Kim, J. K. "A Korean Feminist Reading of John 4:1-42." *Semeia* 78 (1997): 109-19.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 87-103.
- Lee, D. A. "Abiding in the Fourth Gospel: A Case-study in Feminist Biblical Theology," *Pacifica* 10 (1997): 123-36.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in John 20." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 58 (1995): 37-49.
- Lieu, J. M. "The Mother of the Son in the Fourth Gospel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (January 1998): 61-77.

- Loader, W. R. G. "The Central Structure of Johannine Christology." *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 188-216.
- Malina, Bruce J. "Dealing with Biblical (Mediterranean) Characters: A Guide For U.S. Consumers." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19 (1989): 127-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Gospel of John in Sociolinguistic Perspective." In *Center for Hermeneutical Studies: Hellenistic and Modern Culture*, ed. Herman C. Waetjen, 1-23. Berkeley, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Individual and The Community--Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9 (1979): 126-38.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mother and Son." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 20 (1990): 54-64.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Patron and Client." *Foundations & Facets Forum* 4 (1988): 2-32.
- Malina, Bruce, and Jerome Neyrey. "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World." In *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey, 25-65. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publisher, 1991.
- Martin, T. W. "Assessing the Johannine Epithet 'the Mother of Jesus.'" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60 (1998): 63-73.
- Mastin, B. A. "A Neglected Feature of the Christology of the Fourth gospel." *New Testament Studies* 22 (1976): 32-51.
- Maynard, A. "ΤΙ ΕΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΙ." *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 582-86.
- McVann, Mark. "Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet." In *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey, 333-59. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991.
- Meeks, Wayne. "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism." In *The Interpretation of John*, ed. John Ashton. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.
- Minear, Paul. "We Don't Know Where. . . John 20:2." *Interpretation* 30 (1976): 125-37.
- Moloney, Francis. "The Faith of Martha and Mary." *Biblica* 75 (1994): 471-93.
- Moxnes, Halvor. "Honor and Shame." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 23 (1993): 167-76.
- Neyrey, Jerome H. "Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative." *Semeia* 68 (1994): 113-37.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "My Lord and My God": The Divinity of Jesus in Johns' Gospel." In *SBL 1986 Seminal Papers 25*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.
- Niebuhr, Ursula M. "Glory." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 14 (1984): 49-53.
- O'Day, Gail R. "John." In *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, 293-304. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Role of the Beloved Disciple." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9 (1979): 58-65.
- O'Grady, John. "The Human Jesus in the Fourth Gospel." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 14 (1984): 63-66.
- Painter, J. "The Enigmatic Johannine Son of Man." In *The Four Gospels 1992*, ed. F. Van Segbroeck, 1869-87. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992.
- Panier, L. "Cana et Temple: La pratique et la théorie: Une lecture Semiotique de Jean 2." *Lumiere et Vie* 41:37-54.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian. "Pseudo-kinship." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills. New York: Macmillan & Co. and The Free Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host: Introduction to the Study of the laws of Hospitality." In *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology*, ed. J. G. Peristiany, 13-30. Paris: Mouton & Co., 1968.
- Reinhartz, Adele. "The Gospel of John." In *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, vol. 2, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, 561-600. New York: Crossroad, 1994.
- Reinmuth, E. "Lazarus and His Sisters--What was John's Point?: Narratological Observation on John 11.1-44." *Review of Theological Literature* 1 (1999): 127-38.
- Robinson, B. P. "The Anointing by Mary of Bethany (John 12)." *Downside Review* 115 (1997): 99-111.
- Schneiders, Sandra M. "John 20:11-18: The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene--A Transformative Feminist Reading." In *What is John?*, vol. 3, ed. Fernando F. Segovia. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 12 (1982): 35-45.



- \_\_\_\_\_. Schottroff, Luise. "The Samaritan Woman and the Notion of Sexuality in the Fourth Gospel." In *What is John?*, vol. 2, ed. Fernando F. Segovia. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Scroggs, Robin. "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement." In *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults--Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, vol. 2, ed. J. Neusner. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
- Seim, Turid Karlsen. "Roles of Women in the Gospel of John." In *Aspects on the Johannine Literature*, ed. Lars Hartman and Birger Olsson, 56-73. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1986.
- Theissen, K. "Jesus and Women in the Gospel of John." *Direction* 19, no. 2 (1990): 52-64.
- Tolmie, D. F. "The Characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 69 (1998): 57-75.
- Trudinger, P. "Of Women, Weddings, Wells, Waterpots and Wine! Reflections on Johannine Themes (John 2.1-11 and 4.1-42)." *St Mark's Review* 151 (1992): 10-16.
- Walker, Norman. "The Reckoning of Hours in the Fourth Gospel." *Novum Testamentum* 4 (1961): 69-73.
- Whitters, M. F. "Discipleship in John: Four Profiles." *Word and World* 18, no. 4 (1998): 422-27.
- Williams, Ritva H. "The Mother of Jesus at Cana: A Social-Science Interpretation of John 2:1-12." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997): 679-92.
- Witherington, Ben, III. "Lord." In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Kenneth DeRuiter et al. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

## ABSTRACT

### A SOCIO-NARRATOLOGICAL APPROACH TO JOHANNINE CHRISTOLOGY THROUGH CHARACTERIZATION OF WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 1996-2001

Mi Sug Kim (Kang)  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001  
Chairperson: D. John Polhill

This dissertation examines the role of Johannine women: Mary the mother of Jesus (2:1-11), the Samaritan Woman (4:1-42), Martha and Mary (11:1-44), Mary of Bethany (12:1-8), the Women at the Cross (19:25-27), and Mary Magdalene (20:1-18), thus suggesting an alternative approach to a better understanding of Johannine Christology. Chapter 1 introduces the justification of this study, scholarship and issues related to women's study, the limitations which this dissertation faces, and the methodology, a socio-narratological approach that this dissertation utilizes to draw out the characterization of Johannine women.

Chapter 2 provides some of the major key christological concepts in the Gospel of John and introduces various approaches which have been taken for the study of Johannine Christology, pointing out their limitation.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with each pericope related to women specifically. Chapter 3 examines the women who appear in the Book of Signs (chaps. 1-12). Chapter 4 examines the women who appear in the Book of Passion (chaps. 13-21). These two

chapters draw out the characterization of women each according to literary aspects and cultural aspects, and through *Synkrsis*. Then each pericope in these two chapters is concluded with christological implication that the characterization of women bears.

Chapter 5 reflects on the result of this study, thus providing an alternative understanding to Johannine Christology.

## VITA

Mi Sug Kim (Kang)

### PERSONAL

Born: September 9, 1962, South Korea  
Parents: Jong Man Kang and Sang Soon Im  
Married: Jin Hwan Kim, December 2, 1989  
Children: Secil, born July 30, 1990  
Sejee, born May 5, 1992  
SeHyun, born January 8, 1997

### EDUCATIONAL

High School, South Korea, 1978-1980  
University of Ulsan, South Korea, 1981-1985  
M.A. in Linguistics, Graduate Center and City University of New York,  
1986-1989  
M. Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992