The Function of the Portrayal of the Debate in the Gospel of Mary: Making Authority Claims by Appealing to the Contemporary Models of Authority

by

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Abstract

In the *Gospel of Mary*, the later scene of the debate between the two parties, Mary and Levi on the one hand and Andrew and Peter on the other hand (*Gos. Mary* 17:10-19:2; PRyl 463), has been interpreted with the predetermined, biased framework, as a source of the historical information. The assumed inter-group or intra-group polemical context has colored the interpretation of what Peter says in the story world (17:18-22; PRyl 463 recto lines 12-14). This study argues that such interpretation fails to keep the larger narrative in view and does not account for the plot, characterization, and literary techniques employed to impact the implied reader. This study takes an alternative, narrative-critical approach to the text, by reading the text independently of the assumed polemical framework. From a narrative-critical perspective, the debate scene should be read as a part that contributes to the whole, not as a resource for the historical information. Peter’s role and his relationship to Mary in the narrative should be understood not only by his negative attitude towards Mary in the debate scene, but also by his initial positive attitude towards her (10:1-6; POxy 3525 lines 14-17). Whether the implied author wishes the implied reader to perceive Peter as the object of a polemic should be verified by
textual evidence and the implied author’s point-of-view crafting. When approached narrative-critically, the portrayal of the debate is fundamentally concerned with the narrative’s rhetoric of persuasion. The function of the debate scene is meant to make truth-authority claims by appealing to the authority of divine revelation and the authority of the shared knowledge about Mary, the Savior’s favorite, according to the two models of authority, which were widely used in antiquity (i.e., revelatory authority and literary authority). The role of the debate scene was not to counter the historical opponents’ irreconcilably different views on private revelation and female leadership, but to persuade the implied reader, identified with the reluctant disciples represented by Peter, to accept the risen Savior’s teaching as true and authoritative, and thus to carry out courageously the Savior’s commission despite the threat of suffering.
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 History of Scholarship ...................................................................................................... 6
   1.2 Texts, Provenance, and Dating ...................................................................................... 21
   1.3 Genre and Literary Unity ................................................................................................. 27
   1.4 Definition and Discussion of ‘Gnosticism’ ...................................................................... 33
   1.5 Summary and Conclusion ............................................................................................... 39

2. Methodological Clarification: Narrative Criticism ............................................................... 40
   2.1 Premises and Procedure of Narrative Criticism .............................................................. 40
      2.1.1 Text as a Self-Contained Whole ............................................................................. 41
      2.1.2 Text as a Motivated Discourse ............................................................................ 42
      2.1.3 The Generation of Meaning in a Dialogical Process ............................................. 43
      2.1.4 The Role of Cultural Context in the Generation of Meaning ............................... 46
   2.2 Theories of Characterization, Emplotment, and Point-of-View Crafting ....................... 47
      2.2.1 Characters and Characterization ......................................................................... 47
      2.2.2 Plot and Emplotment ......................................................................................... 50
      2.2.3 Point-of-View Crafting ....................................................................................... 53
   2.3 Expected Reading: Identifying the Textual and Extratextual Clues .............................. 56
   2.4 Summary and Conclusion ............................................................................................... 58

3. Extratext for the Implied Reader: Models of Authority in Antiquity ................................. 60
   3.1 The Means: Authority of Divine Revelation .................................................................. 60
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Divine Revelation in Jewish Literature</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Divine Revelation in Non-Jewish Literature</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The Agent: Authority of the Tradition of a Cultural Heroic Figure</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 The Phenomenon of Pseudepigraphy and Its Authorizing Function</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 The Extratextual Information about Mary a Cultural Heroic Figure</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Gospel of Mary: How to Make Truth-Authority Claims</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Comparison of the Greek and Coptic Versions</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Comparison of POxy 3525 and BG 8502 9:5-13</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Comparison of PRyl 463 and BG 8502 17:5-19:5</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 The Structure of the Text</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The Function of the Narrative Framework</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The Function of the Characters and Point-of-View Crafting</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Exegesis: “Is She More Worthy than Us?”</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1 Initial Situation (7:1-9:5a)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2 Initiation of Tension (9:5b-12a)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3 Development of Tension (9:12b-18:15a)</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.4 Resolution of Tension (18:15b-21a)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.5 Final Situation (18:21b-19:2)</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Conclusion: the Divine Revelation of Mary the Savior’s Favorite</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Summary and Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 136

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...................................................................................................................... 139
Chapter 1
Introduction

The *Gospel of Mary* records the scenes of the interesting interactions among several characters: the risen Savior, the disciples as a whole, Peter, Mary, Andrew, and Levi. What has been the center of focus in the previous studies on the *Gospel of Mary* is the later scene of the debate between two parties, Mary and Levi on the one hand, and Andrew and Peter on the other hand, about the validity and reliability of the Savior’s teaching conveyed by Mary (*Gos. Mary* 17:10-19:2; PRyl 463).¹

Andrew raises a question about the reliability of its contents of the teaching, by saying that it is ‘new’ or strange in comparison with what is already known to the disciples (17:10-15; PRyl 463 recto 5-10). Peter raises a question about the reliability of the recipient Mary, by asking why the Savior gave such message not openly to ‘us’ (i.e., the male disciples whom Peter deems worthier than Mary), but secretly to a woman (17:16-22; PRyl 463 recto 11-15). Mary asks Peter, while weeping, if he thinks that she is lying about the Savior (18:1-5). Levi intervenes to

advocate for Mary. He told Peter not to despise her because the Savior deemed her worthy (18:6-12; PRyl 463 verso 1-6). Levi further emphasizes Mary’s esteemed status as one whom the Savior knew well and loved (18:12-15; PRyl 463 verso 7-8). 2

In the previous studies on the Gospel of Mary, the scene of this controversy among the characters is predominantly dealt with as a source of information about the past. The present study is different from previous studies, because its primary interest is not in ‘the world behind the text’ but in ‘the world within the text.’ 3 This study will problematize the dominant scholarly approach to the scene of the debate among the characters in the later part of the Gospel of Mary, which treat it as a ‘window’ to the past. The debate scene’s meaning has been influenced by the previous studies’ dominant historical concerns, including the assumed frame of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox binary, and feminist biblical studies’ particular interest in gender issues and a quest for the historical Mary Magdalene. 4 The survey of the previous scholarship will be conducted to give an overview of how the scene has been interpreted through such biases.

The inclusion of the scene in the Gospel of Mary has been mainly understood as pointing to the text’s purported anti-Peter (or anti-Petrine tradition) polemic. In response to Mary’s recounting of the risen Savior’s revelation, Peter asks: ὃ σωτηρ λάθρα γυναικὶ ἐλάλει καὶ οὐ

2 In comparison with Levi’s statement about Mary in Rylands Papyrus (PRyl) 463, in Papyrus Berolinensis (BG) 8502 Mary’s esteemed status is more emphasized as the Savior’s favorite over all the disciples. Levi says that the Savior loved Mary ‘more than us’ (18:14-15). The comparison of the Greek text and the Coptic text will be conducted more substantively in ch. 4.

3 For the definition and discussion of the expression ‘the world behind the text,’ as a ‘window’ to the past, see Sandra Marie Schneiders, The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), ch. 4, esp. 113. ‘The world within the text’ or ‘the world of the text’ is the world reflected in the events of the story, the text of linguistic system. See Schneiders, The Revelatory Text, ch. 5, esp. 132-56.

4 The terms ‘Gnostic,’ ‘orthodox,’ and the Gnostic versus orthodox dichotomy have been created and used by many modern scholars as heuristic categories for interpreting certain ancient texts. However, the definitions of the terms and the use of the Gnostic versus orthodox categories have been subject to scholarly debate. For example, King says, “some scholars emphasize a single characteristic as determinative, such as anticosmic dualism . . . . Others list a set of characteristics whose combination signals a phenomenon to be Gnostic.” King, What Is Gnosticism? (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2003), 226. Furthermore, labeling certain texts ‘Gnostic’ based on a set of similar characteristics entails the danger of ignoring the diversity among them. King states concerning it, “The synthetic character of typological definitions also works to project a false and artificial uniformity onto what are quite varied phenomena. By erasing or at least submerging the differences among Gnostic phenomena, typology hides the problem of variety rather than resolves it.” King, What Is Gnosticism? 226-227. The present study will discuss in depth the use of the terms and categories in ch. 1. Throughout this study, the expression ‘proto-orthodox’ will be used instead ‘orthodox,’ except the cases of other scholars’ usage of ‘orthodox’ when their works are discussed.
It has been assumed, rather than debated, that what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ (λαθρα) and by ‘a woman’ (γυναικί) are in fact the two issues at stake in the historical inter-group or intra-group conflict. The two disputable issues were the means (i.e., by private revelation) and the agent (i.e., through Mary a woman), that the historical opponents, represented by Peter, regarded as unreliable.

For those who understand the debate as reflecting an inter-group conflict, Peter represents the proto-orthodox group, which accepted what was transmitted ‘publicly’ (φανερῶς) only (i.e., the apostolic or Petrine tradition in a fixed or written form, available to all), yet rejected what was transmitted ‘secretly’ (λαθρα). Peter negatively responds to Mary, who represents the Gnostic group, because he does not accept any further, on-going revelation of the risen Jesus’ teaching tradition beyond the apostolic tradition. For those who assume a historical intra-group conflict, Peter represents the emerging patriarchal leadership, who rejected female leadership represented by Mary. Thus the negative depiction of Peter opposing Mary has been understood as exposing a polemic against Peter, a representative of patriarchal leadership.

Several questions can be raised about the previous studies’ interpretation of the debate scene. First of all, is it legitimate to deal with the scene as the resource of the historical

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5 There is a difference between PRyl 463 and BG 8502. While the term ‘secretly’ is in the former text, there is instead the expression ‘without our knowledge’ (ναξιογε οποι) in the latter text. The discussion of the comparison of the two texts will be in ch.4.


7 E.g., Haskins, Mary Magdalen, 37-42; Erika Mohri, Maria Magdalena: Frauenbilder in Evangelientexten des 1. bis 3. Jahrhunderts (Marburg: Elwert, 2000), 278-81; Schaberg, The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene, 187, 190 n. 359; Brock, Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle, 15-17; cf. Karen L. King views the debate as reflecting an inter-Christian debate about the source of Christian life and salvation, including gender issue, female leadership, and true discipleship. King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 54-56.
information, as if the dialogue among the characters is the verbatim recording of the historical conversation? From a literary-critical perspective, the scene is not a representation of reality but a construct of reality intended to exert a certain rhetorical force. It is part of the larger narrative that is expected to be understood in its own literary context according to its own literary logic. When approached narrative-critically, the narrative about the interactions among the characters artificially frames the longer section of the risen Savior’s revelation, as the implied author’s chosen means to impact the implied reader.\(^8\) The purpose of the narrative frame is to promote the enclosed revelation-teaching as true and authoritative to the implied reader. The roles played by the characters should be understood primarily in view of the text’s discourse or rhetoric of persuasion, by which the implied reader is led to embrace the text’s worldview and values, presented as the risen Savior’s teaching mediated by Mary.

The role played by the character Peter throughout the narrative is important in understanding the implied author’s evaluative point of view on him and, thus, in verifying the argument that Peter’s negative reaction to Mary points to the text’s purported anti-Peter polemic. Does the implied author present an anti-Peter polemic by negatively depicting Peter? Does the implied author characterize Peter as the narrative’s major antagonist? Is the implied reader expected to distance himself or herself from Peter or his evaluative point of view throughout the narrative? As this study will demonstrate, the portrayal of Peter’s abrupt negative reaction to Mary does not necessarily point to the text’s anti-Peter (or anti-Petrine tradition) polemic. It will be argued that such interpretation fails to keep the larger narrative in view and does not account for the plot, characterization, and literary techniques employed to impact the implied reader. It

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will be demonstrated that the inclusion of debate scene is not for an anti-Peter polemic but as part of the text's plot development and rhetorical techniques. The debate scene, when it is approached with literary concerns, is included not to counter the opponents’ rejection of the mode of private revelation and female leadership, but to persuade the implied reader, identified with the reluctant disciples represented by Peter, to courageously go out and preach the gospel. The narrative frame’s intended function to promote the enclosed teaching section (i.e., the revelation) as true and authoritative should be taken into account in understanding the meaning of the debate scene.

The following is the present study’s thesis statement. A narrative-critical analysis of the text’s setting, characters, plot, and discourse, will reveal that the meaning of the debate scene, which has been influenced by the assumed Gnostic versus proto-orthodox framework and feminist biblical studies’ particular interest in gender issues, is not about refuting the opponents’ different views on private revelation and female leadership, but rather about making truth-authority claims by appealing to the contemporary models of authority, viz. the authority of divine revelation and the authority of the oral-scribal tradition of a cultural hero (i.e., the tradition of Mary the witness of the risen Savior).

Chapter 1 will survey and discuss the previous scholarship and show that the debate scene has been interpreted as pointing either to a polemic against the Petrine (or apostolic) tradition in the context of the inter-group conflict, or to that against Peter representing patriarchal leadership in the context of the intra-group conflict. How the assumed framework of the Gnostic-orthodox conflict and feminist biblical studies’ particular interest in the gender issue have influenced the interpretation of the debate scene in the Gospel of Mary will be addressed. It will be noted that such predetermined categories and limited interest have colored the understanding of what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ and by ‘a woman,’ which are assumed as the two disputable issues at stake in the historical inter-group or intra-group conflict. After dealing with the preliminary considerations about the Gospel of Mary, the text, its provenance, genre, date, and literary unity, scholarly controversy involved in the definition of ‘Gnosticism,’ the ‘Gnostic’ character of the Gospel of Mary, and the use of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox categories in interpreting Peter’s statement will be discussed. The typological definition of the category ‘Gnosticism’ will be adopted and the meaning and purpose of the debate scene in the Gospel of Mary will be explored independently of the text’s assumed Gnostic character.
Chapter 2 will discuss the methodological clarification of this study. Narrative criticism will be used to explore ‘the world within the text,’ to examine how the portrayal of the debate among the characters is expected to be read in its own literary context. Narrative criticism’s premises and procedure, the theories of characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting, and the conception of ‘expected reading’ will be outlined.

Chapter 3 will reconstruct the extratextual information that implied reader may brings to the text concerning the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous figure, in order to understand what is at stake in the debate in the *Gospel of Mary*. How this conception was used in promoting revelatory knowledge in Jewish and non-Jewish sources in late antiquity will be surveyed and discussed in terms of the two models of authority widely used in antiquity, viz. revelatory authority and literary authority. They will shed light on that divine revelation and the shared knowledge about Mary the Savior’s favorite were part of the implied reader’s extratexts, which made the composition of the *Gospel of Mary* possible.

Chapter 4 will conduct a narrative-critical exegesis of the *Gospel of Mary*, by paying attention to how the events of the narrative was ordered, and how the implied reader was guided to experience the narrative by its discourse, such as emplotment, characterization, and point-of-view crafting. The variant readings of the Greek and Coptic texts will be compared and discussed to see if they influence the interpretation of the text. The narrative’s structure will be identified, and the intended rhetorical function of the frame narrative will be discussed in terms of the plot, centered around the tension caused by the recipients’ failure in properly responding to the risen Savior’s revelation. Perspective analysis will be used to understand how the implied reader is led to experience the narrative, and to evaluate the character Peter, by the implied author’s technique of point-of-view crafting.

Chapter 5 will provide the summary and conclusion of this study.

1.1 History of Scholarship
The *Gospel of Mary* has been viewed as a Gnostic literature with no real discussion about its Gnostic character until recently. The word ‘Gnostic’ and the conception of ‘Gnosticism’ have been subject to scholarly debate, in regard to whether there was a identifiable category to which the terms such as ‘Gnostic’ and ‘Gnosticism’ can be attached.\(^9\) The present study will assume the typological definition of ‘Gnosticism’ when the terms ‘Gnostic’ and ‘Gnosticism’ are used in this section about the previous scholarship. The typological definition is the dominant way of determining whether certain texts are ‘Gnostic’ or not, by assessing whether they display a recognizable set of ideas, such as the demiurgical inferior creator and dualism of spiritual reality and material existence.\(^10\) Whether the *Gospel of Mary* reflects such ideas and, thus, can be called ‘Gnostic’ is disputable. This issue will be dealt with when the category of ‘Gnosticism’ and the Gnostic versus orthodox binary are discussed in later in this chapter.

As we will see, a majority of scholars have taken for granted the Gnostic character of the *Gospel of Mary* and interpreted the debate scene primarily with the framework of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox dichotomy. The present study aims to draw attention to how the interpretation of the debate scene has been influenced by such assumed framework. What is the most problematic is that certain characteristics, later attached to the terms ‘Gnostic’ and ‘orthodox’ by modern scholars, are anachronically imposed on the two parties’ respective stance in understanding the scene’s meaning. Scholarly preoccupation with historical concerns has influenced especially what Peter refers to by the term ‘secretly,’ viz. private revelation as a mode of transmitting the risen Savior’s teaching. The major issue at stake in the debate has been assumed as the validity of the risen Savior’s teaching tradition transmitted ‘secretly’ (λαθρός) versus ‘openly’ (φανερῶς). The reason that Peter negatively responds to Mary is explained by the so-called proto-orthodox stance that denies any on-going, private revelation as an unreliable

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\(^10\) David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 19. Typological methodology is widely accepted in defining ‘Gnosticism,’ though scholars do not agree with each other exactly what characteristics may constitute the category of ‘Gnosticism.’ For example, Esther A. De Boer and Antti Marjanen argue that one of the key features that constitute ‘Gnosticism’ is the dualistic creation myth with the figure of the demiurgical creator. De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 32-34; Marjanen, “The Identity of Mary in the so-Called Gnostic Christian Texts,” in *Which Mary?: The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*, ed. F. Stanley Jones (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 32 n. 3.
means to convey the risen Savior’s teaching. In this view, Peter denies what Mary said altogether, because he accepts only what is transmitted ‘openly,’ viz. the apostolic tradition in a fixed or written form, available to all.

For example, Elaine H. Pagels argues that the debate scene in the Gospel of Mary is about apostolic authority versus visionary experience, and gives evidence of a historical inter-group debate about two different viewpoints on the spiritual authority of female leadership. She understands the controversy as reflecting this difference between the orthodox group and the Gnostic group: “Peter and Andrew, here representing the leaders of the orthodox group, accuse Mary—the gnostic—of pretending to have seen the Lord in order to justify the strange ideas, fictions, and lies she invents and attributes to divine inspiration.” According to Pagels, Mary represents the Gnostic group’s stand that claims to experience the continuing presence of the risen Savior through visionary experience. The figure Mary is used as a weapon of polemics to challenge the orthodox leaders, represented by Peter and Andrew, who are suspicious of new visions or revelations beyond the apostolic tradition that they already know. Pagels argues that the Gospel of Mary represents such viewpoint in so far the disciples acknowledge Mary’s direct contact with the risen Savior and accept his revelation from Mary.

Pheme Perkins holds the similar opinion that the debate scene reflects an inter-group debate, yet puts more emphasis on the issue of the validity of Gnostic insights or revelations than on the issue of female leadership. Perkins says, “The hostility that follows Mary’s revelation

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11 Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, 75-81; also Schmid, Maria Magdalena in gnostischen Schriften, 89.
13 According to Pagels, orthodox Christians authorized only the apostles’ experience of seeing the risen Jesus with their own eyes (not in a private vision or dream) as authentic. By authorizing the validity of inner vision, which the orthodox did not authorize as authentic, Gnostics could claim that their experiences were equal to or superior to the apostles’ actual sighting. See Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, 10-14.
16 Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 131-137. Mary is used as an mediator of the risen Savior’s revelation, not because she was a woman leader of the Gnostic group but because she was a figure with whom revelatory tradition could be associated. Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 136 n. 10.
establishes Peter as spokesman for orthodox objections to gnosis. First, the Lord revealed everything to the apostles in common—no private revelations are allowed. Second, the Gnostics are only able to convert senseless women (cf. AdvHaer I 6, 3)." According to her, the Gospel of Mary belongs to the genre of a ‘Gnostic revelation dialogue,’ which can be compared to the orthodox group’s genre of the Gospel. The role and function of the Gospel of Mary as a Gnostic revelation dialogue is to attack the proto-orthodox or Petrine tradition.

By framing the two parties involved in the debate with the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox dichotomy, what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ is interpreted in a biased way, as if he totally denies private revelation as a valid mode of transmitting the risen Savior’s teaching. However, such retroactive reading with the assumed framework entails the danger of distorting the textual meaning. As this study will demonstrate, Peter in the story world never denies the validity of private revelation or the possibility that divine revelation can be given to a virtuous person. His negative reaction is not because of his rejection of the validity of private revelation, but because of Mary’s esteemed status, and because she was deemed worthy to receive such divine favor. The depiction of the initial narrative that Peter is one of the recipients of the risen Savior’s revelation suggests that he is by no means a representative of the so-called proto-orthodox stance concerning divine revelation. In the story world, what Peter refers to by ‘publicly’ is in fact justifiably applicable to the risen Savior’s initial teaching revealed to all, not to the earthly Jesus’ teaching transmitted in the apostolic tradition.

Nevertheless, subsequent studies similarly assume the historical inter-group conflict behind Peter’s objection to Mary. Robert M. Price further argues that the debate scene actually preserves a first-century debate about Mary, whom he identifies with Mary Magdalene, the apostle of the Gnostic group which he characterizes as egalitarian. Pagels and Perkins understand Mary in the Gospel of Mary as a literary device for symbolizing the Gnostic stand in

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the second and third century. Price goes further from their stance and understands it, along with other Gnostic writings’ references to Mary as an esteemed figure, as strong evidence that the historical Mary Magdalene acted as an apostle in the first century. According to him, Mary received the risen Savior’s revelation, which included a radical teaching about “female equality with males based on the transcendence of sexuality in a spiritual union with Christ.”²¹ With the assumed two different viewpoints on divine revelation, Price conjectures that the proto-orthodox group denied Mary’s apostolic authority as well as her radical teaching mediated by revelation.²²

Antti Marjanen shares with the previous scholars the assumption that the Gospel of Mary is a Gnostic writing and the debate scene as symbolizing the historical conflict between the Gnostic group and the proto-orthodox group.²³ His study on the characterization of Mary in the Gnostic writings, such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Sophia of Jesus Christ, the Dialogue of the Savior, the Pistis Sophia, the Great Questions of Mary, the First Apocalypse of James, and the Manichaean Psalm-book, is important. It is because, by the comparative study of Mary’s different roles in the various Gnostic writings in relationship to Peter (and the other male disciples), he points out that, if there is any hint of the conflict between the Gnostic and non-Gnostic Christians, it should be limited to the Gospel of Mary only.²⁴ According to him, in the Gospel of Philip, the male disciples’ jealousy of the esteemed Mary does not lead to the Gnostic versus orthodox conflict. Similarly, in the Pistis Sophia, Peter does not represent a non-Gnostic position but is Gnostic as Mary. In the Gospel of Thomas, the conflict between Mary and the male disciples is not about the Gnostic versus non-Gnostic positions but about the position of

²¹ According to Price, the historical Mary Magdalene claimed a privileged relationship with Jesus before and after his resurrection. Price, “Mary Magdalene: Gnostic Apostle?” 76.
²² In Price’s view, Mary’s absence in the portrait of the apostles in the New Testament can be explained by that biblical writers actually tried to minimize and distort her role. Price, “Mary Magdalene: Gnostic Apostle?” 72.
²³ Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 119. In his later article, however, Marjanen says that he have redefined his conception of Gnosticism and no longer regard the Gospel of Mary (along with the Gospel of Thomas and the Dialogue of the Savior) as Gnostic. “Even if the anthropology and the soteriology of these writings correspond to that of Gnosticism (or Platonism) with the emphasis on the return of the preexistent soul to the realm of light as a sign of ultimate salvation, none of these writings contains the other central feature of Gnosticism. They do not contain the idea of a cosmic world created by an evil and/or ignorant demiurge.” Marjanen, “The Identity of Mary in the so-Called Gnostic Christian Texts,” 32 n. 3. Also see Marjanen, Was There a Gnostic Religion? (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).
²⁴ Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 216-25.
women. The controversy between Mary and the male disciples reflected in these texts cannot necessarily be interpreted as an indication of a disagreement between the Gnostic group and the proto-orthodox group.

Marjanen’s observation of the peculiarity of Peter’s stance in the Gospel of Mary seems to influence subsequent studies to give more attention to the gender issue than the issue of the validity of private revelation. Rather than repeating the previous scholarly assertion about Peter as a representative of the proto-orthodox group, scholars put more emphasis on the gender issue in accounting for Peter’s negative reaction to Mary in the debate scene. While in the previous studies what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ was the center of much scholarly attention, after Marjanen’s study Peter’s mention of ‘a woman,’ which is interpreted as pointing to his misogynic stance, has replaced it as a key to understanding the conflict in the Gospel of Mary.

Karen L. King, one of the prolific scholars on the Gospel of Mary, argues that it is Peter’s male pride that provokes his objection to Mary. Like Price, King is interested in the historical Mary Magdalene and understands the Gospel of Mary as reflecting a historical conflict. According to her, the fundamental issue of the debate is about “who can be relied upon to preach the gospel” and the answer of the Gospel of Mary is given by a contrast between Mary’s character and Peter’s character. While Peter is portrayed as a jealous and contentious character with his own male pride, Mary is portrayed as a superior character, who has already achieved


26 Marjanen says that it is hard to establish any literary dependence among the Gnostic writings. The root of the Gnostic Mary Magdalene traditions would have been related to the tradition that the risen Jesus appeared to Mary in Mark (i.e., Markan Appendix) and John, which would make Mary an attractive or apt figure for a Gnostic myth-making process. Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 223.


28 King, “Why All the Controversy?” 71; King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 176-78.
inner stability and peace.\textsuperscript{29} The purpose of the \textit{Gospel of Mary} is thus to elevate Mary’s apostolic authority by negatively depicting Peter, the representative of Jesus’ male apostles. Mary’s character superior to Peter is the basis for her legitimate exercise of apostolic authority in instructing the other disciples, by passing on the Savior’s teaching. For King, the issue of private revelation is less important than the gender issue. Peter’s negative response to Mary is not primarily because he holds a different viewpoint of private revelation, but because he holds a misogynic view of her, a mere woman with no status and power.

King is different from the previous scholars who regard the debate as reflecting the inter-group conflict between the Gnostic group and the proto-orthodox group. King understands the debate as being related to the historical intra-group conflict, in which Christians with different views cannot yet appeal to fixed norms, either orthodox or heretical.\textsuperscript{30} King dates the writing earlier than the previous scholars, to the first half of the second century. She argues that the \textit{Gospel of Mary} reflects a time and place at which the so-called ‘orthodox’ tradition was not yet fixed.\textsuperscript{31} In her view, the scholarly assumption that the \textit{Gospel of Mary} is Gnostic, and thus heretical, is problematic. It is because this assumption leads one to anachronistically apply the later understanding of the orthodox Christianity to judge how deviant the \textit{Gospel of Mary} is. However, while King criticizes the danger of using the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox categories, she does not deal with how such problematic framework has been anachronically applied to what Peter means by ‘secretly’ and ‘openly.’ She simply assumes that a historical conflict concerning two different viewpoints on private revelation underlies Peter’s negative comments, yet tries to avoid using the Gnostic and proto-orthodox categories in identifying those involved in the conflict.\textsuperscript{32} King raises other questions without discussing whether the interpretation of the scene based on such assumption is valid or not. She asks, “If so, who were those groups? . . . . What

\textsuperscript{29} King, “Why All the Controversy?” 72.

\textsuperscript{30} King, “Why All the Controversy?” 69.

\textsuperscript{31} King, “Why All the Controversy?” 63. Scholars generally date the Gospel of Mary to the second century and King argues for dating it to the first half of the second century based on “its life situation in the early second century debates over women’s leadership and the role of the apostles.” King, “The Gospel of Mary,” 82. Also see Brock, \textit{Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle}, 82.

\textsuperscript{32} King, \textit{The Gospel of Mary of Magdala}, 85.
does the *Gospel of Mary* tell us about Christianity in the second century?"33 Historical concerns and questions involved in ‘the world behind the text’ have dominated King’s interpretation of the debate scene, used as a window to the past.

The gender issue, rather than the issue of private revelation, has increasingly gained scholarly attention since King’s study. The interpretation of the debate scene in the *Gospel of Mary* has been influenced by the dominant concern of the feminist biblical studies, such as a quest for an evidence of female leadership, and the historical Mary Magdalene. Jane Schaberg is likewise interested in the gender issue and the historical Mary. She conducts a study on whether Mary’s role in the *Gospel of Mary*, along with that in the other Gnostic and apocryphal writings, reflects the social-historical reality of the roles of women.34

Although Schaberg, like King, argues for the earlier date of the *Gospel of Mary* concerning the debate scene, she seems to follow Marjanen’s view on it as symbolic of the inter-group debate on the issue of the validity of visionary experience as well as the gender issue.35 However, in order to deal with Mary in the *Gospel of Mary* along with the other portrayals of Mary under the general term ‘the Gnostic Mary Magdalene traditions,’ Schaberg does not clearly differentiate the *Gospel of Mary* from the other later Gnostic writings, which deal with the intra-group controversy on the female leadership. According to Schaberg, the concreteness of the controversy between Mary and Peter provides the glimpses of women struggling for egalitarianism within patriarchal systems.36 Schaberg observes that Mary does not play an important role in the ending scene but Levi does, by defending the weeping Mary and performing the apostolic task (i.e., to go out to preach the gospel).37 She interprets such portrayal

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37 In the Greek fragment (PRy1 463) it is only Levi who goes out to preach the gospel, with no mention of Mary and the other disciples.
as suggesting that Mary is the apostle only to the apostles, not to the world, and possibly reflects the text’s androcentric bias.\(^{38}\)

Ann Graham Brock follows King’s view on the earlier date of the *Gospel of Mary* and sees the debate as reflecting an historical intra-group controversy on female leadership challenging the emerging patriarchal Christianity.\(^{39}\) Brock deals with the *Gospel of Mary* along with the canonical and non-canonical Mary traditions, in order to get a glimpse of the struggles and gender questions of the first centuries of Christian life. She says, “Although it is possible that theological or philosophical differences lay behind Peter’s objections to Mary, the consistent way in which the figure of Peter refers to women or to Mary’s gender in each of these major controversy dialogues strongly suggests that the issue at stake involves leadership roles for women.”\(^{40}\) In her view, similarly with King’s view, what is at stake in the controversy between Mary and Peter is the criteria for determining who has apostolic authority.

Thus, so far in the previous studies, the debate scene has been interpreted as pointing either to a polemic against the Petrine (or apostolic) tradition in the context of the inter-group conflict, or to that against Peter representing patriarchal leadership in the context of the intra-group conflict. It is evident that the debate scene, especially what Peter says, has been treated in a biased way, with the assumed frame of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox binary and feminist interpreters’ particular interest in gender issues. Such predetermined categories and limited interest have controlled the interpretation of what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ and by ‘a woman,’ which are assumed as the two disputable issues at stake in the historical inter-group or intra-group conflict.

Meanwhile, the assumed Gnostic nature of the *Gospel of Mary* and the interpretation of it in a Gnostic context have been subject to criticism by Esther A. De Boer. She approaches the

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\(^{39}\) Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle*, 82.

\(^{40}\) Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle*, 84, 103. Brock relates the Mary versus Peter controversy in many literally unrelated texts from widely dispersed locations to the antecedent different traditions of the resurrection appearances either to Mary or to Peter. According to her, the tension between the two leading figures is already present in the conflicting traditions of the first resurrection witnesses in the first century C.E.
Gospel of Mary differently from the previous scholars, who view it either with the assumption that it is a later Gnostic writing written on the basis of the earlier canonical tradition, or with the assumption that it is an early Christian writing, preserved by the later Gnostic group with high esteem of Mary Magdalene, challenging the contemporary Christians who neglect the apostolic authority of Mary Magdalene. De Boer tries to read the Gospel of Mary independently of the assumptions that it was meant to be read in a Gnostic context and that it provides the earliest evidence of the Gnostic Mary traditions.

Regardless of whether the Gospel of Mary is a later Gnostic writing or an earlier Christian writing, scholars tend to understand Mary’s role as advocating egalitarianism against the misogynic Peter. De Boer raises a question about the scholarly use of the figure Mary in the Gospel of Mary as the revealer of Gnostic insights and the valued female apostolic leader, who advocates egalitarian discipleship. Most scholars, whose primary interest is in the Gnostic Mary traditions for reconstructing female leadership in early Christianity, deal with Mary in the Gospel of Mary along with the other Marys in the later Gnostic writings. In turn, they interpret the risen Savior’s teaching on nature, matter, and sin in the Gospel of Mary in a Gnostic way. However, in De Boer’s view, the Gospel of Mary gives no internal clue for the so-called ‘Gnostic’ features found in the other writings (e.g., Gnostic dualism in creation, the negative use of female imagery) and, thus, it is doubtful that it can be read in a Gnostic context. She rejects the

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41 “Two basic viewpoints can be distinguished in recent scholarly work: (1) Gnostic authors have constructed a Gnostic Mary Magdalene using the biblical portrait of her as a vehicle for Gnostic teaching, and (2) biblical authors neglected the important role of Mary Magdalene, of which Gnostic authors preserved evidence.” De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 10.

42 For example, King says that the location of the Coptic version of the Gospel of Mary as part of a Gnostic collection (i.e., the Berlin Codex) suggests that it was read as a Gnostic text, from a Gnostic perspective. King, “The Gospel of Mary,” 625 n. 10. However, De Boer points to that only two writings out of four in the Berlin Codex are clearly Gnostic (i.e., the Apocryphon of John, the Sophia of Jesus Christ) and raises a question about calling the Berlin Codex a Gnostic collection. In her view, it is “a compilation of different views on evil.” De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 52-56.

43 De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 10, 49, 133. The myth of the creation of the material world by the demiurgical figure is a popular choice for the modern scholarly criterion for defining ‘Gnosticism,’ which in fact did not exist as a fixed form of religion in antiquity but was used as a blanket term by the modern scholars to cover and categorize a lot of early Christian movements and writings. Since there is no mention about such dualistic creation myth in the existing body of the Gospel of Mary, De Boer says that it cannot be considered Gnostic according to the modern criterion. For her discussion of the definition of the term ‘Gnostic,’ see De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 32-34.
Gnostic interpretation of the risen Savior’s teaching and suggests a non-Gnostic context for understanding it, viz. the broader Stoic, Jewish and early Christian contexts.  

Concerning the debate scene, De Boer notes that it is not a debate with Mary but a debate among men about Mary’s teaching. It is fundamentally meant to promote the apostolic leadership of all, both women and men, who can shed light on the Savior’s teaching, rather than the apostolic leadership of women specifically. The gender issue is what functions to connect Mary in the *Gospel of Mary* with the different Marys in the Gnostic Mary traditions in the feminist biblical studies. However, it is difficult to see that the gender issue may fully account for Peter’s negative reaction to Mary, as if he is, from the beginning, denying that the possibility that a woman may be the recipient of the risen Savior’s revelation and commission.

Christopher Tuckett also approaches the *Gospel of Mary* differently from the previous scholars, who have been mainly interested in the Gnostic Mary traditions for reconstructing female leadership in early Christianity. His dealing with the *Gospel of Mary* seems to reverse the previous scholarly discussion on its relationship with the canonical Mary traditions and its so-called ‘Gnostic’ character. According to him, certain themes, language, and imageries in it suggest a Gnostic understanding of the material world, the human inner spark of the divine

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44 De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 34, ch. 3. “We concluded that the dualism of the Gospel of Mary is a moderate one and belongs to a Jewish-Christian context in which the material world directly derives from the spiritual one. The world is not created by an inferior Demiurge, but is created by God himself through his Nature.” “In the language used in the Gospel of Mary, Nature is originally rooted into the Divine, but has become mixed with a power contrary to Nature. The particular language of the Gospel of Mary . . . belongs to a more specifically Stoic context, in which matter is a thought construct and matter and Nature are intertwined. This means that the material world as such is not to be avoided, as would be the case in a Gnostic dualistic view, but that one should be careful not to be ruled by the power contrary to Nature.” De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 202. “Gnostic thoughts on suffering, on primordial Man, on being stable and on the post-mortem ascent past archontic powers offered no help in interpreting the content of Mary’s teaching in the Gospel of Mary. Instead, Philo’s writings, the Pauline letters and the Gospel of John appeared to be illuminating . . . not only the dualism in the Gospel of Mary, but also the interpretation of Mary’s teaching . . . are more closely related to a broader Christian context than a Gnostic one, and are rooted in similar ground as Philonic, Pauline, and Johannine thought.” De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 204-205.

45 De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 205-206. She rejects the scholarly conjecture that early Christian texts present a fatal alternative: either women become men (a view reflected in the use of negative female imagery in the Gnostic Mary traditions) or as women submissive to men. The *Gospel of Mary* presents another view that “considered (at least) Mary Magdalene to be on an equal footing with her brothers (and sisters) in the sense that they all have been made true Human Being and that they all are prepared to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of the Son of Man.” De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 208.
nature, and the demiurgical figure.\textsuperscript{46} While De Bore understands such language and imageries in terms of Stoic philosophy’s impact on the culture and society, Tuckett says, “Any similarities between the \textit{Gospel of Mary} and Platonism or Stoicism probably simply reflect the ways in which Gnosticism generally both reflects and adapts ideas from the Greek philosophical traditions current at the time.”\textsuperscript{47} Tuckett thus considers the \textit{Gospel of Mary} a Gnostic writing. He also argues that the parallel features between the \textit{Gospel of Mary} and the canonical traditions (e.g., the gospels, the Pauline epistles) suggest that the second-century author of the \textit{Gospel of Mary} may well have been influenced, whether directly or indirectly, by the finished version of texts, which later became canonical, and were already circulating widely and exercising considerable influence.\textsuperscript{48} Thus he rejects King’s view that the \textit{Gospel of Mary} includes the earlier traditions which lie behind the canonical texts as common stock for many Christians.\textsuperscript{49}

For the debate scene Tuckett seems to reverse the previous scholarly discussion leaning to King’s view that it reflects an historical intra-group conflict. He says, “At least the beginning of a process of drawing boundary lines is under way here, and the basis for this process appears to be the differing . . . contents of the message . . . . Thus Andrew’s complaint against Mary . . . by implication does appeal to some kind of (substantive) norm.”\textsuperscript{50} The boundary lines between the competing groups here (i.e., the proto-Gnostic group and the proto-orthodox group), “have not yet been as sharply drawn . . . . The issue is thus not only one of who might be authorized as a legitimate preacher of the gospels, but also of which ‘gospel’ is to be preached.”\textsuperscript{51} In Tuckett’s view, the debate occurs precisely because of what she has said, not necessarily because it is she who has said it.\textsuperscript{52} He understands that Peter’s objection has force only if Mary’s teaching differs

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 73-74.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 73; cf. King, \textit{The Gospel of Mary of Magdala}, 115-18.
\item \textsuperscript{50} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 197.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 197.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 198.
\end{itemize}
from what is known to the other disciples ‘openly.’ Tuckett’s reaffirmation of what De Boer objects, viz. the view that the Gospel of Mary is a Gnostic writing, illustrates the irresolvable difficulty in defining what constitutes ‘Gnosticism’ and a ‘Gnostic’ writing. Tuckett’s use of what King rejects, viz. the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox dichotomy, in understanding the debate scene also illustrates the irresolvable problem concerning the use of the label ‘Gnosticism,’ which exists only by presupposing certain ‘orthodox’ norms. The different or arbitrary use of the term ‘Gnosticism’ and the problematic use of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox categories seem to lie behind the ongoing scholarly dispute in regard to the debate scene in the Gospel of Mary.

The present study aims to problematize the assumptions on which the previous studies are based, and to develop an alternative approach to the meaning and function of the debate scene. Scholarly views on meaning and function of the debate scene in the Gospel of Mary surveyed so far are basically concerned with ‘the world behind the text,’ with the problematic assumption that it reflects an historical inter-group or intra-group debate over the two issues. What literary critics call ‘referential fallacy’ has been committed, when the scene has been dealt with primarily for the historical information. The assumed anti-Peter polemic, either with the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox framework or with the particular interest in the gender issue, has colored the interpretation of Peter’s statement and even the Gospel of Mary as a whole. The inclusion of the debate scene has been understood to counter the historical opponents’ irreconcilably different views on private revelation and female leadership. In this view, the means (i.e., by private revelation) and agent (i.e., through Mary a woman) were the two disputable issues regarded as unreliable and, thus, functioned to block their reception of the risen Savior’s teaching in the Gospel of Mary.

However, when approached with literary concerns, such interpretation is far beyond what the textual evidence justifiably supports. First of all, from a literary-critical perspective, the

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portrayal of the interactions among the characters are not a representation of reality but a construction of reality, and its literary purpose should be explored primarily not with what is exterior to the text but with what is in the text. If the scene is intended to be a polemic against Peter, who rejects both divine revelation and a woman as unreliable, Peter’s viewpoint should be observable, not only in his negative comment in the debate scene, but also in the other parts of the text. Contrary to this expectation, Peter’s role in the initial narrative is by no means the antagonist to Mary. Peter by no means denies from the beginning the possibility that the risen Savior gives his teaching ‘secretly’ ‘to a woman.’ It is Peter himself who first mentions that the risen Savior gave Mary certain teaching unknown to the other disciples (10:1-6; POxy 3525 lines14-17). By respectfully inviting Mary to speak, he acknowledges the possibility that a woman may be the reliable agent of conveying the risen Savior’s teaching. Such inconsistent viewpoint of Peter makes it difficult to identify him with the representative of the so-called proto-orthodox stance on private revelation or of the misogynic male leadership.

Secondly, the intended rhetorical effect on the implied reader in the end is hardly related to an anti-Peter sentiment. Peter is consistently depicted not as the narrative’s major antagonist, but as the representative of the disciples as a whole, who, according to Levi, should be collectively ashamed of their reluctance in receiving the risen Savior’s teaching and commission (18:15; PRyl 463 verso 8-9). Being identified with the disciples, including Peter, who struggle with fear, anxiety, and doubt after the risen Savior’s departure, the implied reader anticipates that the narrative’s tension caused by the disciples’ problem is to be resolved in the end. From the narrative’s normative perspective, the risen Savior’s teaching revealed to Mary, the major section of the text, is to empower the fearful disciples to cope with their problem. The function of the point of view in the narrative should be taken into account in understanding how the implied reader is guided to perceive the character Peter in the story world. As the present study will demonstrate, the implied reader is led by the narrative’s rhetorical devices including the narrator, characterization, and emplotment, not to distance himself or herself from Peter, but to empathize with him in following his perception of the character Mary. The role played by Peter is prominent in crafting the implied reader’s evaluative point of view on Mary, because it is Peter
who is given ‘syntactic prominence’ in the narrative, and by whom the character Mary is introduced and characterized as a virtuous, esteemed figure. 54

The portrayal of Peter’s abrupt negative reaction to Mary in the debate scene should be understood against the background of such positive depiction of Peter in the initial narrative, by which the implied reader is guided to empathize with him and to be positively disposed to Mary. From a narrative-critical point of view, Peter’s inconsistent attitude towards Mary may be interpreted in terms of the implied author’s literary technique for exerting certain rhetorical force on the implied reader. There is an example for the use of such literary technique in the canonical gospel accounts (Matt 16:13-28; cf. Mark 8:27-38). In the scene of Jesus asking about the disciples’ view on him, Peter is first positively depicted as one who reacts to Jesus rightly. However, he is soon depicted negatively, being reprimanded by Jesus for responding to him in a wrong way. The negative depiction of Peter, whose evaluative point of view is not aligned with the narrative’s normative one, is hardly understood as promoting an anti-Peter polemic. The depiction of uncomprehending Peter functions to producing more about Jesus’ authoritative teaching. The portrayals of Jesus’ disciples who frequently fail to rightly respond to Jesus in the canonical gospels also provide the similar examples for the use of such literary technique. 55

The scholarly tendency of reading the debate scene in a polemical context, in which Peter is pitted against Mary with the assumed Gnostic versus proto-orthodox framework and/or with the particular interest in the gender issue, is not supported by the textual evidence. Such interpretations based on what is exterior to the text do not take account of the debate scene’s larger narrative context, the plot of the text, characterization, and literary techniques employed to impact the implied reader. The present study will develop an alternative approach to the Gospel of Mary by reading it as a literary work artfully composed to impact the implied reader. While in

54 Gary Yamasaki, Perspective Criticism: Point of View and Evaluative Guidance in Biblical Narrative (Eugene, Oregon: Casemate Publishers, 2013), 24. In the theory of literary characters, the readers are being led to emphasize with a character who is given ‘syntactic prominence,’ understood as being placed close to the head of the clause. Peter in the Gospel of Mary plays such prominent role that produces empathy. Also see Susumu Kuno, Functional Syntax: Anaphora, Discourse, and Empathy (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), 232.

55 For the portrayal of the doubting Thomas in John 20:24-29, and a narrative-critical interpretation of the scene, which is not necessarily for an anti-Thomas polemic but is part of the larger narrative’s patterns of allowing Jesus to speak authoritatively, see Christopher W. Skinner, John and Thomas—Gospels in Conflict?: Johannine Characterization and the Thomas Question (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2009).
the previous studies the portrayal of the controversy among the characters has been dealt with different scholars’ different concerns involved in ‘the world behind the text,’ the present study will explore its meaning in its own literary context, how it functions in the story world as the implied author’s chosen rhetorical means. In so doing, the fundamental issues involved in the interactions among the characters may be understood differently from the previous interpretations, mainly concerned with the two different views on private revelation and female leadership.

1.2 Texts, Provenance, and Dating

The three manuscripts of the Gospel of Mary have survived: two small Greek papyrus fragments (POxy 3525, PRyl 463) and a Coptic manuscript included in the Berlin Codex (Papyrus Berolinensis 8502; hereafter BG). The severely damaged two Greek fragments are only one page or two pages long, while the Coptic manuscript, which is nine pages long, provides the most extensive witness to the ancient text of the Gospel of Mary (pages 7-10 and 15-19 have survived among the original 19 pages). Both Greek fragments were discovered in northern Egypt, near the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus (POxy) 3525 was discovered in 1903. It has writing on one side, probably as part of a scroll. Papyrus Rylands (PRyl) 463 was found and acquired by the Rylands Library in Manchester in 1917. It has writing on both sides and, thus, is from a codex. The differences in their format and script indicate that they were not from the same manuscript. Both of them, on the grounds of the paleographic analysis, date from the third century C.E. The presence of these two copies from such early dates suggests that the original

Gospel of Mary, probably written in Greek, existed at least before the end of the second century.\footnote{57}

The Coptic version is part of Papyrus Berolinensis (BG) 8502. It was discovered in Egypt and acquired for the Egyptian Museum in Berlin in 1896. It is also called the Berlin Codex. The Gospel of Mary is the first writing of the Berlin Codex, which is the compilation of the four writings. The remaining three writings are the Apocryphon of John, the Sophia of Jesus Christ, and the Act of Peter. Other versions of the Apocryphon of John and the Sophia of Jesus Christ were found in Egypt near the village of Nag Hammadi in 1948. The discovery of the parallel texts influenced the scholarly understanding of the close relationship between the Nag Hammadi codices and the Berlin Codex, and it also influenced the interpretation of the Gospel of Mary.\footnote{58}

The Coptic manuscript, written in Sahidic dialect, dates from the fifth century C.E. on paleographic grounds.\footnote{59} POxy 3525 contains 9:1-10:14 of the Coptic manuscript and PRyl 463 covers 17:4-19:5. Since the two Greek manuscripts are fragmentary, the restoration of them was at times conjectured based on the Coptic version. While the reconstruction of their missing parts depended on the parallel Coptic text, where the Greek is clear there are at times some variants between the Greek versions and the Coptic version. The Greek fragments must have been from the versions of the Gospel of Mary, which were divergent from the Greek Vorlage (or the Coptic Vorlage) of the Coptic text. The three manuscripts show that the Gospel of Mary was copied at various times and circulated relatively extensively until the fifth century.

\footnote{57}{There are some copying errors in the Greek versions and they preclude the possibility of any of them being the original Gospel of Mary. The cursive script of the Greek manuscripts suggests that they were copied by amateur copyists for personal use.}

\footnote{58}{The Gospel of Mary has been dealt with together with the Nag Hammadi texts and was later published along with them. See James M. Robinson, “Codicological Analysis of Nag Hammadi Codices V and VI and Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,” in Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2-5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4, ed. Douglas M. Parrott (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 2–5; R. McL. Wilson and G. W. MacRae, “The Gospel according to Mary BG, I:7.1–19.5,” in Nag Hammadi codices V, 2-5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4, ed. Douglas. M Parrott and James Braschler (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 453–71; Walter C. Till and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Germany : East), Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502 (Berlin: Akademie, 1955).}

\footnote{59}{R. McL. Wilson and G. W. MacRae, “The Gospel according to Mary BG, I:7.1–19.5,” 453–71.}
Since the three manuscripts were discovered in Egypt, Anne Pasquier argues for the Egyptian provenance of the *Gospel of Mary*. However, according to De Boer, their discovery in Egypt is probably because of its dry climate, rather than because of it as the location of their composition. She also notes the fact that the Jewish and Christian papyri, which originally came from outside Egypt, were also found at Oxyrhynchus. De Boer suggests Asia Minor as the origin of the *Gospel of Mary*, based on the presence of similar imagery among the *Gospel of Mary*, the Pauline letters, and the Gospel of John. The Syrian provenance has been suggested by Judith Hartenstein on the grounds of the literary traditions about Levi in that area, and by Michel Tardieu on the grounds of similar teachings between it and the school of Bardaisan which existed in second-century Edessa. Since the *Gospel of Mary* gives no explicit clue for its geographical origin, scholarly conjecture depends on what have been identified as the similarities in language and conception between it and other writings from identifiable locations. De Boer attributes such similarities to widespread Stoic philosophy’s influence and says that “the context of the first recipients of the *Gospel of Mary* is probably in which the Stoic philosophy flourished.”

The date of the *Gospel of Mary* is commonly suggested as sometime in the second century. If the Greek fragments were from the copies of the original one, which had come from outside Egypt, the autograph can be dated several decades earlier than the later copies, probably before the end of the second century. Scholarly views on the date are largely divided into two.

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62 E.g., the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, Paul’s letter to the Romans, and the letter to the Hebrews. These texts date from the first three centuries. De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 13.
Some argue for an earlier date, sometime in the first half of the second century. Others date it from the second half of the second century. The latter group views the similarities between the Gospel of Mary and the canonical writings as suggesting that the Gospel of Mary presupposes their existence and, thus, is dependent on them. However, since there is no conclusive clue for a direct dependence, the similarities may be explained by an indirect dependence (e.g., shared oral or written traditions, which later became part of the New Testament). Pasquier dates the Gospel of Mary from the middle of the second century for a different reason. According to her, the Gnostic myth, which underlies the writing, suggests the later date of its composition. However, whether the Gnostic myth underlies it or not is a disputable issue, as De Boer raises a question about whether the Gospel of Mary is Gnostic or not.

According to King, if the Gospel of Mary was written in the latter half of the second century, it would have included Paul’s arguments concerning female leadership, whether for it or against it. In her view, Paul’s authority was typically invoked in Christian discourse about women’s roles in the church and, thus, the absence of any parallel or allusion to Paul’s arguments in the Gospel of Mary suggests its relatively earlier date. Tuckett also argues for an earlier date, yet with a different reason. Tuckett interprets the debate among Andrew, Peter, Mary, and Levi at the end of the narrative as reflecting the earlier stage of the two different groups’ historical debate. In his view, it reflects “a situation in which different groups (perhaps ‘orthodox’ and ‘Gnostic’ Christians) are still in dialogue with each other and in which any differences have not yet hardened into rigid divisions with an ‘us vs. them’ mentality.” As this study will demonstrate, there is no direct correspondence between the portrayal of the debate

69 Pasquier, L’Evangile selon Marie, 3-4.
70 De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 32-34; cf. Tardieu proposes the later date of the gospel’s composition since he views that the second-century School of Bardesanes influenced the Gospel of Mary. Tardieu, Écrits gnostiques, 25.
71 King, “The Gospel of Mary,” in Searching the Scriptures, 2:628;
72 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 12.
among the characters and the historical conflict of the two competing groups. Dating the gospel should not be based on such biased reading which commits ‘referential fallacy.’

Concerning the similarities in wording and themes between the Gospel of Mary and New Testament texts, King maintains that many of them can be traced to the earliest layers of the Jesus tradition.73 According to her, “By the early second century, the terminology, themes, characters, and narrative structure of the Jesus story were part of the shared thought-world of early Christians, and the Gospel of Mary’s use of language was typical of this idiom of Christian theological reflection.”74 While some may argue that such similarities indicate the gospel’s dependence on the canonical texts, King understands them differently, as suggesting that the Gospel of Mary is “an early, independent interpretation of the Jesus tradition within a Gentile Christian context.”75 She observes that the gospel’s teaching, when it alludes to other interpretations which later became part of the New Testament, does not draw upon them yet rather primarily opposes them.

The savior’s warning against being led astray in 8:15-17 is one of the examples. Canonical and non-canonical parallels of the Gospel of Mary 8:15-18 have been well noted.76 In King’s view, the structural similarities among them are crucial in advancing the gospel’s teaching in the last part, about the true location of the Son of Man or the kingdom.77 While alluding to other interpretations, the author of the gospel presents in the last part its alternative teaching about the Son of Man within the disciples. It is presented against the teaching that claims the external location of the Son of Man. King also notes that the Savior’s command to seek and follow the inner Son of Man in 8:19-20, which alludes to Jesus’ similar sayings in the other canonical and non-canonical traditions, likewise brings the readers’ attention to the inner

73 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 93-118.
74 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 97.
75 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 97.
Son of Man.\textsuperscript{78} The gospel’s teaching about the inner Son of Man is the basis for the succeeding commission to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the nations, which also echoes other traditions about Jesus’ commission (8:21-22). The deliberate use of the traditions already known to the gospel’s readers, for the purpose of advancing the gospel’s alternative teaching, is a better way to account for the similarities between the gospel and the canonical traditions than the gospel’s literary dependence on them.

However, while accepting King’s explanation by intertextuality or intertextual echoes, Tuckett raises a question about her argument that the gospel provides independent witness to early Jesus tradition. He argues that the gospel shows influence not only from individual traditions but also from Luke’s finished gospel. He observes that Luke 17:21-23 is the result of the redaction of Q and L by the author of Luke. The fact that Luke’s redactional combination of the two traditions is reflected in the \textit{Gospel of Mary} 8:15-19, thus, suggests the gospel presupposes not just Luke’s traditions but the Gospel of Luke.\textsuperscript{79} The combination of the expression the ‘Son of Man’ with the terms ‘kingdom’ and ‘the Gentiles’ in the \textit{Gospel of Mary} 9:8-10 likewise suggests the gospel’s use of Matthew’s editorial work in Matthew 24:14 (cf. Mark 13:10; for Matthew’s redactional work concerning the references to the ‘Son of Man’ combined with ‘kingdom,’ see Matt 13:41; 16:28).\textsuperscript{80}

Tuckett, like King, admits that despite the similarities in wording, the gospel’s meaning of the ‘Son of Man’ is radically different from the canonical gospels’ ‘Son of Man,’ who will arrive at the eschatological judgment. Though the gospel is not directly dependent on the canonical gospels, its intertextual echoes or allusions seem to presuppose the synoptic tradition. King argues that such intertextual echoes with different meanings indicate the gospel’s polemics to counter the contemporary, competing theology (e.g. apocalyptic Son of Man eschatology, a

\textsuperscript{78} E.g., Jesus’ command to follow: Mark 8:34b // Matt 16:24 // Luke 9:23; Q 14:27; command to seek/find: Q 11:9-10; \textit{GThom} 2, 38, 92, 94; John 7:34 36; 13:33; \textit{DSav} 126:6-11; 129:15. King translates ‘Son of Man’ as ‘Child of true Humanity.’ See King, \textit{The Gospel of Mary of Magdala}, esp. ch. 3.

\textsuperscript{79} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 60.

\textsuperscript{80} Tuckett, \textit{The Gospel of Mary}, 61-62.
sacrificial atonement soteriology). However, as Tuckett notes, there is no hint in the gospel for an explicit polemical aim. The author of the Gospel of Mary might have known at least the synoptic gospels and considered their words worth reappropriating to meet the believers’ needs in new contexts, sometime in the second century.

The present study will explore the world within the text and will conduct responsible narrative criticism, which takes account for the textual and extratextual clues for understanding what the normative textual world presents to the implied reader. It will be demonstrated that the text is not about deliberate polemics against those with irreconcilably different theological views, but rather is mainly concerned with encouragement and assurance concerning the issues of persecution and suffering, entailed in the mission for the Gentiles.

1.3 Genre and Literary Unity

The Gospel of Mary has been viewed as belonging to the genre of the ‘Gnostic revelation dialogue.’ A dialogue as the literary form of presenting the risen Jesus’ teaching to his disciples is observed in a number of early Christian texts, such as the Apocryphon of John, the Sophia of Jesus Christ, Pistis Sophia, the Dialogue of the Savior, the Letter of Peter to Philip, and the First Apocalypse of James. The post-resurrection settings for the texts, the risen Jesus and his followers as the main characters, and the presentation of Jesus’ teaching in the form of the dialogue among them seem to be the characteristic features of these texts. By using the phrase the ‘Gnostic revelation dialogue,’ Perkins views such common features as suggesting a specific genre. According to her, the texts with these common features were used as the vehicles for advancing the so-called ‘Gnostic’ teaching and can be comparable to the canonical narrative gospels, used to promote the kerygma of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The genre of the

81 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 108.
82 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 68.
‘Gnostic revelation dialogue’ was used by Gnostic Christians in the similar manner that the genre of ‘Gospel’ was used by orthodox Christians.

However, as Tuckett points out, the use of a dialogue as a literary vehicle for presenting certain philosophical teachings was widespread in antiquity. A series of the followers’ questions and teachers’ answers to them were widely used as a means to teaching. What is peculiar to the Gospel of Mary is that the risen Jesus’ dialogue with his disciples is restricted to the initial narrative. The major part of the text is not the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples but rather Mary’s recounting of her dialogue with Jesus followed by her vision. Moreover, the contents of the risen Jesus’ teaching, though they are conveyed by the literary genre of a dialogue in certain early Christians texts, do not necessarily present the so-called ‘Gnostic’ thought characterized by the dualistic creation myth with the demiurgical creator (e.g., the Gospel of Mary, the Epistula Apostolorum). King notes such problematic use of the term ‘Gnostic’ attached to the genre of dialogue and rather calls the Gospel of Mary a ‘post-resurrection dialogue.’

Another problem entailed in using the term ‘dialogue’ in referring to the genre of the Gospel of Mary is the lengthy development of the narrative about the interactions among the characters. Although some call such narrative ‘a series of dialogues,’ the portrayal of the interactions between comforting Mary and the distressed disciples, and between Mary and Peter before Mary’s lengthy monologue, and later among Andrew, Peter, Mary, and Levi cannot be covered by the generic description ‘dialogue.’ The genre for such lengthy portrayal should be

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86 Perkins says that the Epistula Apostolorum seems an orthodox attempt to use Gnostic opponents’ genre to counter their teaching. Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 26 n. 2.
87 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 30. For the critique and discussion about tying the genre of the dialogue with the ‘Gnostic’ teaching content, see Martina Janßen, “Mystagogus Gnosticus? Zur Gattung der ‘Gnostischen Grespräche des Auferstandenen,’” in Studien zur Gnosis, ed. Gerd Lüdemann (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1999), 21–260.
88 For example, King says that the text is structured as a series of dialogues and departures: (1) the dialogue between the Savior and the disciples, followed by the Savior’s departure; (2) the dialogue among the disciples, followed by their departure (or Levi’s departure) to preach the gospel; (3) the dialogue between the Savior and Mary, ending in her silence; (4) the dialogues between the soul and the Powers, culminating in the soul’s departure from the world to its final resting place. See King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 30.
more appropriately called ‘narrative.’ Tuckett similarly comments on the peculiarity of the text:

“Jesus’ teaching is followed by the doubts of the disciples and Mary’s efforts to comfort them; Mary’s teaching is followed by the debate involving Peter, Andrew and Levi. It is not easy to find parallels to these features in the other so-called ‘revelation discourses’ or ‘dialogue gospels.’” 89

The final form of the Gospel of Mary includes the risen Jesus’ two revelations in a narrative framework. The narrative framework functions to combine the two revelations together. Concerning the revelations, some scholars relate them with Jewish apocalyptic traditions and even call the Gospel of Mary a ‘Gnostic apocalypse’. 90 The idea that divine teaching comes through conversation with the deity is widespread in antiquity and Jewish apocalypses routinely have heavenly journeys or visions, in which the conversation between the seer and an angelic guide is presented as a vehicle for the interpretation of what the seer has seen. 91

The artificiality of the questions on the parts of the disciples in their conversation with the risen Jesus, according to Perkins, points that such conversation does not represent a real one. 92 Pedagogical questions and answers occur as part of divine revelation, intended to present the text’s particular teaching on, for example, the problem of sin of the world (Gos. Mary 7:12). The artificial narrative frame of the Gospel of Mary is also intended to promote the text’s teaching presented in the two revelations. The narrative setting not only holds together the two revelations but also functions to authenticate the contents as true or reliable.


91 Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 19-20. “Since the Nag Hammadi writings provide many examples of esoteric Jewish traditions, the affinities between Gnostic dialogues and Jewish apocalypses probably indicate the genera in which those traditions were handed on in Gnostic circles . . . All the surviving examples seem to be operating with a genre which they expect their readers to recognize.” Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 41.

When it comes to the discussion of the literary unity of the *Gospel of Mary*, thus, a keen attention to such intended role or function of the narrative frame is required. Peter’s inconsistent attitude towards Mary, positive in the initial narrative yet negative in the later narrative, has posed a difficulty to some interpreters. In order to account for it, some suggest that the two scenes originally existed separately were combined clumsily later.\(^93\) Pasquier, for example, suggests that Peter’s negative attitude (*Gos. Mary* 17:16-22) is about Mary’s use of the word ‘us’ in *Gos. Mary* 9:19-20: “. . . for he has prepared us and made us into human beings.” Pasquier understands Peter as opposing Mary because, in his view, Mary cannot be a ‘human being’ because she is a woman.\(^94\) According to her, the literary coherency can be achieved if the original text did not include the contents in *Gos. Mary* 9:21-17:15.\(^95\) Pasquier’s argument is based on her assumption that what is at stake of the debate is the gender issue, viz. misogynic Peter’s rejection of the possibility of a woman becoming an androgy. She understands Peter as representing the orthodox stance that prohibits female leadership.\(^96\) It is doubtful that Pasquier’s assumption about Peter’s objection of Mary’s androgynous status as the main issue, and her explanation of Peter’s inconsistent attitude, can be explained by removing the later part of the narrative. In fact, Peter’s mention of the term ‘secretly’ can be made sense only by presupposing the preceding accounts of Mary’s revelation.\(^97\)

Walter C. Till argues that the two stories were originally separate, not because of Peter’s inconsistency but because of the difference in the main characters: the Savior in the initial narrative (*Gos. Mary* 7:1-9:5) and Mary in the later one (*Gos. Mary* 9:6-19:2).\(^98\) His argument,

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\(^94\) See Pasquier, *L’Evangile selon Marie*, 5-10; 96-101.

\(^95\) Both Pasquier and Renate Schmid view the later part of the text is secondary to the first part, viz. redactional expansion. In Pasquier’s view, the later part may contain an earlier tradition about Mary’s revelation discourse. Pasquier, *L’Evangile selon Marie*, 9-10; Schmid, *Maria Magdalena in gnostischen Schriften*, 18.


\(^97\) For the critique and discussion of Pasquier’s view, see Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 103.

which is based on the lack of a role for Mary in the first part of the text seems problematic, because there is no way to know whether she appears in the missing first six pages or not. Puech, like Till, concludes that only the later section, in which Mary plays an important role, is “At any rate the title ‘Gospel of Mary’ is strictly appropriate.”99 For him, the difference in the genre of the two sections is the main reason for his argument. While the risen Savior’s conversation with his disciples seems typical of Gnostic texts, the later part about Mary’s vision is exceptional and, thus, this dissimilarity points to the text’s literary disunity. However, as discussed above, designating a portion of a text that utilizes dialogic pedagogy as belonging to a specific genre (i.e., the ‘Gnostic revelation dialogue) seems problematic. All these explanations for the difference in Peter’s attitude towards Mary, in the main characters, and in the genre seem unsatisfactory and fail to take account of the role of the narrative frame, its structure, content, and composition.

Marjanen advocates the text’s literary unity, because Peter’s inconsistent attitude may be explained in terms of the plot development.100 King takes the similar position. Peter’s sudden antagonism does not mean that the later part of the text was clumsily attached to the first one. Rather, Peter’s abrupt negative response to Mary can be explained by that Peter is simply not prepared for what Mary said, which “went far beyond Peter’s expectation.”101 According to Erika Mohri, Levi’s statement about Peter’s hot-temperedness explains why Peter acts so negatively.102 Since the text itself provides the reason for Peter’s inconsistency, Peter’s different attitude towards Mary does not necessarily point to the text’s literary disunity.

While it is possible that the composer of the Gospel of Mary used earlier source materials (e.g., the two revelations of the risen Savior), the literary sources of the Gospel of Mary, if any, are unknown. Most scholars acknowledge the difficulty of postulating how the text came to be in

99 Puech and Blatz, “The Gospel of Mary,” 1:395. Puech understands that the second part of the story begins with Peter’s invitation of Mary to tell the Savior’s teaching (Gos. Mary 10:1-19:2).
100 Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 103-104.
101 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 84.
the present form. The text’s unity or integrity has been advocated mainly because there is no compelling reason for doubting it. Mohri examines the text and found a number of features that suggest its literary integrity. She observes how the different parts of the text are closely related to each other, by presupposing or echoing each other. For example, similar motifs and vocabulary appear both in Levi’s remark in the ending scene and in the risen Savior’s words in the earlier part of the text. The latter part presupposes and echoes the former one. Many other scholars argue for the text’s integrity, based on the similarities in the form and content of the two parts of the narrative.103

Ardyth L. Bass’s study on the redactional seams, vocabulary, style, and theme of the Gospel of Mary is insightful in understanding text’s composition and structure.104 Bass investigates into the Coptic text’s internal clues that shed light on the redactor’s compositional strategies and theological interest. The symmetrical structure of the two parts (7:1-9:24 and 10:1-19:5) is demonstrated by a form-critical identification of transitional keywords, catchwords, redactional elements, and thematic parallels. These features point to the deliberate composition of the text, which may shed light on the text’s purpose and function. According to her, the text’s narrative structure, that includes the scene of controversy and its resolution by Levi’s concluding remark, can be viewed as an ‘expanded pronouncement story,’ an example for which can be found in the canonical story of the anointing in Mark 14:3-9//Matt 26:6-13. Bass is critical of the previous dominant scholarly interest in the figure Mary rather than the text itself. She does not conflate the identity of Mary with Mary Magdalene because this identification is not verified by the text, and may frame the interpretation of the text in a biased way.105 She is also critical of feminist biblical studies’ approach to the Gospel of Mary, which is mainly concerned with a


104 Ardyth L. Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary’” (Ph.D., Marquette University, 2007).

105 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary,’” 16.
quest for evidence for female leadership. It is because the previous studies, with such limited interests, tends to interpret the text within the assumed framework of a tension between Mary Magdalene and Peter over the church leadership issue, without paying adequate attention to the text’s structure, content, and compositional strategies.

The present study agrees with Bass on the danger of the assumed framework in interpreting the *Gospel of Mary*, especially its portrayal of the debate among the characters. While Bass is wary of feminist biblical studies’ narrow interest in the figure Mary and the gender issue in interpreting the *Gospel of Mary*, the present study notes the danger of dealing with the debate scene as a window to the past, losing sight of its literary role and function in its own narrative context. While Bass utilizes a form-critical identification of the text’s structure and the function of the debate scene and examines the compositional strategies of the redactor, this study will utilize narrative criticism to investigate into the text’s rhetorical strategies and literary logic to understand the meaning of the portrayal of the debate among the characters.

1.4 Definition and Discussion of ‘Gnosticism’

The most problematic kind of the framework for the interpretation of the *Gospel of Mary* seems the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox binary. There is a danger in such a retrojective reading, on the basis of the assumed ‘Gnostic’ character of the text. The definition of the term ‘Gnosticism’ has been much debated since the discovery of a set of the Coptic writings near Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. The Nag Hammadi codices represent a striking variety of early Christian models. Scholarly interest in the diversity of early Christianity has produced many studies on defining and categorizing canonical and non-canonical early Christian texts, according to what seems distinctive of each text. Certain names have become associated with the diverse early Christian groups and functioned as designations of discrete bounded entities, such as ‘Jewish Christianity,’

‘Pauline Christianity,’ ‘Johannine Christianity,’ ‘Gnostic Christianity,’ ‘proto-orthodox Christianity,’ ‘the Valentinians,’ ‘the Montanists,’ ‘the Marcionites,’ and ‘the Encratites.’

Defining a stream of Christian tradition, by discovering its legitimating essence, entails a danger of distorting other ‘streams’ by exaggerating the differences between them, as if some features identified as one stream’s essence did not exist at all in the other streams. David Brakke also points out the problem of highlighting one form of Christianity at the cost of the others. The following is one of the examples for such problem: “For example, . . . the Montanists differed from the proto-orthodox by allowing women to hold leadership positions in their churches . . . but to do so they relied on highly charismatic and therefore poorly organized mode of church structure.”

In order to discover and define the Montanists’ legitimating essence, which clearly differentiates them from other Christians, female leadership and charismatic (or prophetic) works are highlighted, at the cost of denying the possibility of such features in other streams of Christian tradition, viz. the proto-orthodox. However, scholars are increasingly less inclined to define one group at the cost of others. Such practice does not do justice to the complexity of early Christian situation.

When it comes to the means (i.e. by private revelation) and the agent (i.e., through Mary a woman) in the Gospel of Mary, what have been identified by modern scholars as the essential features of Gnostic Christianity may influence the interpretation of the text. For example, the charismatic or prophetic works and female leadership have functioned as the Montanists’ legitimating, essential features. The risen Savior’s teaching transmitted by private revelation and through Mary a woman in the Gospel of Mary have been understood similarly. The charismatic or prophetic activity of a woman has been assumed as constituting the underlying Gnostic group’s essential features, which cannot be found in the competing proto-orthodox group represented by Peter. For example, Pagels says, “At least three heretical circles . . . included women who took positions of leadership—the Marcionites, the Montanists, and the Carpocratians. But from the year 200, we have no evidence for women taking prophetic, priestly,

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and episcopal roles among orthodox churches.” Pagels then uses the scene of the debate in the *Gospel of Mary* as an evidence for orthodox leadership’s denial of women’s activity. Scholars like Pagels assume the framework of the ‘heretical’ (including the Gnostic) versus ‘orthodox’ binary, and whether women’s activity was accepted or not as key factors that differentiate one group from the other. In other words, the acceptance of women’s activity is assumed to constitute the legitimating essence of the non-orthodox streams of Christianity, including the group behind the *Gospel of Mary*.

As in the case of the Montanists, the rationale for the acceptance of women’s activity in the heretical groups is based on the assumption of the more fundamental differences between the heretical and orthodox groups in regard to charismatic or prophetic works. The acceptance of women’s activity in the former was possible, because the groups accepted charismatic works mediated by women. In turn, the denial of women’s activity in the latter is explained by their contrary attitude toward charismatic works. Attaching an essential feature to a group as a defining characteristic, at the cost of other groups, can be observed in this rationale. While pro-charismatic attitude becomes the basis for women’s activity in the heretical groups, anti-charismatic attitude becomes associated with the orthodox groups as an essential, defining feature, which functions to differentiate them from the heretical groups. The interpretation of what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ and by ‘openly’ in the *Gospel of Mary* has been influenced by this binary of the pro-charismatic heretical groups and the anti-charismatic orthodox groups. Peter’s negative reaction to Mary is interpreted on the basis of the assumption of contrasting stances concerning charismatic works, which are then attached to the two underlying groups as their defining features.

The scholarly attempts to define a stream of Christian tradition by discovering what is legitimating essence to it, thus, entails a danger of depriving any possibility of the same features from the other streams. Rigid boundaries have been drawn between Gnostic Christianity the proto-orthodox Christianity as discrete, firmly bounded systems. The category ‘Gnosticism,’ which exists only by presupposing ‘orthodox’ category, is defined in terms of a series of

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characteristics, which function to show how different or deviant it is from the category ‘orthodox.’ Dualistic categories of Gnosticism and orthodox are the invention of modern scholars, constructed retrospectively on the basis of early Christian heresiological discourse. There is the tendency of exaggerating between the gap between the two categories, by assigning certain contrasting characteristics to them. The interpretation of what Peter means by ‘secretly’ and ‘openly’ in terms of the two means of conveying Jesus’ teaching tradition (i.e., the ‘secret’ means or private revelation, the ‘open’ means or the publicly available apostolic tradition) reflects such a practice.

As mentioned earlier, scholars increasingly see such attempts to define one group at the cost of others as not doing justice to the complexity of early Christian situation. Michael A. Williams and King are among those who note the problems involved in the definition and use of the category ‘Gnosticism.’**112** Williams demonstrates how the variety of materials classified under the category ‘Gnosticism’ exhibit too much or too little features for being called ‘Gnostic.’ King also points out the inadequacy of the category ‘Gnosticism’ to characterize the various materials: “The synthetic character of typological definitions also works to project a false and artificial uniformity onto what are quite varied phenomena. By erasing or at least submerging the differences among Gnostic phenomena, typology hides the problem of variety rather than resolves it.”**113**

The *Gospel of Mary*, likewise, exhibits too little features for being called justifiably ‘Gnostic,’ if typological definition of Gnosticism is applied. Scholars widely use typological methodology in defining ‘Gnosticism,’ though they do not agree with each other exactly what characteristics may constitute the category ‘Gnosticism.’ The most popular choice for scholars in defining what constitute a ‘Gnostic’ writing or ‘Gnosticism’ is the dualistic cosmogeny with the distinction between a true God in the higher realm and the demiurgical creator in the lower realm.**114** In fact, if dualistic cosmogeny and the demiurgical creator are the definitive

112 Williams, Rethinking “gnosticism”; King, *What Is Gnosticism?*


characteristics that constitute a ‘Gnostic’ writing, more than half of the works in the so-called ‘Gnostic library’ should be removed from the list. The Gospel of Mary is not ‘Gnostic’ in this sense, because there is no mention of such an inferior creator figure. As Tuckett does, some may argue that the Savior’s revelation about the rise of the soul presupposes the so-called Gnostic, dualistic cosmology. However, the soul’s ascent from a lower realm to a higher realm itself is hardly a particularly ‘Gnostic’ idea, because such conception and language are commonplaces of ancient philosophy. Tuckett defines the category ‘Gnosticism’ differently, by sticking to the emphasis on ‘Gnosis’ or knowledge as an legitimating essence, that is contrasted to the emphasis on faith as the legitimating essence of ‘orthodox’ category. However, since both revealed knowledge and faith are part of early Christian soteriological discourse, the binary of knowledge versus faith seems too artificial and oversimplifying, hardly what is essential in the Gnostic and orthodox categories.

The use of the problematic category ‘Gnosticism,’ defined over against the category ‘orthodox,’ has been subject to criticism. Rather than drawing rigid boundary lines between the diverse expressions of early Christians as fixed and discrete entities, a new perspective for dealing with them is required. According to King, “An alternative approach is to reconceive religious tradition and identity in terms of continuity in difference.” She says, “Religious are not fixed entities with a determinate essence or decisive moment of pure origination. They are constructions that require assiduous, ongoing labor to maintain in the face of both contested

115 Concerning the variety of materials which differ from each other in their most basic characteristics, Joseph Dan says, “it is futile to search for a “common denominator” for all of them which could serve as a definition.” Dan, “Jewish Gnosticism?,” 317. Instead of the category ‘Gnosticism,’ Williams proposes a new category ‘biblical demiurgical’ as an alternative for the texts that include the dualistic cosmogeny and the demiurgical figure. Williams, *Rethinking “gnosticism,“* 265.


118 King, “Why All the Controversy?,” 69. For the discussion of the difficulty of classifying the Gospel of Mary as ‘Gnostic’ according to the typological definition of ‘Gnosticism,’ see De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary,* 32-34; 52-56; 204-205.


power relations within, and porous, overlapping boundaries with traditions without. Relations among such traditions therefore cannot properly be conceived as stable or neat."  

"Continuity in difference" is an alternative model for understanding the relations among diverse early Christian expressions. It "affirms that tradition and identity are not pure and fixed but constantly in processes of formation, deformation, and reformation if they are alive." The hybrid and fluid situation of early Christians in building their religious identities in both continuity and discontinuity with the previous traditions should be taken account of. There existed no fixed or stable categories or boundaries, such as the Gnostic or the orthodox as historical entities. What is needed is, rather than essentializing and homogenizing, the close reading of each distinct text in order to understand its own making sense of the world and Christian vision of salvation.

The present study on the Gospel of Mary approaches it as a distinct text, which presents its own vision of the world and Christian life in both continuity and discontinuity with the previous traditions. Since the assumed Gnostic character of the text and the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox categories have influenced the interpretation of the debate scene, this study will begin with De Boer’s assertion that it should be read independently of any assumptions that Mary is the revealer of Gnostic insights and that the Gospel of Mary is the earliest evidence of the Gnostic Mary traditions. In this study, the typological definition of ‘Gnosticism’ is used, in the sense that De Boer understands it and that King problematizes it. What constitute a Gnostic writing will be defined as containing the conception of dualistic cosmogeny and the demiurgical creator figure and, thus, the Gospel of Mary will be dealt with without assuming that such cosmological speculation underlies the text. As King problematizes the binary of the Gnostic versus orthodox categories, this study understands the category ‘Gnosticism’ as an artificial construct with a series of essentializing characteristics, assigned by modern scholars to differentiate it from the category ‘orthodox.’

123 See De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 10, 52-56.
1.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the dominant scholarly approach to the meaning of the debate in the *Gospel of Mary* and the underlying assumptions that influenced the interpretation of the scene. The survey of previous studies showed that they focused their attention on historical concerns, and treated the text as a window into the past. The debate scene has been viewed as pointing to a polemic either against the Petrine (or apostolic) tradition in the context of the inter-group conflict, or against Peter, who represents patriarchal leadership in the context of the intra-group conflict. Peter’s statement has been interpreted in a biased way, within the assumed frame of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox binary and feminist interpreters’ particular interest in gender issues. What Peter meant by ‘secretly’ and by ‘a woman’ has been regarded as pointing to the two disputable issues which were at stake in the historical inter-group or intra-group conflict. The reason for the inclusion of the debate scene has been interpreted to counter the historical opponents’ irreconcilably different views on private revelation and female leadership.

After dealing with the preliminary considerations about the text, provenance, date, genre, and literary unity of the *Gospel of Mary*, this chapter discussed the problematic category ‘Gnosticism,’ constructed by modern scholars over against the category ‘orthodox.’ The danger of defining it at the cost of the other, by assigning certain contrasting, essential characteristics to the two categories has been explained. Such flawed attempts to define the category ‘Gnosticism’ at the cost of the other possibly has resulted in a biased understanding of the means (i.e. by private revelation) and the agent (i.e., through Mary a woman) of the risen Savior’s teaching in the *Gospel of Mary*. In order to understand the meaning and purpose of the debate scene without assuming the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox framework, this study will employ a typological definition of ‘Gnosticism’ as defined by De Boer. The *Gospel of Mary* will not be interpreted as inherently ‘Gnostic.’ Rather it will be read on its own, without assuming certain characteristics attached to ‘Gnosticism’ by modern scholars.

The present study will develop an alternative approach to the meaning and function of the debate scene, by reading it, not with what is exterior to the text but with what is interior to the text. Through the use of narrative criticism this study will explore the normative story world, to determine how the portrayal of the debate among the characters can be read in its own literary context.
2.1 Premises and Procedure of Narrative Criticism

Narrative criticism is the major methodology in this study. Narrative criticism was developed in the late twentieth century by the New Testament scholars as an eclectic form of literary criticism for interpreting the Gospels. Narrative criticism attempts to analyze the normative world of the story by employing the heuristic concepts of the implied author and the implied reader. It views the text as the communication between the implied author and the implied reader, both of whom are constructed from the text. It examines the implied reader’s anticipated response to the clues provided by the implied author, who seeks to communicate his message or point of view. What distinguishes the present study from the previous studies, mainly interested in ‘the world behind the text,’ is its exploration of ‘the world within the text,’ as the immediate context for understanding the debate scene. Different reading strategies may yield different interpretations. A literary approach, specifically a narrative-critical approach to the debate scene, begins with certain premises to explore the normative narrative world. This chapter will clarify the methodology, its premises and procedure, the theories of characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting, and the conception of ‘expected reading.’

Narrative criticism’s premises are concerned with fundamental issues like the nature of the text and meaning, the process of the production of meaning, and the role of cultural context. First of all, a text is viewed as a literary artifact, a self-contained whole. Secondly, a text is

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2 John A. Darr identifies the following four premises that undergird literary theories: (1) texts are stable, but schematic, linguistic entities. (2) All texts function rhetorically. (3) Meaning inheres in neither text nor reader alone, but is produced in and through their interaction. (4) The writing, reading, and interpretation of texts do not occur in a vacuum, but rather are conditioned and enabled by cultural context(s). See Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1992), 17.
understood as a motivated discourse, designed to evoke certain cognitive, emotional, and ideological responses in the implied reader. Meaning in this sense is understood as impact or effect rather than merely as message. Thirdly, meaning is not inherent in a text but is generated in and through a dialogical process, the interaction between a text and the implied reader. The implied reader’s reading is guided by the textual clues, which provide a criterion for establishing a range of critically acceptable interpretations. Lastly, cultural context both enables and constrains the generation of meaning.

2.1.1 Text as a Self-Contained Whole

The premise that the text is a self-contained whole is crucial in understanding the meaning of the debate scene in the larger narrative context of the *Gospel of Mary*. When the text is read narrative-critically, the final form of the text is the object of investigation. Since the literary coherency of the text is the basis of a narrative-critical investigation, a part of the text is viewed to contribute to the whole, and the whole is understood to provide a context for understanding a part. The interpretation of the portrayal of the controversy among the characters is, thus, to be read not in isolation but against the whole narrative context of the extant pages of *Gospel of Mary* (i.e., pp. 7-10, 15-19 of the BG8502 text). A synchronic analysis of the whole narrative explores the meaning and role of the debate scene, not with what is exterior to the text but primarily with what is in the text. It will begin with the textual clues and the text’s own literary logic in the interpretation of the portrayal of the controversy among the characters.

As mentioned earlier, Peter’s abrupt negative attitude to Mary in the debate scene has posed a difficulty to scholars, because it is contrasted to his positive attitude in the gospel’s earlier scene, in which he respectfully invites Mary to tell the Savior’s teaching revealed only to her (10:1-6; POxy 3525 14-17). In order to account for the difficulty, some interpreters suggest that the two scenes originally existed separately and were combined clumsily later. A narrative critic would not try to resolve the interpretive difficulty simply by such a source-critical suggestion. Rather, the characterization of Peter is to be examined as a rhetorical device meant to

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3 See the discussion of the literary unity of the *Gospel of Mary* in chapter 1, § 1.3 Genre and Literary Unity
impact the reader. Peter’s interactions with Mary, first positive and later negative, constitute the events, which form the plot. Since the text is a motivated discourse, designed to evoke certain cognitive, emotional, and ideological responses in the implied reader, the purpose of such characterization and emplotment is to convey the implied author’s normative evaluative point of view to the implied reader, by guiding his or her reading experience. The ‘what’ and ‘how’ (or ‘story’ and ‘discourse’) of the whole narrative of the Gospel of Mary, thus, should be examined to make sense of its part, its rhetorical function in its larger literary context.

2.1.2 Text as a Motivated Discourse

In the Gospel of Mary as a motivated discourse, the portrayal of the interactions among the characters belongs to the implied author’s rhetorical means to evoke certain responses in the implied reader. Narrative criticism utilizes the conceptions of the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of a narrative to examine the text as a motivated discourse. One of the secular literary critics influential in the field of biblical literary criticism is Seymour Chatman, who conceptualizes a narrative text as consisting of ‘story’ and ‘discourse.’ Chatman says that ‘story’ is “the content or chain of events (action, happenings), plus what may be called existents (characters, items of setting)” and ‘discourse’ is “the expression, the means by which the context is communicated.” A story refers to the ‘what’ of the narrative such as the events, characters, and settings and a discourse refers to the ‘how’ of the narrative, the means by which the story is presented. While the story level of the narrative is about ‘what’ actually happens in the narrative, the discourse level of the narrative is about ‘how’ the narrative connects with the reader. Plot is about the movement of the events in which the characters interact with each other. Chatman says that “the events in a story are turned into a plot by its discourse, the modus of presentation.” While the events belong to the story

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4 Although Marjanen did not conduct an extensive literary study on the Gospel of Mary, he approached Peter’s inconsistent attitude to Mary from a literary-critical perspective. According to him, the seemingly inconsistent portrayal of Peter can be due to a development of the text’s plot, not because of the inner inconsistency of the two sources. Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 103-104.

5 Chatman, Story and Discourse, 19.

6 Chatman, Story and Discourse, 43.
level of the narrative, shaping the order of the events belongs to the discourse level of the narrative.

The present study naturally considers the story level of the *Gospel of Mary*, viz. the events, characters, and setting. However, this study will especially attentive to the discourse level, to the techniques or means by which the implied reader is led to embrace the narrative’s normative evaluative point of view. ‘How’ the implied reader is guided to perceive the characters and the interactions among them, which form the plot, will be examined. The *Gospel of Mary* is without doubt an emplotted story. It presents a narrative about the risen Savior and the disciples including Mary in the post-resurrection setting. As a motivated discourse, it has a basic chain of the events that the characters appear and interact with each other to evoke certain cognitive, emotional, and ideological responses in the implied reader. The risen Savior’s teaching, the longest part of the text, is told in a certain way in order to impact the implied reader. The portrayal of the debate among the characters, thus, should be approached primarily as a rhetorical means to convey to the implied reader the narrative’s normative evaluative point of view, presented as the risen Savior’s message.

Since the interactions among the characters form events and plot, the analysis of the literary characters and their relationship with each other is required to understand the ‘how’ of the narrative. While the characters belong to the story level of the narrative, characterization belongs to the discourse level of the narrative. The characters in the narrative do not exist on their own, but only in relationship to the other characters. The characters fundamentally exist for the implied reader, because characterization or character-building process is one of the rhetorical strategies for persuading the reader to embrace the implied author’s desired message or impact.\(^7\) It is important to analyze how characters and characterization contribute to the rhetoric of the *Gospel of Mary* narrative, in order to properly understand the debate scene’s desired impact on the implied reader.

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2.1.3 The Generation of Meaning in a Dialogical Process

The premise that meaning is not inherent in a text but is generated in and through a dialogical process is mainly based on Wolfgang Iser’s literary theory. Iser’s view on how meaning is generated is based on Roman Ingarden’s study of the phenomenology of literature, which puts an emphasis on the actions involved in responding to the text. By conceptualizing meaning as coming into existence upon the interaction between the reader and the text, Iser moves significantly beyond the formalist approach to the text as a solid object whose meaning is self-evident. Iser understands a text as a skeletal framework or a schema riddled with ‘gaps’ and indeterminacies. For a satisfactory reading experience, the reader continually tries to build a consistent and coherent narrative world by filling in the ‘gaps’ with the clues in the text.

Narrative criticism is fundamentally a text-centered approach which examined how the text guides the implied reader’s cognitive, ideological, and emotional response to it. The implied reader fully expects the text to provide sufficient data and guidance to construct a narrative world that hangs together and makes sense. The implied reader participates in the generation of meaning in and through his or her interaction with the text, and the textual clues provide a criterion for establishing a range of critically acceptable interpretations. For the present study, the debate scene’s meaning or desired impact on the implied reader is to be explored primarily based on what is in the text. The narrative’s notable ‘gap,’ that should be filled in by the implied reader on the basis of the textual clues, is the portrayal of Peter’s negative attitude towards Mary, contrasted to his positive one in the earlier scene. This study’s primary interest is in understanding the literary function of the portrayal of the controversy in the Gospel of Mary. It will explain for what rhetorical effect it was included in the text.

King questions the purpose of the controversy in the Gospel of Mary: “The Gospel of Mary clearly sides with Mary and Levi against Andrew and Peter, but why question Mary’s

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8 Iser, The Act of Reading; Darr, On Character Building, 18.
integrity at all if the work wishes to affirm her teaching?"\textsuperscript{11} King’s question seems to reflect literary concerns. Her question is important in order to properly understand the scene in its own literary context and according to its internal literary logic. However, King does not answer such an important question literary-critically, but instead reflects the modern scholarly tendency in approaching it. She says, “Modern commentators have suggested that this scene reflects real conflicts, in which Peter and Mary (or Peter/Andrew and Mary/Levi) represent different positions under debate or different groups in conflict with each other within second century Christianity.”\textsuperscript{12} King answers the question with the predetermined anti-Peter polemical framework, rather than on the basis of internal textual clues.

In regard to the argument for the text’s anti-Peter polemic, the relatively ‘mild,’ ‘unpolematic,’ and ‘unhostile’ character of the debate should be noted, as Tuckett points out.\textsuperscript{13} Tuckett’s observance seems contrary to the previous scholarly tendency to exaggerate the gap between the two parties involved in the debate, as if there is irreconcilable division between them. Tuckett notes that how Mary and Peter are favorably addressed by each other (i.e., “sister,” “my brother”) and how the exchange between them is scarcely a ‘quarrel.’\textsuperscript{14} Tuckett, as others do, approaches the debate scene with historical concerns to learn about ‘the world behind the text.’ He concludes that its relatively unhostile tone may attest to a fairly early stage of the division between the ‘Gnostic’ and ‘orthodox’ Christians, which have not yet been developed into any ‘us versus them’ mentality.\textsuperscript{15} A narrative critic, however, may account for the presence of the debate scene differently. Why does the implied author include the relatively unpolemical and unhostile debate, while he or she sides with Mary and Levi and wishes to affirm the risen Savior’s teaching presented as a revelation to Mary? The debate scene’s desired impact on the implied reader, or meaning generated in and through the interaction between the text and the implied reader, should

\textsuperscript{11} King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 85.
\textsuperscript{12} King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 85.
\textsuperscript{14} Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 202.
be examined not in the assumed anti-Peter polemical context, but in its own literary context. The argument that the character Peter is used in the *Gospel of Mary* for polemical purpose should be verified by a narrative-critical investigation into how the implied reader is guided to perceive the character Peter and his relationship with Mary. Such study will be carried out by filling in the textual gaps and constructing connections between aspects of a narrative, in sequential and cumulative reading process, to build a consistent and coherent narrative world.

### 2.1.4 The Role of Cultural Context in the Generation of Meaning

Cultural context both enables and conditions the interpretation of the text. As no text comes into existence in a vacuum, so does no interpretation of the text. Cultural context here refers to the repertoire of cultural knowledge that the implied reader brings to the text. The dialogical process between what the text brings to the implied reader and what the implied reader brings to the text is the means by which meaning is generated. This text-reception complex, viz. the process of text reception or meaning-making, is embedded in the complex network of factors, which consist of the system of the presuppositions of both the implied author and the implied reader.

Darr quotes from E. D. Hirsch who argues that it is crucial to take account of the role of cultural knowledge or “cultural literacy” in reading with comprehension: “. . . the network of information that all competent readers possess. It is the background information, stored in their minds, that enables them to take up a newspaper and read it with an adequate level of comprehension, getting to the point, grasping the implications, relating what they read to the unstated context which alone gives meaning to what they read.” Darr calls what Hirsch refers to as the “unstated context” the “extratext.” Darr says that, though the text itself is the data needed to find guidance in reading upcoming passages, sometimes the reader must turn to the extratexts to fill in the “gaps.” The extratexts refer to all the knowledge that the implied reader is

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expected to have. They include the following: (1) language, (2) social norms and cultural script, (3) classical or canonical literature, (4) literary conventions (e.g., standard plots, stock characters, type scenes, genres), and (5) commonly-known historical and geographical facts.\textsuperscript{18}

In the present study on the controversy in the \textit{Gospel of Mary}, what the implied reader is expected to bring to the text is crucial in understanding what is at stake in the debate. Scholars who interpret the debate in the context of an inter-group conflict tend to exaggerate the gap between the two groups, as if one group did not accept private revelation as the reliable mode of conveying the risen Savior’s teaching. What is at stake in the debate, according to them, is the two different views on divine revelation including visionary experience. However, the interpretation of what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ and ‘openly’ with the assumption of the pro-charismatic versus anti-charismatic stance, represented by the two parties involved in the debate, is based on the problematic Gnostic versus orthodox framework. As this study will demonstrate, in the story world of the \textit{Gospel of Mary} Peter never denies the possibility that divine revelation can be given to a divinely favored, virtuous figure. Peter’s statement in the debate scene should be read in consideration of the implied reader’s expected knowledge of the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person. The cultural and literary conventions involved in divine revelation are very important in properly understanding what Peter says and what is at stake in the debate from the implied reader’s perspective.

2.2 Theories of Characterization, Emploiment, and Point-of-View Crafting

2.2.1 Characters and Characterization

Literary theories about characters and characterization will be outlined in this section, before proceeding to a focused investigation into the characters in the \textit{Gospel of Mary}. As rhetorical means, characters and characterization exert persuasive force upon the implied reader in his or

\textsuperscript{18} Darr, \textit{On Character Building}, 22.
her accepting or assimilating the narrative’s normative point of view, worldview, and values. Darr’s theoretical model about characterization or character-building has made an immense impact on the narrative-critical analysis of the characters in the gospel accounts. His theory of character-building process is based on Iser’s theory of reading process, in which the implied reader builds a consistent and coherent narrative by filling in the textual gaps based on the textual clues. Darr finds what is missing in Iser’s treatment of the reader’s role, viz. the importance of taking account of the cultural context of the implied reader in understanding how a text is read.

Darr sets out his own four-fold approach to characterization. First, Darr argues that the analysis of a given character needs to be holistic and contextual. Following Iser, he says that the implied reader’s desire to build consistency among discrete textual data should be taken into account in character-building. By ‘holistic’ he means that the implied reader sees the character as operating in a consistent and coherent manner throughout the whole narrative. By ‘contextual’ he means that the implied reader builds the character within the context of the narrative’s plot, the network of relationships among the characters in the story world, and the narrative’s cultural and physical settings.

Secondly, he says that the analysis of the character should be sequential and cumulative. Since the implied reader’s experience of the character in reading process is sequential, following the implied reader’s successive construction and assessment of the character is essential. One important observation relevant to the implied reader’s sequential reading is that the ancient texts like the New Testament are basically the documents written for an oral-aural communication. The reader, more precisely the hearer, is expected to experience the narrative sequentially as he or she encounters the spoken words in sequence. Without a thorough knowledge of the whole narrative, without knowing what lies ahead, the hearer is engaging in a dynamic enterprise. The whole reading process is an evolving process of anticipation, frustration, retrospection, reconstruction, and satisfaction. Iser says, “We look forward, we look back, we decide, we

change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject; this is the dynamic process of recreation.”

Thirdly, Darr emphasizes the importance of taking account of extratexts, as discussed above. In discussing the ontology of a literary character, Darr says that the reader speculates about what a character did before appearing in a particular episode and what he or she will do when that scene ends. It is because of the ‘illusion of individuality’ which attends literary characters. Such speculation and anticipation are the normal aspects of the reading process. Speculation and anticipation concerning a character help the reader to fill in the gaps and build connections within the text. The implied reader continually supplements the character-building by inferring from extratexts familiar from other texts and from life. The knowledge of the extratexts, especially literary conventions in regard to stock characters or type scene, is important in understanding narrative characters in ancient works, because they were “largely illustrative, symbolic, and typed, rather than representational, mimetic, and heterodox as they tend to be in modern novels.” What should be noted at this point is that, while extratexts help the implied reader to fill in the gaps in regard to literary character, the primary limiting and shaping framework for character-building process is the narrative context. As Darr explains, “Even those characters based on historical personages must, therefore, be construed and assessed according to the constraints of the specific narrative within which they appear.”

Lastly, Darr says that his approach entails an analysis of ways in which characters and characterization affect the reader. It is an analysis of how characters contribute to the rhetoric or ‘how’ of the narrative. How is the reader, as the builder of literary characters, encouraged to adopt a certain system of values and particular point of view? Characterization is used to establish the narrative’s normative point of view. Characters are used as the different paradigms of perception. In the biblical narratives, the implied reader is seldom at a loss in assessing the

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characters or determining whose evaluative point of view is reliable, because by the guidance of
the fully reliable narrators, a rather definite hierarchy of viewpoints is identifiable. Point of view
is the foundational concept in discussing the discourse level of the narrative. The story’s
normative or controlling evaluative point of view is, according to Wayne C. Booth, always
evident to everyone who knows how to look for it.25 The different evaluative points of view of
the characters produce conflict among the characters and shape the plot of the narrative.26

The characters in the Gospel of Mary will be examined by using Darr’s theory of
caracter-building process. Peter’s role will be of special interest, because the role played by him
in the debate scene has often been understood out of its own narrative context, as the primary
antagonist of the main figure Mary. King even regards Peter as the main reason for the
composition of the Gospel of Mary, which, according to her, was written to counter Peter’s
apostolic authority and to elevate Mary’s instead.27 Whether the Gospel of Mary promotes an
anti-Peter polemic or not may be verified by the focused analysis of the characterization of Peter.
How the implied reader is guided to perceive the character Peter and his relationship with Mary
in sequential and cumulative reading, by the rhetorical means including the narrator,
characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting will be examined.

2.2.2 Plot and Emplotment

Plot is the movement of events, and emplotment refers to shaping the order of events to impact
the implied reader. Plot is “the designing principle that contributes to our understanding of the
meaning of a narrative.”28 An understanding of how the implied author emplots is important to

25 Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, 121. For discussion of point of view including the evaluative point of view, see
Uspenski, A Poetics of Composition, 1-100; Chatman, Story and Discourse, 151-158; Kingsbury, Matthew as Story,
33-37.
grasp a narrative’s structure and direction, because plot is a logical progression of events. The events or incidents of the narrative are mainly the result of the characters’ interactions with each other. According to Chatman, events may include speech, thoughts, or even feelings and perceptions. The long sections of the risen Savior’s teaching in the Gospel of Mary, thus, belong to the narrative as events. The plot or the action of the narrative is intrinsically related to characterization. Characters, by their words and actions, initiate and move the flow of the narrative. By their words and actions, which form the incidents of plot, they are characterized. Concerning this interdependent relationship between plot and characters, Darr states, “Audiences ‘actualize’ plot in terms of character and character in terms of plot.” The manner in which the events are presented by the implied author functions to reveal the characters to the implied reader. Since the character Peter and the plot of the Gospel of Mary are interdependent, how Peter functions in the plot should be examined in order to understand his role.

The Gospel of Mary is an emplotted narrative, with a particular contour of the initiation of tension, its development, and its resolution. By modern standards, the plot structure of the text is not complicated. In order to grasp the development of the characters in the Gospel of Mary, it is necessary to understand how the events are shaped into the plot. Narrative criticism is different from historical criticism, which usually treats the Gospels as the collections of smaller units that have no intrinsic relationship with each other. Historical criticism tends to view the various incidents in the Gospels as being related to each other topically or merely sequentially. However, narrative criticism begins with the premise of the text’s coherency and looks for causal links between incidents in the narrative. Powell says, “There is an inherent tendency for readers to infer a principle of causation whenever and wherever it helps the narrative to make sense.” The awareness of causal links is a feature of narrative criticism. The initiation of tension, its development, and its resolution in the Gospel of Mary, and how such plot structure reveals the characters involved are based on this principle of causation.

29 Chatman, Story and Discourse, 45; Powell, What is Narrative Criticism? 35.
30 Darr, On Character Building, 39.
31 Powell, What is Narrative Criticism? 42.
Conflict analysis has been applied to narrative-critical studies on the Gospels and it is relevant also in the present study.\(^{32}\) Conflict can be defined broadly as anything that causes tension in the narrative, including “a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills.”\(^{33}\) The clash of the different evaluative points of view of the characters causes tension or conflict, and such tension is integral to a narrative. Plot develops around such tension, and the implied reader naturally anticipates its resolution. According to Powell, “The individual events that comprise a story may be analyzed in terms of what they contribute to the development and resolution of conflict in the narrative as a whole.”\(^{34}\) The characters in the narrative are revealed by how they contribute to the initiation, development, and resolution of the narrative’s tension.

The tension in the *Gospel of Mary* is initiated by the fearful disciples, whose understanding, desires, or wills are in conflict with the narrative’s normative one, introduced as the risen Savior’s teaching and commission. The implied reader is led to perceive Peter’s character, by tracing how he contributes to the initiation and development of the tension. The disciples as a whole, including Peter, are portrayed as a character group with the same character traits (e.g., ‘fearful,’ ‘doubtful,’ ‘reluctant’).\(^{35}\) The depiction of the disciples’ negative reaction to the risen Savior’s commission to go out and preach the gospel contributes to the plot. The clash of actions and desires sets the stage for the movement of the narrative to the goal of its resolution. The disciples’ fear of persecution, which entails the danger of death, is the fundamental problem that the implied reader anticipates to be resolved in the end. The major part of the plot is the event of Mary’s recounting of the risen Savior’s teaching. The remarkably long duration of the section slows down the narrative time.\(^{36}\) Since the amount of time that the narrator devotes to


\(^{34}\) Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 43.

\(^{35}\) Chatman defined traits as a character’s persistent quality that the reader is able to distinguish one character from another. The traits or attributes of a character are inferred from narrator’s comments, the character’s words and actions, what others say about the character, etc. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 45; Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 128.

reporting it indicates its importance, the event of Mary’s recounting of the risen Savior’s revelation is expected to contribute to the resolution of the tension, by empowering the disciples to cope with their problem.

However, this important event is unexpectedly followed by the debate scene. As a plot-significant action, the negative response of Andrew and Peter to Mary causes another line of tension to be resolved. As many scholars observed, Peter’s negative reaction to Mary contradicts his previous positive one (10:1-6; POxy 3525 14-17), and his inconsistency creates puzzlement. The character Peter often has been understood as Mary’s enemy, being pitted against her, and even the object of a polemic of the text, regardless of his respectful attitude toward of Mary in the earlier scene. What is the rhetorical effect sought by the implied author by the depiction of Peter’s objection? Does the implied author wish the implied reader to perceive Peter as the narrative’s major antagonist, from whose evaluative point of view the implied reader is expected to distance himself or herself throughout the narrative? What role is played by the character Peter in the narrative, in order to serve the writing’s overall aim of impacting the implied reader? In order to answer these questions, how the implied author positions the implied reader at certain vantage points, how he or she provides evaluative guidance on certain characters or events should be understood.

2.2.3 Point-of-View Crafting

Understanding the implied author’s technique of point-of-view crafting is crucial in the interpretation of the narrative, because it allows narrative critics to discern the implied author’s evaluative guidance for the implied reader. Point of view is a literary concept, which is defined as “the relation in which the narrator stands to the story.”\(^\text{37}\) It signifies the way that a story is told.\(^\text{38}\) According to James L. Resseguie, point of view can refer to “(1) ‘the angle of vision’


from which the narrator tells the story, or (2) the conceptual worldview of the narrator.”39 The narrator is a rhetorical device employed by the implied author to convey his evaluative point of view, worldview, and values to the implied reader. A third-person omniscient narrator, as the narrator of the Gospel of Mary, tells the story from outside, accesses characters’ thoughts, feelings, and motivations, and provides comments on them. The narrator’s attitude toward or evaluation of characters impacts the implied reader’s perception of them, because it is at the narrator’s angle of vision that the implied reader is positioned in character-building process.

According to Gary Yamasaki, how characters and events in a narrative are expected to be evaluated by the implied reader can be discernable by perspective criticism. Perspective criticism is “an approach designed to uncover evaluative guidance that may be encoded in the point-of-view crafting of biblical narratives.”40 The idea that, by the discourse of a narrative, the implied author brings the implied reader closer to, or farther from, a character is important in the discussion of the evaluative point of view in narrative criticism. Boris A. Uspenski’s discussion of five planes on which point of view is expressed (i.e., ideological, psychological, spatial, temporal, phraseological) is well known in regard to this topic.41 While Uspenski’s identification and explanation of the five planes of point of view are mainly concerned with how a text is composed, Yamasaki’s dealing with the topic is concerned with how the awareness of the implied author’s manipulation of point of view impacts the interpretation of a text. Perspective criticism is meant “to discern how differences in point-of-view moves result in differences in how the reader is to understand what is happening in the narrative.”42 Understanding the intended effects of point-of-view moves or dynamics in biblical exegesis is this methodology’s purpose.

41 Uspenski, A Poetics of Composition.
42 Yamasaki, Watching a Biblical Narrative, 41.
As a movie camera swings away from one character toward another, the point-of-view crafting is geared toward creating a sense of distance from one character and a sense of proximity to another character. When the narrator positions the implied reader at a certain vantage point, the implied reader is to view the story world from that spot. Watching from a particular angle impacts the implied reader’s experience of a narrative. When a movie camera stays on a character and gives a close-up of the character engaged in actions, the audience is guided to watch the events from the particular angle sided by the character. Experiencing the action of a movie along with the character, the audience evaluates other characters and events through the character’s point of view. The audience is led to merge with the character, and this dynamic creates a sense of empathy in the audience.

Booth’s analysis of Jane Austen’s novel *Emma* illustrates this empathy-producing capacity of point-of-view manipulation. Emma the title character is a young woman who cannot keep herself from meddling in the affairs of others. Her ill-informed meddling causes those around her suffer from the devastating results. The natural effect of such depiction of Emma would be a sense of antipathy to her. However, by Austen’s ingenious use of point of view, by “showing most of the story through Emma’s eyes,” the readers are brought closer to Emma and wish for her happiness despite all her misdeeds. The sense of empathy for Emma is created within the readers by the author’s point-of-view crafting. According to Yamasaki, “Booth’s discovery means even in a narrative text containing no explicit evaluative commentary, evaluative guidance may still be present in the point-of-view crafting of the text. Specifically, filtering the events of the story line through a particular character’s point of view creates within the readers a sense of empathy for the character and, as a result, the readers will be inclined to side with the character in whatever he or she does; in other words, the readers are led to evaluate the character’s actions positively.”

What Yamasaki identifies as Booth’s major contribution is that “this sense of empathy could occur where the narration is not being presented with the intimacy of a first-person

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45 Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 12.
narrator, but rather, the distance of a third-person narrator—a narrator who is not involved as a character in the story, but rather, is relating the story as an uninvolved bystander. However, despite the fact that the readers feel a sense of distance from the narrator, a sense of intimacy can still be created with one of the characters. This can occur when the aspects of the story are relayed to the readers through the point of view of that character, such that the readers’ experience of the events merges with the character’s experience, with this merging producing within the reader a sense of empathy with the character. Perspective criticism is thus helpful in assessing evaluative guidance, when there is no explicit evaluative commentary on which to rely. A perspective-critical analysis would view the implied reader’s expected evaluation of a character and event either as subjectively (i.e., being merged with the character) or objectively (i.e., as a stranger or bystander). The point-of-view moves in the narrative would be examined to determine whether they promote proximity or distance.

Perspective criticism will be used in this study to discern whether the implied reader of the Gospel of Mary is expected to distance himself or herself from the character Peter throughout the narrative, whether the implied author wishes the implied reader to evaluate negatively the character Peter and his actions in the story world. Although there is no explicit evaluative comment of the narrator on Peter and his actions, a perspective-critical analysis of the dynamics of proximity and distance will shed light on the implied author’s evaluative guidance for the implied reader in the character-building process.

2.3 Expected Reading: Identifying the Textual and Extratextual Clues

Mark Allen Powell proposes what is similar with the conception of the extratext. He argues that the implied reader’s expected knowledge and belief should be taken into account, in assessing

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46 Yamasaki, Perspective Criticism, 12.
the reader’s “expected reading” in his or her creative filling in the ‘gaps’ in the text.\footnote{Powell, “Narrative Criticism: The Emergence of a Prominent Reading Strategy,” in \textit{Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect}, ed. Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner (Society of Biblical Lit, 2011), 19–43, esp. 25.} He points out that the effect of the text on the reader, emotionally as well as cognitively, will vary depending on whether the reader believes or knows what he or she is expected to do. In order to qualify as an “expected reading,” the implied reader must know everything that the implied author expects him or her to know.\footnote{Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows,” \textit{Asbury Theological Journal} 48, no. 2 (1993): 31–51.} Powell says that every story creates its own world with operative rules different from what we experience in the real world. We enter into the world of a story while reading it and pretend to believe whatever is appropriate for that world. Reading a story like the implied reader requires for us to hold the implied author accountable for sticking to whatever vision of reality is established for the story. In his dealing with the Matthean narrative Powell says, “In the Gospel of Matthew, God speaks audibly from heaven, fantastic miracles occur, and Jesus interacts freely with supernatural beings such as angels and demons—even with Satan himself. . . . all readers who wish to determine the expected effect of Matthew’s Gospel will have to bracket out of consideration their own presuppositions about such things and accept (or pretend to accept) whatever constitutes the reality in the world of Matthew’s story.”\footnote{Powell, \textit{Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism} (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 108-109.}

For the present study on the debate scene in the \textit{Gospel of Mary}, the implied reader’s expected reading with the assumed knowledge and belief, not explicitly stated in the text yet can be known by resorting to the extratexts, is important. In regard to what is at stake in the debate, how the implied reader is expected to react to the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person should be dealt with. The textual clues in the \textit{Gospel of Mary} concerning how divine revelation is perceived by the characters in the story world should be identified. Then, the extratextual clues or the implied reader’s expected knowledge of the cultural and literary conventions on the conception should be reconstructed.

The extratexual repertoire, what the implied reader brings to the text, is more than just a supplementary reservoir of information for filling in the textual gaps. Darr says, “It also provides
a reader with codes and criteria for evaluating and processing the text itself.\textsuperscript{50} The repertoire of literary and cultural conventions presupposed by the Gospel of Mary is an important factor in the production of literary meaning. The conception of the extratext resembles the notion of “literary competence” as explained by Jonathan D. Culler.\textsuperscript{51} Both the writing and reading of literature require the mastery of the linguistic and literary conventions, which make a literary effect possible. By possessing literary competence, interpretation becomes persuasive, being within the bounds of acceptable, common ways of reading. Cultural conventions are part of the extratextual repertoire in which the emergence and interpretation of a text are embedded. The shared literary and cultural patterns of communication embedded in the text in regard to the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person should be reconstructed, in order to properly understand the meaning and purpose of the debate scene.

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

In order to clarify the methodology of the present study, this chapter outlined narrative criticism’s premises and procedure, the theories of characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting, and the conception of ‘expected reading.’ First, the four premises of literary studies concerned with the nature of the text and meaning, the process of the production of meaning, and the role of cultural context were discussed: (1) text as a self-contained whole, (2) text as a motivated discourse, (3) the generation of meaning in a dialogical process, (4) the role of cultural context in the generation of meaning. Since different reading strategies may yield different interpretations, how reading with these four premises would impact the present study’s approach to the debate scene was discussed. The final form of the Gospel of Mary as a self-contained whole will be the object of the present study’s narrative-critical investigation. As a part of the whole, the debate scene’s contribution to the rhetoric of the whole narrative will be examined. The procedure of this study will be based on Darr’s theoretical model, which

\textsuperscript{50} Darr, On Character Building, 22.
emphasizes the implied reader’s dynamic, dialogical encounter with the text and the extratext in the sequential and cumulative character-building process.

Secondly, theories for examining the characters, plot, and point of view of the narrative were outlined. Characters and characterization were discussed as an important rhetorical means in the narrative, and the interdependent relationship between characters and plot was noted. In order to understand how the characters and characterization contribute to the rhetoric of the *Gospel of Mary*, Darr’s theory of character-building process will be employed in this study. Since the *Gospel of Mary* is an emplotted narrative with a particular contour of the initiation of tension, its development, and its resolution, conflict analysis will be utilized in understanding the narrative’s overall structure and logic, and how the characters contribute to the plot movement. Perspective criticism will be used to figure out the implied author’s evaluative guidance concerning the characters involved in the controversy and the nature of the event. Peter and his relationship with Mary will be of special interest, because he has often been regarded as the object of the text’s polemic, being pitted against Mary. How the implied reader is guided by the point-of-view dynamics to perceive and evaluate Peter and his role will be examined.

Lastly, the conception of the expected reading was dealt with, and the importance of taking account of both textual and extratextual clues for such reading was emphasized. For the present study on the meaning and purpose of the debates scene, the implied reader’s anticipated response to the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person should be examined based on both textual and extratextual clues. The literary and cultural conventions concerning the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person will be reconstructed in the next chapter. The reconstructed extratexts may shed light on what is at stake in the debate and the role of the debate scene in the larger narrative context.
Chapter 3
Extratext for the Implied Reader: Models of Authority in Antiquity

3.1 The Means: Authority of Divine Revelation

This chapter will reconstruct the extratextual information that both enables and conditions the
literary effect of the conception of divine revelation, accessible only by a divinely-favored,
chosen agent. Scholars who interpret the debate scene in an anti-Peter polemical context tend to
view what Peter refers to by ‘secretly’ (λάθρα) and by ‘a woman’ (γυναίκη) as the two issues
at stake in the historical conflict. The two disputable issues are the means (i.e., private
revelation) and the agent (i.e., Mary a woman), that Peter, who represents the historical
opponents, regards as unreliable. Those who assume an inter-group conflict behind the scene
understand the key issues of the controversy as the two contrasting views on divine revelation. In
their view, Peter’s statements (PRyl 463 Recto 12-14; cf. Gos. Mary 17:18-22) indicate that the
dispute is over the validity of the risen Savior’s teaching tradition transmitted ‘secretly’ (λάθρα) versus ‘openly’ (ἀνερχόμενος).¹ With the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox framework, Peter
represents the proto-orthodox stance that accepts only what is transmitted ‘openly,’ the publicly
known apostolic tradition of Jesus’ teaching. Peter responds negatively to Mary, because he
denies what is transmitted ‘secretly,’ any on-going, private revelation beyond the apostolic
tradition.

By framing the two parties involved in the debate with the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox
dichotomy, the meaning of Peter’s statement seems to be distorted, as if he totally denies the
validity of private revelation as a mode of transmitting the risen Savior’s teaching. However,

¹ E.g., Pagels, “Visions, Appearances, and Apostolic Authority,” 415-30; Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, 13-14, 64,
76-81; Klaus Koschorke, Die Polemik der Gnostiker gegen das kirchliche Christentum: unter besonderer
Berücksichtigung der Nag-Hammadi-Traktate “Apokalypse des Petrus” (NHC VII.3) und “Testimonium Veritatis”
(NHC IX.3), 49-52; Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 73, 131-37; Terence V. Smith, Petrine Controversies in Early
Christianity: Attitudes towards Peter in Christian Writings of the First Two Centuries, 105; Price, “Mary
Magdalene,” 54-76; Schmid, Maria Magdalena in gnostischen Schriften, 18; Koivunen, Woman Who Understood
Completely, 210; Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 119-121; Foster, The Non-Canonical Gospels, 51; Jansen, The
Making of the Magdalen, 27.
appealing to divine revelation accessible only by a few divinely-favored or chosen agents is not a new idea but a widespread, well-attested model of making authority claims in antiquity. Numerous examples of the religious use of divine revelation given only to a chosen agent, worthy or virtuous enough for receiving such divine favor and special mission, can be found also in New Testament tradition, the legacy of which is traceable to Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic tradition.²

In the gospel accounts, there are the references to the divine revelation, vision, and message given to the virtuous figures: Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:28), Joseph, the righteous one (Matt 1:19), Zacharias and Elizabeth, the righteous couple (Luke 1:5-6), John the Baptist, the preparer of the way for the Lord (Luke 1:13-17; 3:2), Simeon, the righteous and God-fearing one (Luke 2:25), Anna, the devout prophetess (Luke 2:36-38), and Jesus, the beloved divine son (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; Matt 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-7; Luke 9:28-35). Jesus’ disciples including Peter, John, and James, who have had glimpse of the vision of the other-worldly figures in the transfiguration accounts, are portrayed as the recipients of the divine favor, revelation, and mission, though they are not depicted as the consistently ideal or virtuous figures in the gospel accounts. In comparison with them, Mary Magdalene along with other women as the witnesses of the angelophany (Luke 24:1-11) and the risen Jesus (John 20:14-18; Markan Appendix, Mark 19:9; Matt 28:8-10) are depicted more positively, as the steadfast supporters of Jesus even in his suffering and death.

From a narrative-critical perspective, the function of divine revelation given only to these divinely-chosen or favored figures is to characterize the figures as the reliable sources of conveying the respective narratives’ normative evaluative points of view. Thus, it functions to persuade the readers to adopt certain innovative religious ideas introduced by divine revelation as guiding the reader’s understanding of the rest of the narratives. There are many other examples of appealing to divine revelation to make truth-authority claims and to defend the virtuous figures as the reliable sources for conveying certain new or innovative religious ideas


According to David Frankfurter, in late antiquity there were (largely) two models of authority “essential for religious innovation”: the model of revelatory authority and that of literary authority. The former model “implied validity to ‘new’ revelations such as prophecy and that drew upon a broader Mediterranean concept of a secret (yet available) ‘gnosis.’” The latter model “grounded a community’s ongoing compositional activities in the tradition of a cultural hero.”

The literary phenomenon of early Christian sects producing revelatory literature, by employing (in the names of) the biblical heroes, supports the widespread use of the model of literary authority. In regard to the risen Savior’s teaching transmitted by such means in the Gospel of Mary, the interpretation that Peter’s denial of the validity of the means causes him to reject the teaching is highly doubtful. Divine revelation is the chosen means for conveying to the implied reader the teaching section, the major part of the Gospel of Mary. The Gospel of Mary is a literature that was written in accordance with literary and cultural conventions, so as to exert rhetorical force on the implied reader. The text’s chosen means for promoting the teaching section is, thus, expected to serve the rhetoric of persuasion, in conformity with the shared cultural patterns and expectations. By using the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person, worthy of receiving such divine favor, the Gospel of Mary utilizes the model of revelatory authority.

Scholars who view that private revelation is unreliable means, and functioning as an obstacle for Peter’s reception of the risen Savior’s teaching, lose sight of how the conception of

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5 Frankfurter, “The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity,” 129. The literary authority of the tradition about a famous, heroic figure is usually combined with an appeal to revelatory authority. For example, in Jewish apocalyptic writings dealing with divine revelation, divine things revealed are “communicated to the reader in a setting in which a sage from the past vacticinia ex eventu to prove himself trustworthy.” Peerbolte, “Paul’s Rapture,” 160.
divine revelation given to a virtuous person functions in the narrative. In order to verify such argument, and to understand the debate scene as the implied reader does, it is necessary to reconstruct the knowledge or belief that the implied reader is expected to have in understanding Peter’s negative comments. What does provoke Peter’s negative reaction to Mary? Does Peter’s skepticism about the means cause his rejection? Is the debate scene included to counter Peter’s irreconcilably different view on the means? Before dealing with these questions, this study will examine how the conception of divine revelation in the forms of visions and dreams was used, and how the reliability of revelatory experience was evaluated in antiquity.

3.1.1 Divine Revelation in Jewish Literature

The conception of divine revelation widely appears in both Jewish and non-Jewish sources in antiquity. There are numerous examples of the use of visions and dreams as vehicles for divine message, which functions to impact the recipients’ actions. In the Hebrew Bible, God communicates with people through visions: e.g., Abraham (Gen 15:1), Jacob (Gen 46:2), Samuel (1 Sam 1:5), Ezekiel (Ezk 1:1), Daniel (Dan 10:7), and prophets (Num 12:6). Sometimes dreams are also regarded as communication from God: e.g., Jacob (Gen 31:11), Joseph (Gen 37:5), and Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5). There are also examples of revelatory dialogue between God and a chosen agent, though it is difficult to determine whether it is delivered by visions or dreams: e.g., Moses (Num 12:8; Exod 33:11); Nathan (1 Kgs 17:15); God’s faithful ones (Ps 89:14), and prophets (Isa 1:1; Amos 1:1; Obad 1:1; Mic 1:1; Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1). The literary use of the conception of divine revelation is meant to authorize the revelatory knowledge mediated by visions or dreams. When the source of the revelatory knowledge is specified as God in the Hebrew Bible, there is no reference to the negative evaluation of the phenomena of visions or dreams. They are viewed positively as the reliable means of divine communication.

6 The phenomena of visions and dreams are often introduced together and the distinction between the two forms is not always possible. For example, a vision that appears to Paul at night may refer to a dream (Acts 16:9). For the discussion of the terms visions and dreams, and the ambiguity in differentiating between the two, see John S. Hanson, “Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt 2.23.2 (1980): 1408; John B. F. Miller, “Dreams/Visions and the Experience of God in Luke-Acts,” in Experientia, 177 n. 2.
However, skepticism about dreams and visions is expressed, when God as their source is denied. There are references to warnings against of false prophecy mediated by visions and dreams (e.g., Jer 14:14; 23:16, 25-26; 27:9f.; 29:8f.; Zech 10:2; Ezek 12:24; Lam 2:14; Exod 13:1-5; Deut 18:14-22). In Jeremiah 23:16, 25-26, the hearts of the false prophets are the source of the false prophecy. What is in question here is not the phenomena of visions and dreams per se but only the specific cases referred to by Jeremiah. The warnings against of false prophecy in fact rely on the shared knowledge between Jeremiah and the audience about the function of divine revelation. Divine revelation in the forms of visions and dreams functions to legitimize the transcendent authorization of the message or knowledge. The model of revelatory authority is used in the Hebrew Bible to promote the divinely-authorized knowledge. Nevertheless, the danger of false prophets, who appeal to visions and dreams to make authority claims for their oracles, requires a test criterion to distinguish what is from God from what is not. According to Art A. Oepke, four major criteria for it can be observed in the Hebrew Bible: (1) the prophet’s personality and motive, (2) the manner in which the revelation is received; (3) the fulfillment of relevant predictions, and (4) unrelenting loyalty to the will of God rather than to the popular trends of the day.

In 2 Maccabees 15:11-16, Judas encourages his troops by talking about the vision that he received, in which Jeremiah gives him God’s gift, a gold sword. Judas’ visionary experience is regarded as the means of divine communication. By calling the vision ‘trustworthy’ (ἀξιόπιστος, v. 11), Judas seems to acknowledge the possibility of the audience’s skepticism about the vision that he received. However, the audiences are hardly skeptical about the visionary experience as

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8 “The solemn exclamation ḫālāmti ḫālāmti introduced in v. 25b would seem to indicate the presence of an oracle, . . . . This suggests that dreams could be a credible source of oracles.” Jean-Marie Husser, Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 142. “The question of dreams, therefore, at first absent from the prophetic polemic . . . suddenly appears in Jeremiah, who speaks out against prophets who refer to dreams as a source of their oracles. Without directly challenging this form of inspiration, which had long belonged to the panoply of divinatory techniques, Jeremiah does however sow the seeds of suspicion as regards dreams by contesting the authenticity of the words of prophets who use them . . . . Criticism of dreams is therefore not so radical as is often suggested.” Husser, Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World, 145. Also see Miller, “Convinced That God Had Called Us,” 54.

the legitimate means of divine communication. Rather, their skepticism may be about the legitimate source. As in the case in Jeremiah 23:16, 25-26, not God but human hearts may be the source of visions and dreams.\(^{10}\) Similarly in Sirach 34:6-7, dreaming as the means of God’s communication is affirmed, while the possibility of false dream, which is not from God, is also mentioned.

In Second Temple Jewish literature, the use of the model of revelatory authority is particularly well observed. Certain Jewish writings typically called ‘apocalyptic literature’ promote the central revelatory message as authoritative, by appealing to divine revelation accessible only by divinely chosen agents. Modern discussion of the adjective ‘apocalyptic’ is concerned with a more broadly defined system of beliefs or theological perspective, rather than a narrower, literary genre.\(^{11}\) There are some similarities in how ‘apocalyptic’ literature and ‘Gnostic’ literature are defined and classified. Appeal to revelatory authority is understood as one of the legitimating, essential features of the writings, in which revelatory knowledge is central and functions to comfort and exhort the readers in certain needs. However, the use of the model of revelatory authority cannot be seen as an essential or exclusive characteristic of a particular category, as a way to differentiate one from the other. As discussed in chapter 1, such attempt to draw rigid boundary lines between the diverse religious expressions by essentializing and homogenizing is misleading.\(^{12}\) The widespread use of the conception of divine revelation and its function to make authority claims is to be understood in terms of ‘continuity’ in difference. Diverse religious expressions or writings have ‘continuity’ in utilizing the model of revelatory authority, which is part of the extratexts that enable and condition the production of any religious text.

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\(^{10}\) Cf. Zech 10:2 gives an example of giving an empty encouragement or comfort (παπεκάλον in LXX; cf. 2 Macc 15:11) to others with the untrustworthy dreams and vision, that are not from God. See Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 498.


\(^{12}\) See 1.4. Definition and discussion of ‘Gnosticism’ in chapter 1.
According to Christopher Rowland, “To speak of apocalyptic, therefore, is to concentrate on the theme of the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity.”\(^\text{13}\)

Rowland’s statement can be understood as follows: God’s ‘direct communication’ or divine revelation is the common, particular means, by which the diverse Jewish writings promote their central messages (i.e., the heavenly mysteries) to the readers. The notion of the divinely-authorized revelatory knowledge is what is commonly observed in the diverse writings, and its function is to persuade the readers to embrace the respective messages as true and authoritative. The contents of the revealed heavenly mysteries are generally divided under three headings: (1) cosmological mysteries, (2) eschatological mysteries, and (3) evil or illegitimate mysteries.\(^\text{14}\)

First, cosmological mysteries are presented in 1, 2 Enoch and 3 Baruch in a considerable detail, by describing the creation, astronomy, meteorology, and the unseen heavenly realm. For example, cosmological mysteries are described by means of Enoch’s visionary experience in 1 Enoch 41:1-7:

> And after that I saw all the secrets of the heavens, and how the kingdom is divided, and how the actions of men are weighed in the balance. And there I saw the mansions of the elect and the mansions of the holy, and mine eyes saw there all the sinners being driven from thence which deny the name of the Lord of Spirits, and being dragged off . . . . And there mine eyes saw the secrets of the lightening and of the thunder, and the secrets of the winds . . . and there saw from whence they proceed in that place and from whence they saturate the dusty earth. And there I saw closed chambers out of which the winds are divided . . . . And I saw the chambers of the sun and moon . . . .\(^\text{15}\)

The majestic description of the mysteries about heaven and the universe has literary effect on the readers. The comprehensiveness of the revelation prepares them to accept the accompanying message.\(^\text{16}\) In 3 Baruch 1:6, 8, it is also visionary experience that mediates cosmological mysteries. When Baruch laments about Israel’s fate, God reveals to him the orderly operation of


\(^{14}\) Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, 32.


\(^{16}\) Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, 34.
the heavenly realm. Such revelation of the unseen realm functions to reassure the readers of God’s sovereignty in the visible realm as well, and hence, prepares them to accept the accompanying message in regard to Israel.

Secondly, eschatological mysteries are revealed in *1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Testament of Levi, Apocalypse of Abraham*, etc. The central message of the revelation is what will happen in the history, in the end time. The reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, the descriptions of paradise and hell, the defeat of the nations and the cosmic evil forces are included in the revelation of the eschatological judgment and its aftermath. Eschatological mysteries also include soteriological mysteries, which is concerned with heavenly agents (i.e., the heavenly Messiah, the Son of Man) for God’s salvation of his faithful ones (e.g., *1 En. 52:2-4; 63:3-11; 4 Ezra 7:28; 12:32; 13:25 f.*). Divine revelation of what is concealed in the present unseen realm, and what will be actualized in the visible realm in the near future, functions to assure the readers of the certainty of the coming salvation.

Lastly, evil or illegitimate mysteries are particularly prevalent in *the Book of Watchers (1 En. 1-17)*. Enoch receives the revelation about the origin of the cosmic evil forces, which is the fallen Watchers. The fallen Watchers are described as being responsible for the ills and disorder in God’s creation. They take human wives and disclose illegitimate heavenly secrets to them (*1 En. 9:6*). The evil and illegitimate mysteries are about divination, astrology, magic, weaponry, women’s cosmetics, etc (*1 En. 8:2-3; 9:8*). This “worthless” knowledge, illegitimately disclosed by the fallen Watchers, causes people to commit great sin and destruction (*1 En. 16:3*). The major function of this narrative about the origin of the cosmic evil forces (i.e., the fallen Watchers, and the evil spirits as their disembodied offsprings after the Flood), and their association with people’s sin and evil in the world, is concerned with the problem of theodicy. God the Creator is not responsible for the present cosmic disorder, but the heavenly rebels and their aftermath are. There is revelation which is not from God but from the cosmic evil forces. The writing suggests the danger of *false* revelation originated from agents other than God, which is reminiscent of the danger of false visions and dreams in the Hebrew Bible.

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The general positive attitude toward divine revelation as the means of God’s communication appears also in the Qumran texts, though the danger of false revelation not from God is addressed. There are references to prophetic visionaries, who are called God’s anointed, and the seers of truth or testimonies (e.g., 1QM 11:7-8; CD 2:12-13). In the interpretation of God’s revelation to Habakkuk, Qumran’s Teacher of Righteousness is described as “to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets” (1QpHab 7:4-5). The Teacher of Righteousness is authorized in two ways, first by divine revelation given to Habakkuk, and secondly by the depiction of the Teacher of Righteous as the recipient of God’s revelation about eschatological mysteries written in the Prophets. The use of the model of revelatory authority is observable here and throughout the Qumran texts. The author of the Qumran Hymns makes truth-authority claims by appealing to divine revelation. According to him, presumably the Teacher of Righteousness, what he says is received as divine revelation (e.g., 1QH 1:21; 4:23 f.; 8:16 f.; 12:12 f., 33 f.).

As in the Book of Watchers, there are references to the cosmic evil forces in the Qumran texts. The current world is viewed as being under the dominion of the malevolent Angel of Darkness, Beliar, or the spirit of deceit, who works against humanity in general and the community members in particular. As the source of human error, falsehood, and defilement, the comic evil forces headed by Beliar stand behind the evildoers and lead astray the sons of light, the community members. In the Treatise of the Two Spirits, there exists the continual war

18 Miller, “Convinced That God Had Called Us,” 57.
20 According to Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, the interpretation of the Prophets by the Teacher of Righteousness is divinely authorized, though it may not be the case of revelation that accompanies visionary experience. Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity, 47.
21 For a comprehensive treatment of the topic of divine revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Alex P. Jassen, Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism (Boston: Brill, 2007).
22 Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity, 49.
between the spirit of deceit and the spirit of truth over the sons of light (1QS 3:17-4:16). As the source of evil inspiration, the spirit of deceit deceives and leads astray the community members. Contrary to the spirit of deceit, the spirit of truth guides them to live in accordance with God’s will. In the Thanksgiving Scroll, the spirit of God or the Holy Spirit grants heavenly mysteries to the prophets and the community members (1QH 12:12 f.; 13:18 f.). The references to false seers or false prophets in it suggest that their source of revelation is the illegitimate one, the spirit of deceit, viz. Beliar (1QH 12:10, 20). While using the model of revelatory authority, the Qumran texts are conscious of the possibility of the false revelation from the illegitimate source. It shows that the false prophets, the community’s opponents, also appeal to the shared conception about revelatory authority.

### 3.1.2 Divine Revelation in Non-Jewish Literature

The use of the conception of divine revelation in making authority claims is also found in non-Jewish sources in antiquity, including epigraphical and sculptural evidence from the Graeco-Roman world. There are numerous references to visions and dreams, and they attest a widespread belief in the revelatory function of the phenomena. Deities such as Asclepius and Serapis communicate with people through visions and dreams. For example, the healing testimonial inscriptions from Epidaurus record the epiphany of the healing god to the patients, in visions at night in the temple. The credibility of the testimonials relies on the patients’ visionary experience, the means of divine communication and divine healing. Some people sought not only divine healing but also divine counsel, and awaited in the temple until an oracle was given to them.


Beliefs in and practice of oracle, divination, or soothsaying were popular in the Graeco-Roman world. The belief underlying the practice of divination is that gods communicate with human beings by means of various signs or omens, including dreams. However, in comparison with the Jewish sources, which basically acknowledge visions and dreams as the legitimate means of God’s communication, non-Jewish sources express both positive and negative attitudes toward visions and dreams. For example, Aristotle is critical of a widespread belief in the divine source of dreams, and argues that dreams are concerned with the human imagination or illusions. Cicero also holds negative view on the practice of dream divination, which he regards as superstition. He rules out the divine causation of dreams altogether, and argues that all dreams arise from natural causes. Nevertheless, dream divination in antiquity never ceased despite these philosophers’ effort to offer naturalistic and rationalistic explanations for dreams, insofar as a belief in divine communication survived.

The widespread belief in the communication between gods and human beings became the basis for revelatory literature. Revelatory literature in the Graeco-Roman world is largely based on oracles. In comparison with the Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic sources, the non-Jewish sources contain mostly short, one or two lines of inspired speech or oracle mediated by cult mediums or diviners. The collections of oracles were circulated under the pseudonyms, such as Orpheus, Musaeus, and the various Sibyls and Bakides. The Romans kept an official copy of the collection of Sibylline oracles for consultation in times of national emergency. According to David E. Aune, who conducted an extensive study on the ancient oracular and prophetic phenomena and traditions, the existence of the oracular collections for consultation under the pseudonymous names (e.g., the legendary inspired diviners, such as Sibyl and Bakis) attests the

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28 Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1.46, 48-49, 58.
29 Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 2.129, 139-141.
widespread use and respect which they enjoyed.\textsuperscript{32} The model of revelatory authority is used in producing such oracular collections, on the basis of a belief in the authorizing function of divine revelation, as mediated by the reliable, inspired agents.

Aune identifies various types of oracles in antiquity according to form and function, and what he calls the ‘legitimation oracles’ is important in regard to this study’s interest in the authorizing function of divine revelation.\textsuperscript{33} While most surviving evidence for ancient oracles are deities’ response to human inquiry, the legitimation oracles are unsolicited oracles. There are three types of the legitimation oracles: (1) recognition oracles, (2) commendation oracles, and (3) self-commendation oracles. Concerning the legitimation oracles’ authenticating function, Aune says, “These three types of oracles have been designated legitimation oracles since the primary function of all three types is to provide supernatural validation for a reliable source of divine revelation or for a person of (potentially) great status.”\textsuperscript{34}

First, the recognition oracle provides supernatural sanction of a person, who will become a king or who is of divine patronage. For example, various legendary accounts about Alexander the Great utilize the model of revelatory authority, by including the oracles about his divine lineage (i.e., the son of Zeus) and divine patronage.\textsuperscript{35} Secondly, the commendation oracle functions to direct the recipients to a reliable source of divine revelation (i.e., the name of a deity, a particular temple). Lucian of Samosata records three examples of the commendation oracle that give directions about where (i.e., the name of a temple) and to whom (i.e., the name of a god or a


\textsuperscript{34} Aune, \textit{Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World}, 68.

\textsuperscript{35} The Greek geographer Strabo records a number of the recognition oracles about Alexander the Great: “The fellow [i.e. the prophet of Ammon] expressly told . . . Alexander, was the son of Zeus . . . many oracles were carried by the Milesian ambassador to Memphis concerning Alexander’s descent from Zeus, . . . the Erythraean Athenais also gave out an utterance concerning Alexander’s high descent . . . .” Strabo, \textit{Geography}, 17.1.43. For another reference to the recognition oracle about Alexander the Great by the prophet of Ammon, see Plutarch, Alexander, 27.5-11. There are some examples of the recognition oracles about Alexander of Abonuteichos. E.g., “Here in your sight is a scion of Perseus, dear unto Phoebus; This is divine Alexander, who shareth the blood of the Healer!” Lucian, \textit{Alexander}, 11; also see Lucian, \textit{Alexander}, 24.
cult medium) the recipients need to go for divine revelation. Lastly, the self-commendation oracle is that in which the recipient claims to be the authentic vehicle of divine revelation. There are examples of the self-commendation oracle in the collections of Sibylline oracles. The self-commendation oracles are observable not only in the unsolicited oracles, but also in the revelatory literature in which dialogic oracles are included. According to Aune, it is almost formulaic that a deity (or a cult medium) claims to be the reliable source (or agent) of divine revelation at the beginning of the dialogue oracles (i.e., the deities’ response to human inquiry), functioning as an introduction.

As mentioned in the discussion of the genre of the Gospel of Mary in chapter 1, the use of a dialogue as a literary vehicle for presenting certain philosophical teachings was widespread in antiquity. The philosophical dialogues of Plato and Aristotle became literary models throughout the Graeco-Roman world. Revelatory literature which includes the dialogue oracles demonstrates how a belief in divine communication is incorporated in literary form, as a means to advance revelatory knowledge or teaching. There are examples of literary adaptation of the conventional human inquiry-divine response scheme in the practice of divination, as reflected in magical papyri. In the artificial literary settings, deities communicate with humans not by

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36 Lucian, Alexander, 29. The following is Aune’s translation: “Go now to Claros, to hear the voice of my father.” “Go to the sanctuary of the Branchiadae and obey the oracles.” “Depart for Mallos and the prophecies of Amphilokos.” Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, 70.

37 Pausanias, Description of Greece, 10.12.3. “I am by birth half mortal, half divine; an immortal nymph was my mother, my father an eater of corn; on my mother’s side of Idaean birth, but my fatherland was red Marpessus, sacred to the Mother, and the river Aїdoneus.” This self-commendation oracle is from a collection of Sibyllian oracles, quoted by Pausanias. Also see Lucian, Alexander, 18, 43.

38 Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, 71.

39 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 37. See this study’s chapter 1, §1.3 Genre and Literary Unity.


41 “Greco-Roman magical literature, particularly the Greek and Demotic magical papyri, has many recipes for gaining control of various kinds of supernatural beings for the purpose of getting oracular responses to any questions which the magical practitioner might want to pose.” Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, 64. “A very interesting feature of these two quotations [from Demotic magical papyrus] is that the revelatory dialogue apparently begins with a question regarding the identity of the inspiring divinity and (presumably) an answer perhaps introduced by an “I am” formula.” Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, 65.
symbolic means, that requires the professional divination techniques, but by understandable human language. Aune observes an example of the self-commendation oracle as well as the literary use of a belief in divine communication in Poimandres, the first tractate in the Corpus Hermeticum. The literary use of the practice of oracular dialogue attests the underlying belief in divine communication and its authorizing function. How the conception of oracular dialogue functions to serve a literary purpose can be explained by the use of the model of revelatory authority.

In comparison with the Jewish literature which acknowledges God as the authentic source of divine revelation, the non-Jewish literature suggests a variety of sources of divine revelation including visions and dreams. In Homer’s works, dreams are understood as coming from the divine realm. However, different deities are involved in different dreams, and some may be benevolent to the recipients while others are malevolent. In the Odyssey, Athena sends a dream to Penelope in the form of Penelope’s sister, who assures Penelope of her son’s safety. Penelope is greatly relieved by the dream, because she understands it as the divine message of the benevolent god who takes care of her son. In the Iliad, Zeus sends dream to Agamemnon in the form of the wise Nestor. Agamemnon accepts the dream that encourages him to attack Troy as a fate. However, Zeus’s message is a false omen to Agamemnon, because Zeus’ aim is to cause Agamemnon’s defeat in order to glorify Achilles. While the divine source of the dream is acknowledged, whether it is a true omen from a benevolent god or a false omen from a malevolent god is often unknown to the recipient.

There is not only the possibility of the source of dreams as malevolent gods, but also the possibility of misinterpretation of dreams. In Euripides’ drama Iphigeneia at Tauris, Iphigeneia

42 “I am Poimandres, the absolute Nous; I know what you desire, and I am with you everywhere.” Corpus Hermeticum 1.2. See Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World, 71. In Aune’s view, a belief in the human-inquiry-divine response and the dialogic pedagogy of Plato and Aristotle are “adapted as a literary vehicle for revelatory teaching by a supernatural being in a catechetical style (e.g., the many Hermetic tractates and the three Gnostic-Coptic dialogues, Hypostatis of the Archos, Thomas the Contender, and Dialogue of the Savior).” Aune, The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric, 409.

43 Homer, Odyssey, 4.795-841.

44 Homer, Odyssey, 4.838-341.

45 Homer, Iliad, 2.6, 21.
has a dream in which her house collapses apart from one pillar, which she sprinkled with water. Believing in the divine source of the dream, she interprets it as announcing the death of her brother Orestes, whom she identifies with the pillar. She believed that her brother is already dead. However, it turns out to be her misinterpretation of the revelatory dream. In the next scene, the audiences notice that Orestes is still alive. Nevertheless, his life comes to be in crisis because he is among the foreigners enslaved by Taurians and Iphigeneia, ignorant of the fact, will sprinkle them for sacrifice. Based on the shared belief between the author and the audience about dreams’ divine source and revelatory function, the audience anticipates that Iphigeneia’s misinterpreted dream will be fulfilled by Orestes’ death. Another similar example of the literary convention of revelatory dreams and the motif of the recipient’s misinterpretation is in Chariton’s novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Callirhoe has a dream about her ex-husband Chaereas, bound in chains. Believing that it is a revelatory dream, Callirhoe interprets it as the death of Chaereas. However, while the dream is true (i.e., Chaereas is in fact in chains), Callirhoe’s interpretation about his death is false.

While the divine source and revelatory function are acknowledged, the ambiguity of visions, dreams, and symbolic messages requires the recipients’ interpretation and, as in the cases of Iphigeneia and Chaereas, misinterpretation is possible. The reliability of divine revelation depends on whether its source is a benevolent deity, and whether the recipient correctly interprets it. The popular practice of dream divination and a market for professional interpreters or diviners in antiquity may be explained by the ambiguity of divine revelation. Though in Jewish literature the possibility of false sources (i.e., the human mind and the cosmic evil forces) presents, the possibility of misinterpreted revelation is less explicit. Jewish literature generally acknowledges that God communicates with humans in a comprehensible way.


47 Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, 3.7.4.

prophetic and apocalyptic literature, the recipients are expected to communicate divine revelation to fellow believers and, thus, they are viewed as the divinely-inspired interpreters.

In order to understand the extratexts of the implied reader of the Gospel of Mary in regard to ‘the means’ of the risen Savior’s teaching, this study so far has dealt with how the conception of divine revelation in the forms of visions and dreams was used, and how the reliability of revelatory experience was evaluated in antiquity. The Jewish and non-Jewish evidence surveyed so far reflect the similar perspective on the authorizing function of the conception of divine revelation. Skepticism expressed in the Jewish literature about the illegitimate source of revelatory experience (i.e., the human mind and the cosmic evil forces) cannot be understood as a categorical rejection of divine revelation. The false prophets, who appeal to revelatory authority in order to legitimize their oracles in fact illustrate how the conception of divine revelation is understood by the contemporaries as an effective way of making authority claims. Aristotle’s and Cicero’s skepticism about the revelatory function of dreams also evidences the widespread belief in divine communication and revelatory experience.

The distinction between the Jewish and the non-Jewish perspectives on divine revelation is primarily based on the different views on the source of revelation. While the Jewish perspective holds a singular view that God is the authentic source of revelation, the non-Jewish perspective is based on the belief that a number of deities may be responsible for revelatory experience. While a belief in divine communication is shared by both Jewish and non-Jewish revelatory literature, the reliability of revelation in the latter depends on whether the deity’s intention is benevolent or not. In so far as the deity’s intention is benevolent, and the recipient is the object of divine favor, revelatory experience in the forms of dreams, vision, or oracles would be reliable. In the Jewish sources, based on fundamental belief in the benevolent God, divine revelation functions to authorize the recipient as the object of divine favor and, in the case of prophets, the chosen agent for communicating divine message to fellow believers.

How the implied reader of the Gospel of Mary is expected to react to the conception of divine revelation? In view of it as a means to communicate the risen Savior’s teaching to the disciples as well as the implied reader, the Gospel of Mary utilizes the model of revelatory authority. The two sections of the risen Savior’s teaching, one given to the disciples as a whole, and the other, formerly given to Mary, are expected to be embraced by the implied reader as true
and authoritative, based on literary and cultural conventions or the patterns of communication shared by the implied author and the implied reader. The underlying belief in divine communication makes the literary and rhetorical effect of the text possible. The implied reader is expected to accept the authorizing function of divine revelation, and the risen Savior as the legitimate source of revelation.

Does Peter negatively react to Mary because he holds a different view on ‘the means’ by which the risen Savior’s teaching is communicated? It seems highly improbable that Peter, who is the recipient of divine revelation ‘openly’ given to all in the initial narrative, and who invites Mary to talk about the risen Savior’s former revelation given only to her, abruptly rejects the reliability of the means. Peter’s negative comments should be understood not as pointing to his irreconcilably different view on divine revelation, but as an expression of his amazement and embarrassment in regard to the unexpectedly weighty content of the risen Savior’s teaching given to Mary. In order to understand the implied reader’s anticipated response to what Peter says, it is important not to lose sight of how the implied reader is led to perceive Mary, the narrative’s chosen agent for conveying the particular worldview and values introduced as the risen Savior’s teaching. In the next section, another model of making authority claims, viz. the model of literary authority, will be dealt with, as an attempt to reconstruct the extratexts for understanding the implied reader’s expected reaction to the portrayal of Mary, the esteemed agent for divine revelation.

3.2 The Agent: Authority of the Tradition of a Cultural Heroic Figure

How is the implied reader expected to react to the narrative’s presentation of Mary as the esteemed agent of the risen Savior’s revelation? Those who argue for the text’s anti-Peter polemic tend to interpret Peter’s mention of Mary’s gender as indicating his misogynic stance and, thus, understand what is at stake in the debate as Peter’s irreconcilably different view on the reliability of ‘the agent’ (i.e., Mary a woman). Mary’s gender is, according to them, an obstacle for Peter’s reception of the risen Savior’s revelation recounted by Mary. The inclusion of the debate scene is thus to counter Peter’s (and the historical opponents’) different view on ‘the
agent,’ so as to promote female leadership or apostleship represented by Mary. However, such interpretation seems to be driven by the feminist biblical studies’ particular interest in the gender issue. From a narrative-critical perspective, the initiation of the debate and its resolution in the end should be understood as part of the narrative’s plot and rhetoric. The meaning and role of Peter’s statement and the debate scene are to be understood not in an assumed anti-Peter polemical context, but in their own literary context according to its own literary logic.

What is important in regard to the portrayal of Mary the agent is that, despite Peter’s hot-tempered reaction, the narrative’s tension created by the debate is resolved by appealing to the shared knowledge among the characters (and the implied reader) about Mary the Savior’s favorite. Contrary to the assumption that the reliability of the risen Savior’s teaching is doubly weakened by the disputable means (i.e., by divine revelation) and agent (i.e., through Mary a woman), in the story world the authority of the risen Savior’s teaching fundamentally relies on them. How is the implied reader led to embrace the risen Savior’s teaching? Why did the implied author place the risen Savior’s teaching on Mary’s mouth? In order to answer these questions, the extratextual information for using a historical figure as a mediator of revelatory knowledge should be taken account of.

The literary adaptation of a belief in divine communication, as a vehicle for presenting revelatory knowledge or teaching in the forms of visions and dreams, is well evidenced by Second Temple Jewish and early Christian revelatory literature. Such writings’ particular messages or teachings are legitimated by appealing to revelatory authority. Since the role of the human agent is important in conveying divine message to the readers in a comprehensible way, the model of revelatory authority is often used with, and supported by, another model for making authority claims, viz. the model of literary authority. The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy illustrates how the authority of the written traditions of the historical figures in the Hebrew Bible is utilized in promoting revelatory teaching or knowledge as authoritative. The similar practice of using the shared knowledge or traditions about Jesus’ early followers as vehicles for conveying particular messages or teachings in early Christian literature, including the Gospel of Mary, can be viewed as utilizing the model of literary authority.
3.2.1 The Phenomenon of Pseudepigraphy and Its Authorizing Function

Certain Second Temple revelatory writings are ascribed not to the real authors but to the biblical figures, such as Enoch, Baruch, and Ezra (e.g., the Enoch literature, 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra). Divine revelation of cosmological and eschatological mysteries is mediated by, or placed on the lips of, famous ancient figures, in order to appeal to the authority of the traditions of such revered figures, known to both the author and the readers. According to Eibert Tigchelaar, “The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy is part of a larger phenomenon of parascriptural literature, where new texts contribute to a discourse that has been initiated by already existing texts.” In view of Michel Foucault’s well-known notion of the author as a function of discourse (i.e., ‘author function’), the conception of authorship and pseudonymity may be approached differently. It is anachronical to apply contemporary assumptions about authorship to the production of ancient texts. Foucault’s idea about the literary legacy of the author function may shed light on how the production of a new text is enabled by the already existing tradition of a heroic figure, and contributes to the expansion of the tradition. By using a revered biblical figure’s name, a pseudepigraphic work both draws on and extends the authority of the heroic figure’s literary legacy.


The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy is widely observed, not only among revelatory literature, but also among a variety of interpretive rewritings or reworkings of the biblical narratives and teachings. Moshe J. Bernstein, whose interest is in the function of the phenomenon of using the biblical figures’ names in producing certain Qumran texts, identifies the three types or levels of the practice of pseudepigraphy: (1) authoritative pseudepigraphy, (2) convenient pseudepigraphy, and (3) decorative pseudepigraphy.52 First, authoritative pseudepigraphy refers to the use of an ancient figure’s name as the speaker of the text. Secondly, convenient pseudepigraphy refers to the use of ancient figures’ voices in the text, while the text does not specify the identity of the speaker or narrator. Lastly, decorative pseudepigraphy refers to the use of an ancient figure’s name to achieve a certain effect, without particular regard for content.

The first type of pseudepigraphy is observed in the texts typically termed ‘pseudepigrapha.’ The speaker’s identity is specified as a biblical figure, and the contents conveyed by the figure are not restricted to divine mysteries. It also includes sapiential literature, poetry, prayer, and testaments, as evidenced by the works like the Psalms of Solomon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.53 By drawing upon the shared traditions about the biblical figures, such works ascribed to them appeal to literary authority. The expansions of the biblical stories in 1 Enoch (e.g., the Book of Watchers; cf. Gen 6), and the similar reworkings of the stories about the famous biblical figures in Jubilees illustrate the second type of the practice of pseudepigraphy. In Jubilees, not only the cosmological and eschatological mysteries, but also legal truths and a correct system of halakhah are promoted by being placed on the lips of the revered ancient figures.54 The Psalms of Solomon utilizes the third type of the practice of pseudepigraphy. There is no internal clue for its association with the

52 Moshe J. Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls: Categories and Functions,” in Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, ed. Esther G. Chazon, Michael E. Stone, and Avital Pinnick (Boston: Brill, 1999), 1–26. Bernstein describes pseudepigraphy as the phenomenon of composing texts or portions of texts which are placed in the mouth of ancient figures. This description is more neutral than the traditional description of pseudepigraphy, as something inauthentic or deceptive. See Tigchelaar, “Forms of Pseudepigraphy in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 87.


54 Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls,” 6.
biblical stories about Solomon, yet the works’ Solomonic authorship would have exerted certain rhetorical force on the readers of the poems.  

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls adds more examples of the phenomenon of pseudepigraphy. There are a number of works in which the biblical figures appear as vehicles for conveying the real authors’ messages to the readers (e.g., Noah, Jacob, Judah, Benjamin, Levi, Rachel, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, Daniel). Whether the works have the first person voice or not may differentiate what Bernstein identifies as the authoritative pseudepigraphy from the others. Examples of this type of the practice of pseudepigraphy are preserved in the multiple copies of 1 Enoch and testament-type writings. The interpretive reworkings or rewritings of the biblical stories have a narrator with an unspecified identity, who speaks in the third person voice (e.g., Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Apocryphon of Joshua). They include first person speeches of the biblical figures in the narratives, as examples of the practice of convenient pseudepigraphy. According to Bernstein, “The goal of convenient pseudepigraphy is, in this case, obvious. The retelling and expansion of the biblical story is accomplished more easily, and the narrative rendered more vivid, through the creation and insertion of speeches into the mouths of characters.” Some texts, implicitly or explicitly attributed to the biblical figures, present new compositions, not the reworkings of the biblical stories or teachings. As examples of the practice of decorative pseudepigraphy, some legal texts attributed to Moses (i.e., the so-called pseudo-Moses texts) introduce new laws. By appealing to the authority of the tradition of Moses as the

55 Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls,” 7.
56 Tigchelaar, “Forms of Pseudepigraphy in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 89-90.
57 “The Aramaic Levi Document, the Hebrew Testament of Naphtali and the Aramaic fragments of testament-like works assigned to Jacob, Judah and Joseph (very fragmentary) and Qehat and Amram (a bit more substantial) are indubitably also pseudepigraphic in the fullest sense. They are “autobiographical,” as far as we can tell, containing exhortations for virtuous behavior to the descendants of the speaker and prophetic visions of the eschaton. ALD also includes prescriptive priestly halakhah which might have required strong pseudepigraphy for its authority. In all these texts, pseudepigraphy intersects with apocalyptic and authoritative pseudepigraphy is characteristic of their composition.” Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls,” 9-10.
58 Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls,” 10.
mediator of God’s laws, new laws are incorporated into a pre-existing framework and made to appear part of it.\(^{59}\)

The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy calls attention to the relation of new texts to the previously existing texts and traditions associated with the famous biblical figures. Hindy Najman, who examines so-called Mosaic discourse in Second Temple Judaism, approaches the function of pseudepigraphy with an insight from Foucault.\(^{60}\) According to her, the expansion of Moses’ role in the long history of pseudonymous attribution and rewriting can be the example of Foucault’s notion that discourses are inextricably linked to their founders, such as Marxism or Freudianism.\(^{61}\) In the similar manner that the names Marx and Freud in the proclamations “Back to Marx” and “Back to Freud” represent the founders of discourses (or the Marx tradition, the Freud tradition), the name Moses represents the founder of Mosaic discourse (or Mosaic tradition). In the various works utilizing pseudepigraphy, the figure of Moses becomes increasingly linked to various notions of authority (e.g., as prophet, lawgiver, divine amanuensis, king, divine man).\(^{62}\) Such expansion of Moses’ role is a way to continue or return to the founder’s discourse. Najman says, “On this understanding of a discourse tied to a founder, to rework an earlier text is to update, interpret and develop the content of the text in a way that one claims to be an authentic expression of the law already accepted as authoritatively Mosaic.”\(^{63}\)

Najman’s approach may change the traditional understanding of pseudepigraphy in terms of authenticity and inauthenticity. The Second Temple authors did not attribute their works to the ancient biblical figures in order to deceptively authorize them. They did so in order to acknowledge the authority of the traditions associated with the figures, and to develop or contribute to the traditions.

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\(^{59}\) See Bernstein, “Pseudepigraphy in the Qumran Scrolls,” 19 ff.


\(^{62}\) Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 11.

Knowledge of the phenomenon of pseudepigraphy and its authorizing function are important in the present study on the *Gospel of Mary*, which employs the figure of Mary as the esteemed agent for the risen Savior’s revelation. The strategies of authorization of the *Gospel of Mary* are different from the type of authoritative pseudepigraphic text, in which an author attempts to authorize the central message under the name of another, ancient figure. In the *Gospel of Mary*, the central message is authorized both as the risen Savior’s revelation and as the faithful testimony of Mary the witness of the risen Savior. Since the text’s central message is placed on the mouth of Mary, yet she is not identified with the author, what Bernstein calls as the convenient pseudepigraphy is observed in the *Gospel of Mary*.

Najman’s observance of *Jubilees*’ strategies of authorization suggests that some commonalities exist between *Jubilees* and the *Gospel of Mary*. In *Jubilees*, authorization is not accomplished through attribution of authorship to Moses. The text is authorized “both as angelic revelation . . . and as the faithful record of Moses, the paradigmatic amanuensis.”

Najman notes that *Jubilees* insists on Moses’ role in its production, in addition to claiming that its source as angelic revelation. Moses’ role is not that of the author, but of an amanuensis. Moses is the authoritative agent or transmitter of angelic revelation. The *Gospel of Mary* exhibits the similar authorizing strategies. As the revelatory message in *Jubilees* is doubly authorized by the means of divine revelation, mediated by the Angel of Presence, and the agent Moses’ faithful scribal activity, the revelatory message in the *Gospel of Mary* is doubly authorized by the means of divine revelation, mediated by the risen Savior, and the agent Mary’s faithful testimony. It is the already existing tradition about Moses as the recipient of divine revelation on Mount Sinai that enabled the use of the figure of Moses in authorizing *Jubilees*’ revelatory message. In the same way, it is the already existing tradition about or the already established reputation of Mary, known to the implied author and the implied reader as the witness of the risen Savior, that enabled the composition of a new text, the *Gospel of Mary*. The text in turn contributed to the expansion of the tradition’s authority.

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64 Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 63-64.
The model of literary authority and the already existing tradition about Mary are part of the implied reader’s extratexts, which enable and condition the literary and rhetorical effect of the use of the figure of Mary in presenting the risen Savior’s teaching. In consideration of what roles are actually played by the means (i.e., divine revelation) and the agent (i.e., Mary) in the narrative, it is highly unlikely that Peter’s hot-tempered reaction is provoked because he regards them as the unreliable means and the unreliable agent. The function of Mary in the *Gospel of Mary* is by no means to weaken the authority of the Savior’s revelation, but to strengthen it by appealing to the authority of the shared knowledge about Mary’s esteemed status as the Savior’s favorite. The already existing tradition of Mary as a revered figure is the sure ground for the implied author’s persuasion of the implied reader to accept the Savior’s ‘new’ message revealed to Mary. The authority of the Savior’s revelation is not doubly weakened by the disputable means and the agent, but doubly *strengthened* by utilizing the two models of making authority claims, the model of revelatory authority and that of literary authority.

3.2.2 The Extratextual Information about Mary a Cultural Heroic Figure

What is fascinating about the *Gospel of Mary* is that it attempts to validate a particular way of seeing the world, presented as the Savior’s teaching, by appealing to literary authority about Mary. What oral or scribal tradition, images, roles, and character traits are associated with Mary? The figure of Mary, assumed by majority as Mary Magdalene, the witness of the risen Jesus in the canonical gospel accounts, has been the object of many studies interested in the historical Mary Magdalene. The name Mary was utilized not only by the *Gospel of Mary*, but also by some later Christian texts, typically called ‘Gnostic.’ Mary’s appearance as an esteemed dialogue partner of the risen Savior, sometimes as the object of Peter’s jealousy or opposition, has drawn scholarly interest in such texts. Besides the *Gospel of Mary*, the following are the extra-canonical writings that portray Mary engaging in a dialogue with the risen Jesus asking questions and being spoken to or of: *Pistis Sophia*, the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the

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66 For an overview of the scholarly discussion of the identity of Mary as Mary Magdalene, see de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 16-18.
Gospel of Philip, the Dialogue of the Savior, etc.\textsuperscript{67} In the canonical gospel accounts Mary is recorded as one who received divine favor by Jesus’ deliverance her from the seven demons, one who continues to follow and support Jesus during his earthly ministry, even in his suffering and death. Mary is depicted positively especially in the resurrection account of John, in which the risen Jesus reveals himself and his special message for the disciples only to her (John 20:11-18). It is likely that by the time the Gospel of Mary was written, the oral or scribal tradition of Mary was well established as a model disciple, the recipient of divine favor. The initiation of the debate and its resolution, by appealing to Mary’s esteemed status as the Savior’s favorite, should be understood in view of how Mary functions in the narrative to serve the implied author’s overall aim to impact the implied reader.

If the implied author’s aim is polemical, to advocate charismatic means and female leadership against Peter’s (and the historical opponents’) denial of them, what would be expected in the narrative is not merely Levi’s statements about Mary’s esteemed status, but a more substantial, apologetic argument for the validity of the means and the reliability of the agent.\textsuperscript{68} The fact that the debate is resolved by repeating what Peter already acknowledged about Mary, her esteemed status as the Savior’s favorite, the purpose of the inclusion of the debate scene seems hardly apologetic. The reason for placing the risen Savior’s revelation on Mary’s mouth is to promote the Savior’s teaching according to the two models of authority widely used in antiquity, viz. the authority of divine revelation and the authority of the oral-scribal tradition of a

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\textsuperscript{67} Among these, in two writings Peter shows hostility to Mary: “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life” (GosThom 114). “My Lord, we cannot tolerate this woman anymore: she does not allow any of us to say a word, whereas she speaks often” (PS I.36; cf. II.72). In other writings there seems no quarrel between Mary and Peter (and other male disciples). See Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 216-25; de Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 4-6.

\textsuperscript{68} There is inherent problem in the previous scholarly interpretation that the purpose of the debate scene is to defend private revelation as a legitimate mode of transmitting the risen Savior’s teaching. The underlying assumption is that the so-called ‘orthodox’ group denies private revelation as a legitimate mode of transmitting the risen Savior’s teaching. This assumption is based on the writings of the second-century heresiologists, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian, who never denied altogether the validity of divine revelation in the forms of visions and dreams, but warned that some revelations can come from the devil. Such assumption is not tenable on the basis of the writings of the heresiologists and, moreover, by the canonical writings on which what has been constructed by the scholars as ‘orthodox’ is based. See See Guy G. Stroumsa, “Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse,” in Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming, ed. David Dean. Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 189–212; James L Ash, “Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” Theological Studies 37, no. 2 (1976): 227–52; Christopher Forbes, Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Environment (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 250.
These two models apply to the *Gospel of Mary*. The text’s central message is introduced as the divine revelation of the risen Savior. The message’s authority relies on its divine source. The text’s divinely authorized message is placed on the mouth of a historical figure, Mary, one of Jesus’ early followers. The shared knowledge of Mary as the recipient of divine favor and a witness to the risen Savior underlies the practice of pseudepigraphy in the *Gospel of Mary*. The divinely authorized message gains more authority by being mediated by Mary, a virtuous figure who was deemed worthy to receive divine favor. The use of the two models, by appealing to divine revelation in the forms of visions and dreams, and to the figure of Mary, is *essential* for making truth-authority claims for the risen Savior’s teaching.

This appeal to revelatory authority and to literary authority can be understood in terms of the shared discursive ‘rules’ of coherence, necessary for the emergence of any religious text. With an insight from Foucault’s “archeological” analysis, Bradley H. McLean understands early Christian discourse as a “rule-governed system.” His understanding of the shared discursive rules of coherence, by which any religious text was able to come into existence, gained religious authority and currency, and was circulated among the contemporaries, shed light on the role of the implied reader’s extratextual information in reading process.

By definition, a text cannot exist in isolation: every text, including every Christian text, belongs to an associative discursive series, which comprises other, previously existing texts, formed according to the same rules. In other words, this analysis of texts is directed at the level of discourse itself, and especially at the discursive rules of coherence according to which texts are formed. As the most general system governing the emergence of new texts, these rules of coherence constitute the very possibility of what could be thought, written, or said, by any Christian author, in any age. These rules can be conceived of in a variety of ways: as a shared cultural logic about causality, as sets of

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69 “Beyond the Bible, the early Christians also had at their disposal the large and varied corpus of Apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic literature, with its emphasis on visions of the divinity or of its angels. The whole literature, Bible and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, constituted the foundation of the Christian attitude to dreams and visions. Biblical dreams and visions are not only legitimate; they were also canonical.” Stroumsa, “Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse,” 194-195.


culturally shared taxonomies, or as a shared cultural metaphor. However they are conceived, it is the rules of discourse that structured the questions that early Christian authors asked, the conceptual categories they employed, and the comparisons they made.\footnote{72}{McLean, “The Rationality of Early Christian Discourse,” 47.}

What the implied reader brings to the text in reading process is both enabled and conditioned by his or her extratexts, which comprise (1) language, (2) social norms and cultural script, (3) classical or canonical literature, (4) literary conventions (e.g., standard plots, stock characters, type scenes, genres), and (5) commonly-known historical and geographical facts.\footnote{73}{Darr, On Character Building, 22.} The shared cultural logic, metaphor, conceptual and linguistic categories, etc. constitute the very possibility of all textual meaning. They belong to the discursive rules of coherence, according to which the composition and interpretation of all texts, including the Gospel of Mary, are governed. The discursive rules of coherence include “the accepted concepts, preferred strategies of explanation and argumentation, and taken-for-granted discursive objects of early Christian texts.”\footnote{74}{McLean, “The Rationality of Early Christian Discourse,” 48.} Making truth-authority claims by appealing to divine revelation and the tradition of a cultural heroic figure can be viewed as part of the discursive rules, the accepted concepts and preferred strategies of authorization.

### 3.3 Summary and Conclusion

In order to understand what is at stake in the debate in the Gospel of Mary, this chapter has reconstructed the extratextual information that implied reader is expected to have concerning the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous figure. In the previous studies, what provoked Peter’s negative reaction was often explained by assuming his (and the historical opponents’) irreconcilably different view on the means (i.e., private revelation) and the agent (i.e., Mary a woman) of the risen Savior’s teaching. The means and the agent were often understood as the disputable issues, which Peter regarded as unreliable. However, such understanding was
problematized, in consideration of the fact that Peter by no means denied them in the previous narrative, and that in the story world the authority of the risen Savior’s teaching fundamentally relied on the means and the agent.

To reconstruct the implied reader’s extratextual information concerning the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person, the use of the conception in Jewish and non-Jewish sources in antiquity has been surveyed and discussed. What is noteworthy is the similarity of perspectives on the authorizing function of the conception of divine revelation. There are also different views between Jewish and non-Jewish literature on the authentic source of divine revelation (i.e., God in Jewish literature; benevolent or malevolent gods in the non-Jewish literature). While in Jewish literature God is the authentic source of revelation, in non-Jewish literature a number of deities, both benevolent and malevolent, are responsible for revelatory experiences. The reliability of divine revelation is understood differently, because from a non-Jewish perspective it depends on the deities’ intention. While in Jewish literature divine revelation is communicated in a sensible way, in non-Jewish literature the possibility of misinterpretation on the part of the recipients is present.

The use of the conception of divine revelation, and the use of the historical figures as vehicles for revelatory message or teaching have been discussed in terms of the two models of authority widely used in antiquity, viz. revelatory authority and literary authority. Modern scholarly discussion of the phenomenon of pseudepigraphy in Second Temple Jewish literature shed light on how new texts drew upon and expanded the authority of the already existing traditions of the famous biblical figures. The authorizing function of the practice of placing the central message on the mouth of the revered biblical figures in Second Temple Jewish literature sheds light on the role of the figure of Mary in the Gospel of Mary. The purpose of placing the risen Savior’s teaching on Mary’s mouth is to make authority claims. By appealing to the authority of the already existing oral-scribal traditions about Mary the recipient of divine favor, the witness of the risen Savior, Gospel of Mary utilizes the model of literary authority.

75 See this chapter, §3.1.1 and 3.1.2.
Contrary to the views that the risen Savior’s teaching in the *Gospel of Mary* was doubly weakened by the unreliable means and the unreliable agent, in the story world the risen Savior’s teaching is doubly authorized, by appealing to the authority of divine revelation and the authority of the oral-scribal tradition of Mary the Savior’s favorite. It was argued that, in view of the roles played by the means and the agent in the story world, what provoked Peter’s hot-tempered reaction was not due to his different views on them, viz. his denial of divine revelation as the valid means, and Mary a woman as the reliable agent. Divine revelation and the shared knowledge about Mary the Savior’s favorite were part of the implied reader’s extratexts, which made the composition of the *Gospel of Mary* possible. They were essential for making truth-authority claims for its central message, introduced as the risen Savior’s teaching.
Chapter 4
The Gospel of Mary: How to Make Truth-Authority Claims

4.1 Comparison of the Greek and Coptic Versions

This chapter will compare the Greek and Coptic manuscripts to identify variants, and discuss whether they make significant differences in the interpretation of the text.¹ This study’s interest is in the narrative part of the Gospel of Mary, for the purpose of exploring the events, settings, characters, plot, and discourse in it. The events of the narrative consist of the two longer sections of the risen Savior’s teaching, first transmitted directly to the disciples, and secondly transmitted by the agency of Mary, and the interactions among the characters. The portrayals of the interactions among the characters are preserved in the two Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mary. The fragmentary Greek manuscripts were restored largely based on the Coptic version. Though the missing parts were reconstructed in comparison with the parallel Coptic text, some variant readings between the Greek and Coptic versions exist. The Greek fragments of the narrative sections (POxy 3525 and PRyl 463) and the Coptic manuscript (BG 8502) will be compared with each other to identify variations and their possible influence on the interpretation of the text.²

¹ See this study’s chapter 1, §1.2. Texts, provenance, and dating. The three manuscripts of the Gospel of Mary have survived: two small Greek papyrus fragments (POxy 3525, PRyl 463) and a Coptic manuscript (BG 8502). The differences between the two Greek fragments in format and script indicate that they were not from the same manuscript. Since the two Greek manuscripts are fragmentary, the restoration of them was at times conjectured based on the Coptic version. While the reconstruction of their missing parts depended on the parallel Coptic text, where the Greek is clear there are at times some variants between the Greek versions and the Coptic version. The differences between the Greek and Coptic texts suggest that the Greek Vorlage (or the Coptic Vorlage) of the Coptic text must have been divergent from each of the two Greek manuscripts’ Greek Vorlage.

² The Greek and Coptic texts in this study are based on the most recent critical editions provided by Tuckett. Tuckett’s comments and rationales for his re-examination of the original manuscripts and previous editions will be referred to in identifying the differences between the two versions. The English translations will be primarily based on Tuckett’s one, yet also take account of other published ones. Any substantial reason for the use of other translations will be addressed in the course of discussion. See Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 90-92, 108.
4.1.1 Comparison of POxy 3525 and BG 8502 9:5-13

There are six notable disagreements between POxy 3525 and BG 8502 9:5-13. First, in BG 8502 9:13, only one verb is present for describing Mary’s action directed to the disciples: Mary ‘greeted’ (ἀκαταφέρε) them. In POxy 3525, after the missing parts between lines 8 and 9, Mary ‘kissed’ (κατεψυφληθη) the disciples. In consideration of the lengths of other lines, the missing parts would be better filled with the action of ‘greeting’ as in the Coptic text: Mary greeted (ἀσπαζόμενη) and kissed (κατεψυφληθη) them.³ If the earlier Greek version included the two verbs, the latter verb was omitted in the later Coptic version. King explains the reason by saying, “This line may have been omitted from the Coptic text because the practice of exchanging chaste kisses had come into dispute in the later Egyptian Christian circles which produced the Coptic version of the Gospel of Mary.”⁴ Tuckett, while noting King’s rationale, understands that no difference in meaning is caused by the additional verb in the Greek version, since the loan word for ‘greeting’ in Coptic text may include the idea of ‘kissing.’⁵

Secondly, in BG 8502 9:19-20 Mary says that the Savior has ‘prepared’ (ἁρκετότητα) the disciples, including her, and to make them to be ‘human beings’ (νεωνεκυνεκ). POxy 3525 line 12 is too fragmentary and the original reading is unclear. P. J. Parsons notes that, though doubtfully, the first letter of the Greek verb is σ. He regards it as συν- prefix and suggests the verb συνηφηληκγεων: the Savior has ‘united’ (συνηφηληκγεων) the disciples.⁶ In Tuckett’s view, this restored text is followed by most commentators including Lührmann, without any further discussion. It is possibly because they are influenced by “the general theme (prominent in Gnosticism, but also widespread in the ancient world)” about “the ideal of the restoration of human beings into the

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⁵ Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 121, 164.

⁶ “συν-: doubtfully read; but not κατ-, the expected equivalent of Coptic 췼.” Parsons, “3525: Gospel of Mary,” 14. The Greek equivalent of the Coptic is κατηφηληκγεων. While the verb συνηφηληκγεων is translated by Parsons as ‘to unite,’ it also means ‘to cooperate’ or ‘to work together.’ See Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary,”’ 61-62.
form of an androgynous unity.” Tuckett says, “Lührmann and Petersen both suggest that what is in mind here is the joining together of the male and female parts of humanity into a single androgynous whole.” The presupposition about the theme of the restoration of human beings into an androgynous whole would have influenced scholarly consent to Parsons’ suggestion.

Thirdly, while in BG 8502 9:21 Mary turned ‘their hearts’ (πέντε στή) to the Good (Ἀγαθόν), POxy 3525 line 13 includes ‘their minds’ (πνεῦμα του ἄνω) instead. In BG 8502 10:15 and 21 the word ‘mind’ (νοῦς; νοῦς) is used as the place where the treasure is (BG 8502 10:15-16), and the faculty by which Mary is able to see a vision (POxy 3525 lines 21-23). In view of the positive use of the word, Tuckett suggests that the Greek text’s ‘mind’ may be original, and that the word ‘heart’ (στή) used in BG 8502 9:15 might have influenced the change from the original ‘mind’ to ‘heart’ in BG 8502 9:21 by assimilation. Since difference in meaning between ‘mind’ and ‘heart’ seems minimal, King’s exegesis exhibits no concern for these variant readings.

Fourthly, while it is ‘the sayings of the Savior’ (τὰ ἀποφθέγματα τοῦ Θεοῦ) that the disciples discuss in POxy 3525 line 14, in BG 8502 9:23-24 it is ‘the words of the Savior’ (ἐν Θεοῦ ἠμών). The Greek term ἀποφθέγματα seems more original than the simpler Coptic term ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἱησοῦ. Though expressed differently, both Greek and Coptic texts basically mean the same thing, viz. the Savior’s teaching.

Fifthly, there is a disagreement between the two texts concerning Peter’s request. In the Greek text, Peter asks Mary, “Tell us [those words which you know] of the Savior and which we have not heard” (POxy 3525 lines 16-17). Peter’s request is slightly longer in the Coptic text: “Tell us the words of the Savior which you remember, which you know but we do not

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9 “The term “mind” [in BG 8502 10:21] points the reader back to Mary’s earlier ministry to the other disciples in which “she turned their mind toward the Good” (POxy 5:9). It is because Mary has placed her mind with God that she can direct others to the spiritual treasure of the Good.” King, “The Gospel of Mary Magdalene,” 63.
10 Tuckett argues that it is more probable rather than the reverse change, though he admits that certainty is not possible. Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 122.
\(\text{ετεοοούν θνωού θνανον αν}\), and which we have not heard” (BG 8502 10:4-6). The Coptic text seems to put more emphasis on the disciples’ ignorance of the Savior’s teaching given to Mary, by including ‘but we do not [know].’

Lastly, Mary’s response to Peter’s request in the two texts is slightly different. Mary says, “What is to you unknown and I remember, I will tell you” (POxy 3525 line 18). In the Coptic text, Mary’s statement is shorter, and the Savior’s teaching is not what is ‘unknown’ (\(\lambda\alpha\nu\theta\alpha\nu\epsilon\lambda\)) to the disciples but what is ‘hidden’ (\(\pi\epsilon\omicron\omicron\eta\eta\)) from them: “What is hidden from you, I will proclaim to you” (BG 8502 10:8). While Tuckett does not consider that this difference significantly influences the textual meaning, King does.\(^{11}\) She argues that by describing the Savior’s teaching as ‘hidden,’ “Only the Coptic text emphasizes that Mary’s teaching is intended to be esoteric.”\(^{12}\)

4.1.2 Comparison of PRyl 463 and BG 8502 17:5-19:5

There are seventeen variants between PRyle 463 and BG 8502 17:5-19:5:

(1) The Coptic text has a shorter version of the ending of the Savior’s teaching. While the Greek text includes ‘the rest of the course of season, of time, of aeon’ (\(\tau\omicron\ \lambda\omicron\theta\omicron\ \pi\omicron\delta\nu\ \delta\rho\omicron\mu\omicron\ \kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\omicron\nu\omicron\upsilon\ \alpha\delta\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\varsigma;\) PRyl 464 recto lines 1-2), the Coptic text instead has ‘the time of the season of the aeon’ (\(\mu\eta\omicron\ e\ \chi\rho\omicron\nu\omicron\sigma\omicron\ \mu\tau\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omicron\sigma\omicron\ \mu\tau\alpha\omicron\alpha\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\iota\nu\iota\omicron;\) BG 8502 17:5-6). In the Coptic version, ‘season’ and ‘time’ have changed places, and there is no corresponding word for \(\delta\rho\omicron\mu\omicron\upsilon\).\(^{13}\) This difference suggests either that the Coptic is not a translation of this type of the Greek text, or that the Coptic one is a somewhat free translation.

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\(^{11}\) Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 123.


While in the Greek text Mary became silent after recounting the Savior’s teaching ‘since the Savior up to now had spoken’ (PRyl 464 recto lines 4-5), in the Coptic text she does so ‘since the Savior had spoken with her up to now’ (BG 8502 17:8-9). Lührmann suggests that the Greek text without ‘with her’ (nīhac) implies more radical meaning, “some kind of quasi-identification between Mary and the Savior.” The Savior speaks through Mary not with Mary, according to the Greek text. Mary is thus seen as an as an embodiment of the Savior. In Tuckett’s view, however, it is not certain whether the Greek text implies a more radical meaning that Mary as an embodiment of the Savior. He says, “Here Mary can be seen as simply the vehicle through whom the words of the Savior are transmitted to others via the report of her dream.”

There are four variant readings between the two texts in Andrew’s words (PRyl 464 recto lines 5-10; BG 8502 17:10-15). The first variant is found in his reference to ‘brothers’ (or ‘brethren’). In the Greek text Andrew says: “Brothers (Aδελφοι), what do you think about what has been said?” (PRyl 464 recto lines 5-7). While Andrew mentions ‘brothers’ here, in the Coptic text it is the indirect object of Andrew’s action: “Andrew answered and said to the brethren (Nnesnhu)” (BG 8502 17:10-11). Despite this difference, both texts indicate that Andrew’s words are directed to the brothers or the disciples.

The second variant concerns the form of Andrew’s initial words. In the Coptic text Andrew says, “Say what you (wish to?) say (axi petetίξω) about what she has said” (BG 8502 17:11-12). In the Greek text he asks a question: “What do you think (τι ὑμῖν δοκεῖ) about what has been said?” (PRyl 464 recto lines 6-7). Though expressed

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14 Lührmann, Die apokryph gewordenen Evangelien: Studien zu neuen Texten und zu neuen Fragen (Boston: Brill, 2004), 115.
15 Mohri, Maria Magdalena, 263.
16 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 186.
17 Literally axi petetίξω is ‘say what you say.’ Tuckett here follows the translation of R. McL. Wilson and G. W. MacRae: “Say what you (wish to) say . . . .” Wilson and MacRae, “The Gospel according to Mary BG, 1:7.1–19.5,” 467.
differently, both texts mean the basically same intention of Andrew. The difference
between them does not make a significant change in meaning.

(5) The third variant concerns the reference to ‘the Savior’ (PRy1 464 recto line 8; BG 8502
17:14). It has been suggested that Andrew’s reference to the Savior in the Greek text has
a possessive pronoun (i.e., σωτηρα), which is not found in the Coptic one. Tuckett,
however, notes a lacuna in the Greek fragment at this point and says, “A reading of των
σωτηρα seems to be required by the sense (as well as fitting the clearly visible τηρα at
the start of the line 9 and also the Coptic version at this point).” He regards the
possibility of σωτηρ in the Greek version as being caused by a scribal mistake. If
Tuckett’s observance is right, there is no difference between the two texts.

(6) The last variant is the disagreement between the two texts concerning the reason for
Andrew’s doubt. In the Greek text Andrew does not accept what Mary said, by saying:
“For it seems to be different from his thought (του ἐκείνου ἐννοεῖται)” (PRy1 464 recto
lines 9-10). His words are expressed slightly differently in the Coptic text: “These
teachings seem to be (giving) different ideas (ἐννοεῖται)” (BG 8502 17:14-15). The
Greek text suggests that, because what Mary said seems different from ‘his thought,’ viz.
the Savior’s teaching already known to Andrew, Andrew doubts that it is really from the
Savior. In the Coptic text he simply says that it is ‘different (or ‘other,’ ἐκείνει) ideas.’ In
both texts, the ‘newness’ of the Savior’s teaching mediated by Mary is acknowledged.

(7) While the Coptic text indicates a change of the speaker after Andrew’s statements, the
Greek text does not: ‘Peter answered and spoke about these same things’ (BG 8502
17:16-17). Nevertheless, Levi’s address to Peter in PRy1 464 verso line 1 indicates that

19 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 125.
20 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 125.
21 Since only the ending –νοεῖται is identifiable in the Greek text, suggestions have been made about it. Colin H.
the speaker of the preceding words is Peter. Thus, a note (i.e., ‘Peter said’) has been inserted into the translation of the Greek text to signal that Peter is speaking.22

(8) In Peter’s statements (PRyl 464 verso lines 12-15; BG 8502 17:18-22) there are three variant readings. The first one is the difference between ‘secretly’ (λάθος) in the Greek text, and ‘without our knowing’ (μηδεμεν λαλησατε) in the Coptic text (PRyl 464 verso line 13; BG 8502 19-20). Peter already admits earlier in the narrative that Mary encountered the risen Savior and received his teaching, which previously unknown to the disciples. Both texts, with ‘secretly’ or ‘without our knowing,’ refer to the same fact that the risen Savior revealed himself and his teaching to Mary alone.

(9) The second difference between the two texts is that the Greek version seems to have a scribal mistake in omitting a negative in Peter’s question: “Did the Savior speak secretly to a woman and openly so that we all might hear?” (PRyl 464 verso lines 12-14).23 Since the Savior did not speak openly, ου has been supplied before ‘openly’ (ϕανερωσε) on the basis of the Coptic text: “... and [not] openly (κατα [ου] φανερωσε) so that...”24 Peter’s statements are different in the Coptic text: “He did not speak with a woman without our knowing, and not openly, did he?” (BG 8502 17:18-20). In the Greek text, Peter expects the Savior to speak openly to ‘us’ (i.e., all the disciples), so that ‘we’ all might hear his teaching (ινα παντες νοικοι του Αριστοτελειον). The Savior’s ‘secretly’ speaking to Mary and his ‘openly’ speaking to all the disciples are contrasted. What upsets Peter here is that not the latter, but the former is the Savior’s choice. He, thus, questions whether the Savior actually chose Mary over the disciples. However, in the Coptic text, such contrast is not in view, and ‘not openly’ is used with the same meaning of ‘without our knowing.’ Peter questions whether the Savior, contrary to his expectation, actually spoke with Mary,


a woman, ‘without our knowing’ (ΝΧΙΟΥΕ ΕΡΟΝ) and ‘not openly’ (ἘΝ ΟΥΝΩΝΙΕ ΕΡΟΛ ΑΝ).

(10) The last variant concerns Peter’s mention of Mary’s status as ‘more worthy’ (ἂ央视λογψμεραν) than ‘us’ (PRyl 464 verso line 15; cf. ΝΥΟΥΟ ΕΡΟΝ, BG 8502 17:20-22). The fragmentary Greek text has Peter’s shorter question: “Is she more worthy than us . . .” The Coptic text includes the longer question: “Shall we turn around and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us (ＮΤ<Λ>ΚΟΤΠΗ ΝΥΟΥΟ ΕΡΟΝ)?” Tuckett notes that the extant Greek text at this point is only ‘more worthy’ (ἂ央视λογψμεραν), and it has been restored on the basis of ‘more than us’ (ΝΥΟΥΟ ΕΡΟΝ) in the Coptic version. Peter expresses jealousy by saying, “Did he prefer her to us?” or “Did he choose her over us?”

(11) In the Coptic text the description of the weeping Mary and her response to Peter are preserved, while they are not in the fragmentary Greek text. In the Coptic text, “Mary wept (ΠΙΗΗΕ) and said to Peter: ‘My brother (ΜΑΚΟΝ) Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up in my heart (ΞΗΤ), or that I am lying (ΞΗΧΙ ΧΟΛ) about the Savior?’ (BG 8502 18:1-5). If these passages originally belonged to the earlier Greek version, they provide important textual clues for understanding how Mary (and Peter) is characterized.

(12) In Levi’s longer response to Peter (PRyl 464 verso lines 2-14; BG 8502 18:7-21), there are five disagreements between the two texts. The first one is the Coptic text’s

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25 This follows Lührmann’s reconstruction of the Greek text. See Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 128. However, ἄςςξίλουλογψμεραν also can be viewed as part of the object of the previous verb in Peter’s words. For example, Roberts understands what Peter says like the following: “Did thy Savior . . . speak privately to a woman and <not> openly, that we all might hear something of more note . . .” Roberts, “463: The Gospel of Mary,” 22. Another example is given by Wilson and MacRae: “. . . so that we all might hear something more remarkable . . .” Wilson and MacRae, “The Gospel according to Mary BG, 1:7.1–19.5,” 467.

26 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 17.

27 Mary’s ‘weeping,’ how Peter is addressed by her (‘brother’), and reasons for her ‘weeping’ (i.e., implied charge that her ‘heart’ is the source of her vision, that she ‘lies’ about the Savior) constitute the data for understanding how the implied author reveals the character by the technique of ‘showing.’
inclusion of ‘I see you now’ (Ὑπανε ἐποκ τενογ), which is not in the Greek text (PRyl 464 verso line 3; BG 8502 18:8).

(13) The second variant concerns Levi’s mention of ‘adversary’ or ‘the adversaries’ (PRyl 464 verso line 4; BG 8502 18:10). It is suggested that the Greek text has a singular noun, while the Coptic texts has a plural noun with the definite article (ἀντικειμένος; niantikeimenoc). However, according to Tuckett, in the papyrus not σ but “the trace of a small vertical line”, which is ι, is visible. He concludes that both texts have plural nouns (i.e., ἀντικειμένοι) and, thus, exhibit no difference in meaning.

(14) The third variant is the difference between the two texts in addressing the Savior’s love for Mary. In the Greek text, Levi says that the Savior ‘loved her very well’ (ἀσφαλῶς ἡγάπησεν, PRyl 464 verso lines 7-8). In the Coptic text, he says that the Savior ‘loved her more than us’ (αὐγογοφε ἡγογο ερον; BG 8502 18:14-15). Levi’s statement in the Coptic text has more radical meaning than that in the Greek text. Since “a reverse change is hard to envisage,” it is probable that the Greek text would have originally had the comparative statement. According to Marjanen, a scribal mistake (by haplography) may result in the omission of the phrase, possibly αὐτὴν ἧμᾶς, between the two μᾶλλον. Tuckett regards the comparative phrase as providing a twist to Peter’s earlier mention that the Savior loved Mary ‘more than’ other women (10:2-3). In view of the possible literary effect of using the comparative phrase (i.e., the Savior loved Mary not merely ‘more than other women,’ but ‘more than us’), he concludes that the Coptic

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29 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 117.
30 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 129. The Coptic version’s ‘the adversaries’ have been understood as referring to the orthodox Christians. Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, 77; Perkins, The Gnostic Dialogue, 133. De Boer understands ‘the adversaries’ as indicating the hostile cosmic powers, with whom the soul interacts in Mary’s vision. De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 91-92.
31 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 129.
32 The original text might have been the following: ἀσφαλῶς ἡγάπησεν μᾶλλον αὐτὴν ἡ ἡμᾶς Μᾶλλον . . . ; Marjanen, The Woman Jesus Loved, 116.
version preserves the more original reading. Though it is difficult to say it with certainty, the more radical meaning of the comparative statement in the Coptic version is consistent with the Greek text’s depiction of Peter’s jealousy and of the contrast between the Savior’s choice of ‘secretly’ speaking to Mary over his ‘openly’ speaking to ‘us’ (PRyl 464 verso lines 12-14).

(15) While Levi says in the Coptic text, “[Let us] acquire him for ourselves (ντηξιποψ άνα) . . . as he commanded us,” the Greek text has no equivalent to these words (BG 8502 18:17). Levi’s use of the hortatory subjunctive mood in the Greek text is concerned only with fulfilling the Savior’s commission: “Let us do what was commanded us . . . .” (PRyl 464 verso lines 10-11).

(16) Levi’s exhortation in the Greek text ends with a warning against being constrained by rules and laws ‘as the Savior said’ (ὁ Ποταμός ἀπό τὸν ἡμέραν, PRyl 464 verso lines 13-14). However, the Coptic text does not include ‘as the Savior said,’ but has the phrase ‘beyond what the Savior said’ (παρά πενταπλεύρος Χ νομος; BG 8502 18:21). It is difficult to decide whether ‘as’ (ὁ Ποταμός) or ‘beyond’ (παρά) is more original. The Savior similarly exhorted before his departure concerning rules and law in 8:22-9:4: “Do not lay down any rules (ὀρος) beyond (παρά) what I have appointed for you, and do not give a law (νομος) like the law-giver lest you be constrained by it.” King states that the Greek version with no exceptive clause has more radical meaning, and the Coptic version’s mention of exception might have been added to soften it. Tuckett, however, regards King’s view as somewhat speculative. In his view, if the Greek version’s ‘as the Savior said’ refers back to his earlier mention of exception in 9:1, no difference in meaning is made by ὁ Ποταμός. He says that the Coptic version is “a somewhat over-literalistic, secondary attempt to tie the two passages more closely together.” Thus, he regards the Greek version’s ‘as’ is more original. While the Coptic text explicitly states that the Savior’s

33 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 129.

34 King argues that both cases of παρά (BG 8502 9:1; 18:21) are secondary, “intended to soften the radical character of the command.” King, “The Gospel of Mary Magdalene,” 617.

35 Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 131; also see 193.
teaching is an exception, the Greek one implicitly states it by referring back to his earlier mention.

(17) The most notable difference between the two texts is the ending. In the Greek text, “Levi departed and began to pr[each]” (PRyl 464 verso line 15). In the Coptic text, “They began to go out [to pr]oclaim and to preach” (BG 8502 19:1-2). While in the former Levi alone departed to preach, in the latter presumably the disciples did so. Some scholars understand that in the Greek version Peter and Andrew may not be persuaded by Levi, and still oppose Mary. Concerning those who argue for the implied anti-Peter polemic in the Greek version’s ending, Tuckett states:

One should perhaps be a little wary of seeing any implied polemic against Peter in a possible singular verb here: the Greek text simply implies that, at this point, Levi goes out to preach: it may imply that, at this time, Peter does not—but that in no way excludes the possibility that Peter goes out to preach later! Further, the subject of the verb is presumably Levi alone—and this then excludes not only Peter but also Mary! Is it significant that Mary herself does not apparently go out and preach at this point? . . . As such, it is hard to see any implied polemic against Mary here and thus, derivatively, it is equally hard to see an implied polemic against Peter.

Arguments from silence certainly entail a danger in reading too much into the text, beyond what the textual evidence justifiably supports. The Coptic text’s ending, in which the tension is explicitly resolved by the disciples’ fulfillment of the Savior’s commission, seems more appealing to the readers than the Greek version’s ambiguous ending. It is probable that the explicitly ‘happy ending’ of the Coptic version, in which the preaching of the disciples is contrasted to the initial reluctance of the disciples, is secondary.

The above comparison of the Greek and Coptic manuscripts has demonstrated that the Greek texts are likely not the predecessors of the Coptic text. POxy 3525 and BG 8502 9:5-13

36 “The Gospel ends with considerable ambiguity . . . . according to the Greek test, only Levi actually leaves to fulfill the Savior’s command . . . .” King, “The Gospel of Mary Magdalene,” 617. “Can we really trust that all these apostles fully understood the Savior’s teaching and preached the gospel of the Human One in true? None of this is answered.” King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 85. “The Gospel of Mary ends here, which leaves the readers uncertain. Are Mary’s words accepted? Is her teaching incorporated? . . . But Andrew, Peter, and even Levi seem to have decided to do without her. For them, the teaching Mary as a woman is a problem.” De Boer, The Gospel of Mary, 98.

exhibit some variants in wording and forms. However, the overall textual meaning remains the same despite these differences. There are many variants between PRyl 463 and BG 8502 17:5-19:5. In most cases, the variant readings do not significantly make changes in the interpretation of the text. Some noteworthy cases preserved in the Greek text have been discussed (e.g., Andrew’s mention of ‘his thought,’ the contrast between the Savior’s ‘secretly’ speaking to Mary and ‘openly’ speaking to ‘us’ in Peter’s statement, and the possible inclusion of the comparative clause in Levi’s response to Peter, and the ambiguous ending). The contrast between the Savior’s ‘secretly’ speaking to Mary and ‘openly’ speaking to the disciples in Peter’s words in the Greek text is particularly important for understanding what provoked Peter’s negative reaction. According to the Greek version, Peter’s jealousy is due to the Savior’s choice of Mary over the disciples. Peter’s complaint is directed not to Mary but to the Savior, who revealed such a weighty message only to her. While the Coptic version lacks such contrast, Peter’s expression of jealousy suggests the same reason, the Savior’s choice of Mary over ‘us.’

4.2 The Structure of the Text

Bass’ form-critical study of the Gospel of Mary, which identifies transitional keywords, catchwords, redactional elements, and thematic parallels, is helpful in analyzing its structure.38 The Gospel of Mary is easily divided into two parts (7:1-9:24 and 10:1-19:5). Though King notes the structural similarity between the two parts, she does not conduct a detailed analysis of the similarity.39 It is Bass who analyzes the structure in depth, and demonstrates the text’s symmetrical structure, which is signaled by transitional keywords like the following.40

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38 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary.’” See this study’s chapter 1, §1.3. Genre and literary unity.

39 King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 30-31

40 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary.’” 18.
The two parts of the narrative are symmetrically structured with a series of parallel sections: (1) setting, (2) revelation, (3) objection, (4) response, (5) pronouncement, and (6) conclusion. Transitional keywords or expressions, such as νταπε (or ντεπε), δε, τοτε, μαλλον and νταπε (or ντεπε) again, are repeated to signal the similar narrative flow of the two parts. In each part, after the descriptions of the ‘setting’ and the characters, the risen Savior’s revelation or teaching is introduced to meet the disciples’ need. The subordinate temporal clause ‘when he said this (νταπεκε ναι) . . . .’ or ‘when Mary said this (ντεπεμαρισαμ κε ναι) . . . .’ signals the end of the ‘revelation’ section. It is followed by a portrayal of the
interactions among the characters. Tension is created by those who do not appropriately respond to the Savior’s revelation. This section of ‘objection’ is signaled by δε: ‘but (δε) they were grieved . . .’ or ‘but (δε) Andrewed answered . . .’ Mary’s response to the recipients’ objection is introduced by τοτε. The section of Mary’s ‘response’ indicates a transitional point in the narrative. From the transition point onward, the tension created by the recipients’ objection is soon to be resolved by the intervention of a character. Mary in the first part, and Levi in the second part make a pronouncement or an exhortation in regard to the disciples as a whole. The section of ‘pronouncement’ is indicated by ἀλλον: ‘rather (ἀλλον) let us praise . . .’ or ‘rather (ἀλλον) let us be ashamed . . .’ The use of ἀντε (or ἀντε), the subordinate temporal clause, signals the conclusion of the narrative: ‘When Mary said these things . . .’ or ‘when he [Levi] said these things . . .’ Each part of the narrative ends with a positive portrayal of the disciples, whose changed attitudes and deeds show that the tension is resolved. Although it is only Levi who goes out and preach the gospel in the Greek text, the ending of the positive portrayal of preaching Levi, one of the fearful and distressed disciples in the initial scene, makes no significant difference in the end. As in the ending of the Coptic text, Levi’s changed attitude suggests that the tension is finally resolved.

Bass argues that the objection, response, and pronouncement that follow the section of revelation points to the deliberate composition of the text. Her study supports the unity of the text, by demonstrating that the features of the composition of the part two heavily rely on the part one’s catchwords. In her view, the symmetrical structure of the text, along with the compositional features, may shed light on the text’s purpose and function. According to Bass, the text’s structural features share similarities with those of a pronouncement story like those found in the canonical gospels. She adopts Robert C. Tannehill’s typology of the canonical pronouncement stories in understanding the structure of the Gospel of Mary. Tannehill’s

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41 There is a lacuna in the Coptic text: ‘When [he said these things] and they began to go out . . .’ (ntere [λευει ἄε ξε ηναὶ αγω αφησει η βοκ]).
43 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary,’” 98.
44 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary,’” 121.
typology “provide(s) clues to the rhetorical function of the story, the way in which the storyteller is seeking to influence the reader.”

A pronouncement story consists of the two main parts, the pronouncement and its setting (i.e., the response or a climatic utterance, and stimulus, which is the situation that provokes the response). The situation that provokes the response creates suspense and expectation in the reader, who anticipates what will happen as a result. The movement from stimulus to response is the main development of a story, and it helps the interpreter to understand the purpose of the story’s rhetorical shaping.

Tannehill observes, “The pronouncement story is stylized and should not be confused with a complete and neutral report of an actual conversation.” Tannehill’s statement is important in understanding the structure of the Gospel of Mary and its function. Each of the two parts of the Gospel of Mary are structured with the two necessary parts (i.e., stimulus, response), and the text as a whole contains two expanded pronouncement stories. In each part, the brief portrayal of the interactions between the two parties is expected to be interpreted, not as a ‘neutral report of an actual conversation,’ but as a story stylized to exert certain rhetorical force on the readers. The story is rhetorically shaped to highlight the climatic utterance. The two parties involved in the interaction are not meant to be given an equal hearing. A pronouncement or exhortation of one party “is placed in climactic position in the story so that it will make the dominant impression. The rest of the story points forward to this pronouncement, which is being recommended by the story teller for admiration and emulation.” The exhortations in the climatic ending of the two parts of the Gospel of Mary are shaped to be accepted by the readers.

The two stimulating occasions signaled by ἄγε, the ‘objection’ sections, should be understood as being designed by the story teller to promote the ‘pronouncement’ sections. Understanding the rhetorical shaping of the scene of the interactions between the two parties is crucial for the

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49 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary,’” 128.
interpretation of the *Gospel of Mary*, especially in regard to the purpose and function of the debate scene.

Tannehill identifies six types of pronouncement stories: correction stories, commendation stories, objection stories, quest stories, inquiry stories, and description stories.\(^{51}\) The types of pronouncement stories are established according to the different functions of the pronouncement. Bass identifies the *Gospel of Mary* as a commendation story.\(^{52}\) In a commendation story, what a character commends becomes “a model to be imitated by others.”\(^{53}\) A shift in values or attitudes is exhorted by a character, who is a model of proper understanding and action. For example, in the story of the anointing in Mark 14:3-9/Matt 26:6-13, Jesus commends the woman, her values and attitudes, and corrects those who have criticized her.\(^{54}\) In the two parts of the *Gospel of Mary*, what Mary and Levi say calls for is a shift in values and attitudes. The disciples as a whole are exhorted to reject one attitude and embrace another. Including a shift in “value commitments, emotional attachments, the orientation of the will, and evaluative thought,” the disciples’ attitudinal change is promoted by the exhortations made by Mary in the first part of the text, and by Levi in the second part.\(^{55}\)

In the first part, it is their fearful attitude in regard to the risen Savior’s commission to go out and preach the gospel that provokes Mary’s intervention. In response to their negative attitude toward the Savior’s commission, Mary calls them to reject their fear. She then reminds them of the Savior’s grace and protection. Mary exhorts them to praise the Savior’s greatness for what he had accomplished for them (i.e., “made us into human beings,” 9:20; ‘human beings’: πνευματικός, ἀνθρωπόντος). The disciples are called to embrace the Savior’s commission with no fear, because he is their protector. Mary, along with her values and attitudes, becomes a model to be

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52 Bass, “Composition and Redaction in the Coptic ‘Gospel of Mary,’” 127.
imitated by others. The conclusion that the disciples’ hearts turn to the Good (ἈΓΑΛΗΩΝ) confirms that a shift in their values and attitudes occurs.

In the second part, what provokes Levi’s intervention is the negative attitudes of Andrew and Peter toward Mary’s revelation. The main point of the objection is their reluctance in accepting what Mary said. Andrew and Peter fail in properly responding to the risen Savior’s teaching mediated by Mary, because of their doubt and jealousy. They are disturbed, first because of its ‘newness,’ and secondly because of Mary’s privileged access to it. In response, Mary defends the veracity of what she said and commends herself. Levi intervenes to commend Mary, by referring to her preferred status over ‘us.’ The disciples as a whole are called to be ashamed of their negative attitudes toward the Savior’s revelation recounted by Mary. Levi corrects them by referring to the Savior’s relationship to Mary, and exhorts them to ‘put on the perfect man’ (18:16; or ‘the perfect human being’: ΠΡΩΜΕ ΝΤΕΚΙΟΣ, τῶν τέλειου ἄνθρωπος) and to preach the gospel. Levi thus becomes a model to be imitated by others. In the Greek version, he goes out and preaches the gospel as the Savior commissioned to the disciples. The readers, along with the disciples as a whole, are called to accept and emulate Levi’s values and attitudes by this depiction. The Coptic version changes the subject from Levi to the disciples. The conclusion that not only Levi but the disciples as a whole go out and preach confirms that a shift in their values and attitudes has occurred as a result.

The disciples’ attitudinal change from the negative one to the positive one is the major concern of the exhortations of Mary and Levi in the two parts of the Gospel of Mary. The exhortations of Mary and Levi are positioned in the climatic point of the narrative to make the dominant impression. By shaping the rhetorical structure of the two parts in this way, Mary and Levi are commended by the story teller for emulation. The following chart summarizes Bass’s comparison of the story of the anointing with the two parts of the Gospel of Mary:

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56 Tuckett translates ΠΡΩΜΕ (ἄνθρωπος) as ‘man,’ though he translates the same word in 9:20 (also in PRyl 463 verso lines 10) as a ‘human being.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark 14:3-9</th>
<th>Matt 26:6-13</th>
<th>Gos. Mary: Part One</th>
<th>Gos. Mary: Part Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation: prophetic act of anointing</td>
<td>Situation: prophetic act of anointing</td>
<td>Situation: revelation dialogue</td>
<td>Situation: revelation (vision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative judgment given by: some</td>
<td>Negative judgment given by: disciples</td>
<td>Negative judgment given by: recipients</td>
<td>Negative judgment given by: Andrew and Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive judgment given by: Jesus</td>
<td>Positive judgment given by: Jesus</td>
<td>Positive judgment given by: Mary</td>
<td>Positive judgment given by: Levi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commendation given by: Jesus</td>
<td>Commendation given by: Jesus</td>
<td>Commendation given by: Mary</td>
<td>Commendation given by: Mary/Levi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of proper understanding and action: woman’s action</td>
<td>Model of proper understanding and action: woman’s action</td>
<td>Model of proper understanding and action: Savior’s commission to preach</td>
<td>Model of proper understanding and action: Savior’s commission to preach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and attitude commended: the woman understood the identity and fate of Jesus and performs a prophetic act of anointing for burial in contrast to “some” who do not understand Jesus or his mission.</td>
<td>Values and attitude commended: the woman understood the identity and fate of Jesus and performs a prophetic act of anointing for burial in contrast to the disciples who do not understand Jesus or his mission.</td>
<td>Values and attitude commended: Mary understood the commission to preach, the exhortation to martyrdom, and trusts in the Savior’s protection because “he has prepared us and made us into men.”</td>
<td>Values and attitude commended: Levi understood the Savior’s approval of Mary, his exhortation to martyrdom and commission to preach because we are to “put on the perfect man and acquire him for ourselves as he commanded us.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A series of the setting-revelation-objection-response-pronouncement-conclusion are observed in these stories, and they are examined under the headings of ‘situation’ (setting-revelation), ‘negative judgment’ (objection), ‘positive judgment’ (response), and ‘commendation’ (pronouncement-conclusion). How the sections of pronouncement and conclusion function to call the readers for a shift in values and attitudes is examined under the headings of ‘model of proper understanding and action’ and ‘values and attitude commended.’ Bass’s application of Tannehill’s typology on the structure of the Gospel of Mary sheds light on the purpose and function of the portrayal of the interactions among the characters, especially the debate scene. Bass concludes like the following:

Similarities in structure with the story of the anointing in the Mark and Matthew likewise direct attention to features in the text that have been overlooked, allowing other themes in the text to stand taller outside the shadow of the character Mary. It is not, as has been suggested, a story about the socio-historical leadership of women or struggles for authority in early religious communities or about the superior spirituality of Mary of Magdala. As De Boer rightly argues, “In my opinion the main purpose of the Gospel of Mary is to encourage the disciples to go out and preach the gospel.”

Bass is wary of feminist biblical studies’ narrow interest in the figure Mary and the gender issue in interpreting the Gospel of Mary. There is the danger of dealing with the debate scene as a window to the past, losing sight of its literary role and function in its own narrative context. In order to understand the reason for the inclusion of the debate scene, what should be taken account of is its place within the larger narrative. The reason for the inclusion of the portrayal of the character interactions in the narrative are concerned with its rhetorical function. In view of the structure of the text, in which the initiation of tension and its resolution by a climatic utterance is the main development, the text’s primary purpose is to encourage the disciples (and the readers) to carry out the risen Savior’s commission despite the threat of martyrdom. By adopting insights from Bass’ form-critical study of the text’s structure, this study will utilize narrative criticism to investigate the text’s rhetorical strategies and literary logic to better understand the meaning of the text’s portrayal of the debate among the characters.

4.3 The Function of the Narrative Framework

The rhetorical function of a pronouncement story’s structure sheds light on the purpose and function of the narrative framework of the *Gospel of Mary*. Narrative criticism is interested in how the events contribute to the plot development of the whole narrative. Each of the two parts of the *Gospel of Mary* is structured with the setting, the revelation of the Savior, the tension/dispute, and the resolution of the tension with the climatic exhortations. The movement from the initiation of the tension and its resolution in the end is integral to a narrative. Conflict analysis has been adopted by narrative critics in exploring this movement within the narrative. Conflict or tension in the narrative is caused by the clash of the different evaluative points of view of the characters. 59 Plot develops around such tensions, and the implied reader naturally anticipates its resolution. As part of the coherent whole, individual events of the story should be analyzed in terms of how they are related to each other, and contribute to the initiation, development, and resolution of the tension in the narrative as a whole. 60 The purpose and function of the two symmetrically structured parts in the *Gospel of Mary* thus should be examined in view of how they constitute and contribute to the plot, so as to evoke a desired response from the implied reader.

How are the two events related to each other so as to contribute to the overall narrative’s plot? The two narrative sections about the interactions among the characters frame the two longer sections of the risen Savior’s teaching or revelation. Since the text is a motivated discourse, the function of the artificial narrative framework is concerned with the text’s overall aim of impacting the implied reader. The narrative setting, which holds together the risen

59 “Almost all plots involve some clash of actions, ideas, points of views, desires, values, or norms. The conflict may be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, or moral. It may add suspense or surprise to a narrative. Or it may develop and elaborate values, beliefs, and norms that may be at conflict with society or with the reader.” Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 201.

60 “The individual events that comprise a story may be analyzed in terms of what they contribute to the development and resolution of conflict in the narrative as a whole.” Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 43.
Savior’s two revelations, can be understood as a rhetorical means to persuade the implied reader to accept the enclosed teaching sections as true and reliable. The following is how the plot of the *Gospel of Mary* is visually represented by the structural scheme of conflict analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Initial situation</th>
<th>The risen Savior’s revelation, commission, and departure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(7:1-9:5a)</td>
<td>(7:1-9:5a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Initiation of tension</th>
<th>The disciples’ negative response: they are reluctant in fulfilling the commission, because they are afraid of the threat of persecution, even martyrdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(9:5b-12a)</td>
<td>(9:5b-12a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Development of tension</th>
<th>Mary’s intervention to encourage and comfort the disciples: the disciples’ hearts turn to the Good (<em>ἀγαθόν</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(9:12b-18:15a)</td>
<td>(9:12b-18:15a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary’s further speech at Peter’s request: the risen Savior’s previous teaching/revelation given to Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The negative response of Andrew and Peter: doubt and jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary’s response to Peter: she defends the veracity of her testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levi’s intervention to defend Mary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Resolution of tension</th>
<th>Levi’s reminding the disciples of the Savior’s commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(18:15b-21a)</td>
<td>(18:15b-21a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the first part of the narrative (7:1-9:24), the Savior appears as a character who directly communicates his teaching to the disciples. The authority of the first teaching section relies on the authority of its source, called ‘the Savior’ by the narrator (7:2, 13). What is interesting is that the Savior’s unmediated, authoritative revelation does not bring about any positive outcome. Because the recipients of the Savior’s revelation face the threat of persecution from outside the community, they negatively react to the Savior’s commission to go out and preach the gospel to the nations. The intervention and exhortations of Mary function to resolve the tension initiated by their negative reaction to the Savior’s revelation. However, the narrative does not end here. The second part of the narrative (10:1-19:5) is introduced, probably because the recipients’ fundamental problem still remains. They are not yet prepared to go out and preach the gospel to the nations. Bass agrees with De Boer that “the author’s main purpose with the Gospel of Mary is to encourage the readers to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of the Son of Man. To achieve this goal the author tells about a dialogue with the risen Saviour, about his departure and about the disciples’ reaction to the Savior’s instruction to preach the gospel, thus showing its content and purpose.”

The Savior’s commission has not yet been carried out by the recipients, though their fearful hearts are reoriented to ‘the Good’ (ἀγαθόν) by Mary’s intervention. The first part of the narrative sets the setting for introducing the second part of the narrative (10:1-19:5). The implied reader naturally anticipates that the recipients cope with their problem within the narrative. The major importance of the first part is to introduce and characterize Mary positively, and to prepare the implied reader to be positively disposed to her when she recounts the Savior’s revelation in the second part. The second block of the risen Savior’s revelation mediated by Mary is expected to play a more important role than the first one directly revealed to the recipients. In a new

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setting in which the disciples as a whole, and the implied reader as well, are positively disposed to Mary, the Savior’s revelation mediated by her is intended to empower the recipients to cope with their fear and anxiety. The final scene, in which the recipients go out and preach as the Savior commanded, confirms that the main purpose of the whole narrative is to encourage them, along with the implied reader, to carry out the Savior’s commission.

The purpose and function of the portrayal of the debate among the characters after Mary’s recounting of the Savior’s revelation should be understood in consideration of the plot development in the narrative. The main plot line of the Gospel of Mary is the movement of the initiation of the fundamental tension about the recipients’ inability to carry out the Savior’s commission and its resolution in the end. The two symmetrically-structured parts of the narrative are related to each other, and both contribute to the narrative flow heading to the ending scene, in which the Savior’s commission is finally fulfilled by the recipients (cf. by Levi in the Greek version). The roles of the character Mary and the scene of her recounting of the risen Savior’s previous teaching are concerned with the narrative’s fundamental tension caused by the disciples’ failure in properly responding to the Savior’s commission. The reason for the inclusion of the debate scene and Levi’s climatic utterance in regard to Mary’s esteemed status should be explored with a keen attention to how it serve the resolution of the narrative’s fundamental tension.

4.4 The Function of the Characters and Point-of-View Crafting

The reason for the inclusion of the debate scene has been conjectured in previous studies in terms of the assumed anti-Peter polemic of the Gospel of Mary. In order to verify it by the textual evidence, the function of the character Peter in relationship to the other characters in the narrative, and how the implied author’s evaluative guidance on Peter is provided by point-of-view crafting will be examined. In previous studies, Peter’s role has been understood as Mary’s major antagonist, because of his negative reaction to her in the debate scene. Peter is reluctant in accepting the risen Savior’s revelation mediated by Mary, and is rebuked by Levi for being hot-tempered, acting like ‘adversaries’ (ἀντικείμενος, 18:10) of Mary. The
negative portrayal of Peter has been interpreted as reflecting the polemical stance of the *Gospel of Mary*.

Christopher W. Skinner’s study on the characterization of the uncomprehending characters in the Fourth Gospels takes a literary-critical approach to the negative depiction of a character, as in the case of Peter in the *Gospel of Mary*. The portrayal of doubting Thomas in the Fourth Gospel (John 20:24-28; cf. 11:16; 14:5) has been used by some scholars as the basis for the hypothesis of a historical conflict between the two communities (i.e., Johannine community and Thomasine community). Skinner is critical of Gregory J. Riley and Pagels, who assume that a historical conflict between Johannine and Thomasine communities led to the composition of at least part of the Fourth Gospel. He notes that for these scholars, “the seemingly negative characterization of Thomas in the Fourth Gospel is an important element in helping them validate their arguments for the existence of such a conflict.” He quotes from Isomo Dunderberg’s statement as the impetus for his study: “[T]he Johannine picture of Thomas is negative, but in a manner similar to that of most other figures of the Johannine story world. Thomas is not the only follower of Jesus in John who understands him poorly; most other characters do this as well. Should we, then, posit early Christian groups behind all other followers of Jesus rebuked by him?”

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Skinner also examines the roles of other uncomprehending characters in the Fourth Gospel by employing literary methods, in order to evaluate the claim that the negative depiction of Thomas points to the anti-Thomas polemic of the Gospel.

Since the community-conflict position accuses the Fourth Gospel of directing a polemic against the Thomas tradition through the spiritually dull, uncomprehending character Thomas, the examination of Thomas and other Johannine characters that exhibit a similar lack of comprehension seems especially pertinent. To evaluate the claims of the community-conflict hypothesis one must discern whether the characterization of Thomas is a Johannine anomaly or part of a wider literary pattern in the Fourth Gospel.66

He investigates the literary and theological purpose behind the theme of incomprehension as it is applied to the uncomprehending characters in the Fourth Gospel. Skinner acknowledges that Thomas, who appears three times in the narrative, is consistently depicted “in a less-than-flattering light,” and “a prime example of an uncomprehending character.”67 However, citing other uncomprehending characters, such as Peter, Andrew, Philip, Judas (not Iscariot), the disciples as a representative group, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the sisters Martha and Mary, Skinner argues that Thomas is just one example of the uncomprehending Johannine characters, who fail to understand Jesus’ identity, teaching, and actions. He utilizes literary methods to explore how the depictions of the uncomprehending characters function in the narrative. According to him, they provide the Johannine Jesus an opportunity to clarify some element of his identity and mission.68 He says, “There is a conscious effort in the part of the Evangelist to present these characters as foils for Jesus . . . . there is a consistent pattern that derives the episodes containing these uncomprehending characters. The pattern consists of (1) a statement or action by Jesus, followed by (2) a misunderstanding from the character in question, and typically (3) a clarification by Jesus through explanation, action, or both.”69 The portrayals of the interactions between Jesus and the uncomprehending characters allow the reader to embrace the implied author’s normative evaluative points of view on Jesus’ identity, teaching,

actions, and messianic mission. Thomas is in fact relatively insignificant in the overall narrative, especially in comparison with the role played by Peter, who appears twice frequently and speaks almost twice often.  

It is thus difficult to argue that the Gospel was composed for the so-called anti-Thomas polemic. Skinner concludes:

After everything has been examined carefully, a consistent literary analysis of characters in the Fourth Gospel reveals a pattern where uncomprehending characters provide the Johannine Jesus with opportunities to speak authoritatively to the literary audience. Thomas is one of these characters, and should not be regarded as the target of a Johannine polemic; nor should not be regarded as the impetus for the Fourth Gospel’s composition. While this study has not solved the larger question of John’s relationship to the Gospel of Thomas, the realization of literary trends and theological emphases in the Fourth Gospel raises serious problems for the community-conflict hypothesis.  

What is important in Skinner’s study for the present study is that, first of all, he notes the inherent problem of the assumed correspondence between literary constructs and historical reality, which underlies the hypothesis of the historical conflict between the two communities. Against such assumption Dunderberg rightly raises a question: “Should we, then, posit early Christian groups behind all other followers of Jesus rebuked by him?” What literary critics call ‘referential fallacy’ has been committed, when the negative portrayal of a literary character is assumed to have direct correspondence with a historical rival group, the target of the text’s polemical stance.

Secondly, Skinner’s identification of the consistent pattern in the episodes containing the uncomprehending characters shed light on Peter’s role in the debate scene. The pattern of (1) Jesus’ statement or action, (2) a misunderstanding from the character in question, and (3) Jesus’ clarification is, narrative-critically speaking, the essential elements of the plot of the debate scene. When the debate scene is dealt with as a pronouncement story, its structure, according to Bass, consists of (1) setting, (2) revelation, (3) objection, (4) response, (5) pronouncement, and (6) 

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conclusion. When it is approached narrative-critically, its plot develops in the following sequence: (1) the setting of Mary’s recounting of the risen Savior’s revelation, (2) the initiation of tension by Andrew and Peter, (3) the development of tension by Mary’s response and Levi’s intervention, (4) the resolution of tension by Levi’s exhortations. The role of the character Peter in this scene should be understood in regard to how his negative response to Mary contributes to the development of the plot, and sets the setting for Levi’s climatic exhortations. By examining the roles of the uncomprehending characters, who set the setting for Jesus speaking authoritatively to the literary audience, Skinner’s study illuminates how hot-tempered Peter functions in the debate scene to serve the narrative’s overall aim of persuading the implied reader to embrace the enclosed revelation section.

The present study, like Skinner’s study, problematizes the use of the negative portrayal of Peter for the hypothesis of the historical conflict between the two groups. Peter’s hot-tempered reaction to Mary is part of the plot and the rhetoric of persuasion, and is not an evidence for a historical dispute. The assumed anti-Peter polemic of the *Gospel of Mary* should be verified by what is in the text. What should be examined is if the implied author wishes the implied reader to perceive Peter as the object of a polemic and, thus, consistently to distance himself or herself from Peter. Perspective criticism is concerned with a narrative’s point-of-view crafting, which provides evaluative guidance for the implied reader’s reading experience. In order to understand how the implied reader’s evaluative point of view on Peter is established by the rhetoric of the text, the techniques of characterization used for Peter throughout the narrative should be dealt with.

Literary characters exist only in relationship to other characters. Their words and actions in interaction with other characters form events that comprise the plot. The importance of the character Peter in the whole narrative can be found only in his interactions with other character, such as the risen Savior, Mary, and the disciples as a whole, including Andrew and Levi (7:10; 10:1; 17:16-22; 18:2). The characterization of Peter in the *Gospel of Mary* is based on the technique of ‘showing.’ ‘Telling’ and ‘showing’ are the two generally recognized narrative techniques of characterization. In ‘telling,’ the narrator comments directly on a character,

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signaling out a trait for the implied reader to recognize. The narrator tells the implied reader about the character’s traits and motivations. Since there is no explicit comment of the narrator on Peter, the technique of ‘telling’ is not used in the Gospel of Mary. But ‘showing’ is used for the characterization of Peter, and it is the implied author’s indirect presentation of a character by means of his or her words and actions. The technique of ‘showing’ leaves the implied reader to infer the character’s traits and motivations behind what he or she say and do. The implied author shows the implied reader what a character is like through the point of view of other characters concerning them. In the Gospel of Mary, ‘showing’ is the preferred method of characterization. The implied reader must collect data from the text and evaluate it, in order to figure out the implied author’s evaluative point of view on and the traits of the character Peter.

In reading process, the implied reader may discern the implied author’s evaluative guidance, although there is no explicit comment of the narrator on Peter. A perspective-critical analysis of the dynamics of proximity and distance between the implied reader and Peter reveals the implied author’s evaluative guidance for Peter and his relationship with Mary. Unlike Thomas in the Fourth Gospel, Peter in the Gospel of Mary is not consistently depicted as an uncomprehending character. Both positive and negative portrayals of Peter are observable. Indeed, it is Peter himself, who gives the implied reader information that the risen Savior gave Mary his words unknown to the other disciples (10:1-6). By respectfully inviting Mary to speak, he acknowledges that she is the reliable agent of the risen Savior’s words.

In the theory of literary characters, the implied reader is led to empathize with a character who is given ‘syntactic prominence,’ understood as being placed close to the head of the clause. Peter in the Gospel of Mary plays such prominent role that produces empathy. He appears at the three points of the narrative and plays an indispensable role in introducing and characterizing the character Mary (7:10; 10:1; 17:16). First, he is characterized as the authoritative representative of the disciples, being the dialogue partner of the risen Savior. Secondly, he authorizes Mary as a reliable conveyer of the Savior’s teaching unknown to the

74 Powell, What is Narrative Criticism? 52.
other disciples by respectfully inviting her to speak and characterizing her as the Savior’s favorite among the women. Lastly, he functions to highlight Mary’s privileged status in relationship with the Savior by expressing jealousy, asking if she is worthier than ‘us.’ The portrayal of Peter’s seemingly inconsistent attitude to Mary, positive in the initial scene and negative in the later scene has posed a difficulty to some interpreters and led them to suggest that the two scenes originally existed separately were combined clumsily later. However, when Levi’s explanation of Peter’s inconsistency is given to the implied reader (i.e., hot-temperedness), what Peter says and does in regard to Mary before and after her revelation functions to repeatedly highlight Mary’s esteemed status as the Savior’s favorite.

In the following section on the narrative-critical exegesis of the Gospel of Mary, how the implied reader is led to perceive and build the character Peter in sequential and cumulative reading by the discourse of the narrative, including characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting, will be examined. A perspective-critical analysis will proceed through the narrative, identifying each textual indicator of point of view on particular planes (e.g., ideological/evaluative, psychological, spatial, temporal, phraseological, informational plane), and analyzing its effect on the implied reader’s experience of the story world, especially his or her perception of the character Peter. It is notable that the implied reader does not experience the narrative as an uninvolved bystander, but as one of the recipients of the risen Savior’s revelation. By the implied author’s point-of-view crafting, the implied reader is led to listen to the Savior’s teaching along with Peter and the other disciples. Peter is given ‘syntactic prominence’ in the narrative, as the representative of the recipients of the Savior’s revelation, as the one who introduces Mary as an reliable figure, and as the one who elevates Mary’s status, as

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76 According to Uspensky, there are five planes on which point of view is expressed (i.e., ideological, psychological, spatial, temporal, phraseological). The conception of the “informational axis” of point of view is developed by Meir Sternberg. It refers to an axis indicating the degrees of information possessed by the characters of a scene. At the top of the axis there is a character who has all relevant information related to the situation, and at the lowest end there is a less-informed character. The implied reader also finds himself or herself somewhere on this axis, and experiences the story world according to his or her spot on the axis. If the implied reader is placed on the same spot on the axis as that occupied by a particular character, there is a ‘convergence’ between their points of view on the ‘informational’ plane. A ‘divergence’ between the points of view of the implied reader and a particular character occurs when, for example, the implied reader becomes privy to information unknown to the character (by accessing new information mediated by the narrator or other characters). See Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 129-152; Yamasaki, Perspective Criticism, 54-68.
well as the importance of her vision, by expressing jealousy of her privileged access to it. By reading what Peter says and does in his interactions with the Savior, Mary, and the disciples as a whole, the implied reader is positioned in proximity to Peter, and is led to *empathize* with him, despite his hot-tempered reaction to Mary.

In the story world, Peter and the other disciples in fact function as a character group, who exhibit the same character traits throughout the narrative. What Peter says and does are not differentiated from what the other disciples do. In the initial scene, they all negatively respond to the Savior’s teaching and commission. All the disciples fail in understanding and obeying the Savior’s teaching. The depiction of their collective failure is by no means intended to engender in the implied reader an antipathy towards them. They are not the objects of an polemic. Their failure in appropriately responding to the Savior’s revelation in the initial narrative is repeated in the debate scene, when Levi says that all of ‘us’ should be ashamed of being reluctant in accepting and obeying the Savior’s revelation (18:15). In view of the contrast between the reluctant disciples in the initial scene and the preaching disciples (cf. the preaching Levi, a model disciple in PRyl 464) in the final scene, their roles resemble the roles played by the uncomprehending disciples in canonical gospel accounts. Their failure in understanding and obeying the Savior’s teaching and commission creates the major tension in the narrative. It functions to construct the setting for introducing more about the clarification and further teaching of the Savior.

4.5 Exegesis: “Is She More Worthy than Us?”

4.5.1 Initial Situation (7:1-9:5a)

The implied reader’s experience of the story world of the *Gospel of Mary* begins with the scene of the interaction between the risen Savior and the disciples (7:1). A textual clue to this scene’s temporal setting is given by a third-person narrator in 9:5: “When he had said this, he departed.” What the implied reader may bring to the text is the shared tradition of Jesus’ suffering/death, resurrection, and ascension/departure (cf. 9:10-12). The soteriological understanding of these events is expressed in the narrator’s use of the designation ‘Savior’ (7:2, 13; cf. ‘the blessed
one,’ 8:12). In a post-resurrection setting, the risen Savior gives his final instructions to the disciples just before his departure. This temporal setting contributes to the mood of the scene. The implied reader expects a tense atmosphere, if this is the disciples’ last chance to see and communicate with the risen Savior. Whether the spatial setting of the gathering of the Savior and the disciples is inside or outside is not explicitly mentioned. Mary’s action of ‘rising’ (9:12-13) suggests that she is, from the beginning, a member of the group of the disciples who have sat together, possibly in a confined space. The initial posture of sitting is contrasted to the final scene’s action of going (‘go’: ὄρκος, 19:2; cf. 8:21). The spatial setting for the disciples changes from being confined to an open setting, which is the outside world to where they have been commissioned to go (8:21-22; 9:7-12).

The characters involved in this initial scene are the Savior (7:2, 13; cf. 8:12), Peter (7:10), and the disciples as a whole (8:14). The implied reader first encounters the character Peter when he asks the Savior, “Since you have explained everything to us, tell us this too: What is the sin of the world?” (7:12) By Peter’s words the Savior is characterized as a teacher or revealer. Next the Savior complies with Peter’s request, and explains what the sin of the world is (7:13 ff.). What is presupposed in the use of the figure Peter here is the well-known tradition about him acting as spokesperson for Jesus’ early followers. The role of Peter in this scene is likewise the representative of the disciples as a whole. As a dialogue partner of the risen Savior, Peter represents the recipients of the Savior’s revelation, with whom the implied reader identifies himself or herself. Like the disciples, the implied reader listens to the Savior’s final instructions before his departure. It is from the vantage point of Peter, along with other recipients, that the implied reader is led to perceive the Savior’s words and actions, and to experience the story.

The Savior’s speech, which started prior to page 7, deals with what is beyond the visible world. The Savior talks about the fate of the visible world, by addressing what will happen to ‘matter’ (ὁ[γ]λη), ‘nature’ (φυσις), ‘form’ (παράση), and ‘creature’ (κτισις) in the end (7:1-4). What constitutes the visible world, which is called ‘the nature of matter’ (φυσις οὐσια), will be dissolved into the invisible and ultimate reality, viz. their own ‘roots’ (οὐσια, 7:6-7). The importance of the text’s worldview and values, introduced as the Savior’s revelation, is highlighted by the Savior’s call for the implied reader’s attention to it: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (7:8-9). Being identified with the recipients of the Savior’s revelation, the implied
reader is positioned in the midst of them. When Peter asks him to explain what the sin of the world is, the implied reader is merged with him in expecting the Savior’s answer to the question.

What is the sin of the world? According to the Savior, “There is no sin” (7:13). Sin does not exist as an inherent part of the reality. Sin is caused only when the disciples act contrary to what they ought to do: “it is you who perform sin when you do what is like the nature of adultery which is called sin” (7:14-16). The reason that ‘the Good’ (παράγωγος) came among the disciples is to restore every ‘nature’ to its ‘root’ (ημίγενες, 7:17-20). When the Good came among the disciples, every ‘nature’ is restored to its ‘root,’ and the disciples are able to act according to it, not according to ‘the nature of adultery.’ The restored nature is contrasted to the nature of adultery. The disciples are able to commit no sin, if they act according to their restored nature.

The Savior further reveals that because of the sin of the present world, the disciples become sick and die (7:20-21). What causes their suffering in the forms of sickness and death is their failure to act according to their restored nature. The disciples, and the implied reader as well, are called to cope with the problem of suffering by acting according to the restored nature. Again, the Savior calls the implied reader’s attention to his crucial message: “the one who [under]stands, let him understand” (8:1-2). A ‘disturbance’ in the body (8:5-6), manifested in the forms of sickness and death, arises when ‘matter’ gives birth to a ‘passion’ (πάθος, 8:3). ‘Passion’ has no image and, like ‘sin,’ does not exist as part of the reality (8:3). In the similar manner that sin is caused by what is contrary to the restored nature, passion is caused by what is contrary to nature (8:4). In order to overcome the problem of sin, the reason for the disciples’ suffering, they should act in accordance with the restored nature, as the Savior demands: “That is why I said to you, be obedient and if you are not obedient still be obedient in the presence of the different forms of nature” (8:6-10). The Savior repeatedly calls the implied reader’s attention to his important instructions: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (8:10-11). Emphasis on the Savior’s revelation has been made three times (7:8-9; 8:1-2; 8:10-11). By emphasizing repeatedly, the implied author persuades the implied reader to accept the Savior’s teaching on the fate of the

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77 The phrase θέτημεν after the imperative γραψε can be translated ‘be consent’ or ‘be agreed.’ Tuckett argues that, in consideration of the qualifying γραπτόν, the nuance is ‘be faithful’ or ‘be obedient.’ He thus translates it: ‘be obedient . . .’ The other two occurrences of the θέτημεν are translated in the same way (i.e., ‘be obedient’), because “the presence of the three occurrences of the same root in such close proximity to each other suggests that they have the same meaning, and the root θέτημεν may be implicitly assumed.” Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 147.
visible world, the reason for the disciples’ struggle with the problem of sin and suffering, and how to deal with the problem while living in the world.

A transitional note is supplied by the narrator: “When the blessed one had said these things, he greeted them all, saying ‘peace be with you . . . .’ (8:12-14). The Savior is called by the narrator ‘the blessed one’ (παράκλητος), which functions to characterize the Savior positively as the object of divine favor (8:12). While he is ‘the Savior’ in relationship with the disciples, he is ‘the blessed one’ in relationship with God, the ultimate benefactor. His action of greeting evokes in the implied reader a sense of urgency, because it signals that the Savior is soon to depart from them. He further warns them against being led astray by those who fail to find ‘the Son of Man’ (προφήτης), who is within the disciples (8:15-21; cf. Luke 17:21), and instructs them to follow the inner Son of Man.78 The disciples are able to cope with the problem of sin and suffering (i.e., sickness and death) by following the inner Son of Man. By obeying the risen Savior’s instructions, they are able to fulfill the Savior’s commission to go and preach ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ (περιηγέσθη ημῖν ἐν τῷ παρακλήτῳ, 8:21-22; cf. ‘the gospel of the kingdom of the Son of Man,’ 9:9-10). In order to successfully fulfill their mission, they should be wary of making any ‘rule’ and ‘law’ that may constrain them: “Do not lay down any rules beyond what I have appointed for you, and do not give a law like the law-giver lest you be constrained by it” (8:22b-9:4). What the Savior gave to the disciples is sufficient. Anything beyond the Savior’s rule or law will deprive them of freedom. After these words, another transitional note is given by the narrator: “When he had said this, he departed” (9:5a).

78 Tuckett does not regard ‘the Son of Man’ as Jesus. He says, “Rather, what seems to be asserted here is that the Son of Man is not an external figure at all, but one who is within you. This then seems even to exclude the possibility that the figure is Jesus himself. Rather, the ‘Son of Man’ seems to be a way of referring to the truly human nature that is already (at least in part) ‘within’ the hearers . . . . the phrase is a way of referring to the common property and/or destiny that is available for all the hearers.” Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 155. Jesus’ parallel sayings (e.g., ‘look here/there,’ ‘the kingdom of God in you’ in Mark 13:5-6, 9; Mark 13:21-26; Luke 17:20-24) may be evoked by the Savior’s saying. According to King, the author of the Gospel of Mary juxtaposes the two traditions (i.e., the future kingdom of God and the Son of Man as the eschatological redeemer in the canonical gospels; the inner Son of Man who is already present within the hearers) to displace “the kind of apocalyptic expectations that appear in Mark and Q.” She admits that there is no trace of direct attack though. The critique of the apocalyptic expectations of the future Son of Man is implied at best. King, The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, 102; Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary, 153.
4.5.2 Initiation of Tension (9:5b-12a)

The Savior’s revelation, commission, and departure leave the implied reader still in proximity to Peter and the other disciples. The narrator provides insight into the interiority of the recipients of the Savior’s revelation and commission: “But they were grieved, and they wept greatly saying, ‘How shall we go to the Gentiles and preach the gospel of the kingdom of the son of Man? If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?’” (9:5b-12a) This transition to the psychological plane of point of view of the recipients contributes further to the implied reader being drawn into proximity to them. The narrator’s explanation of their inside views engenders within the implied reader a feeling of empathy for them. The implied reader, even if he or she does not share the evaluative points of view of the fearful and distressed disciples in regard to suffering, is positioned right in the midst of them. The recipients of the risen Savior’s revelation are established as the point-of-view characters despite their negative reaction to the Savior’s commission.

The narrative’s tension is created by the depiction of the weeping disciples, who are unable to carry out courageously the Savior’s commission. The implied reader naturally anticipates the resolution of this tension within the narrative. The disciples are dealt with as a character group, and what they say and do enable the implied reader to perceive their character traits. They weep greatly because they are ‘grieving’ and ‘anxious.’ They are ‘fearful’ that the Gentiles, who are the objects of their own missions, will harm them. They are ‘timid’ and ‘reluctant’ in carrying out the Savior’s commission, in consideration of the threat of persecution, even martyrdom. They are ‘unwilling’ and ‘unable’ to follow the Savior’s instructions, because they are too preoccupied by the fear of suffering. The implied reader may recall the Savior’s teaching on the disciples’ physical suffering (i.e., sickness and death, 7:20-21). What he revealed to them is not only its cause but also how to overcome it. The negative depiction of the disciples thus indicates that they fail in understanding and obeying the Savior’s instructions. The implied reader expects that the disciples make a shift in their understanding, mood, and attitudes in the end. In order to fulfill their own missions, they must cope with their fear of suffering, by understanding and obeying the Savior’s teaching.
4.5.3 Development of Tension (9:12b-18:15a)

The narrator signals a transition in the narrative by introducing Mary on the scene: “Then Mary arose, greeted them all, and said to her brothers” (9:12b-14). Mary intervenes to comfort and encourage the disciples. The implied reader, who stays in proximity to the fearful disciples, is led to perceive and evaluate what Mary says and does from their vantage point. Mary’s action of ‘rising’ indicates that she has been with the recipients of the Savior’s revelation. The traits that she evinces are different from those of the remaining disciples. She is ‘sympathetic’ for the grieving and weeping disciples. She is ‘willing’ to help the distressed fellow believers. Her friendly action of ‘greeting’ (cf. ‘kissing,’ P Oxy 3525) recalls the Savior’s similar action (8:13). The implied reader is positively disposed to her by these character traits, and expects her to contribute to the resolution of the narrative’s tension. She says, “Do not weep and do not grieve nor be irresolute, for his grace will be wholly with you and will protect you” (9:14-18a). Mary points to another character trait of the disciples as a character group. They are ‘irresolute’ or ‘doubting.’ Literally, they have two hearts (‘Do not have two hearts’: ἴμπῃς ἵπτῃ καυλᾷ, 9:15). They are not sure about the Savior’s grace and protection. According to Mary, after the Savior’s departure, the disciples are not left behind without help. His grace is with them and will protect them.

Mary exhorts them to change what they say and do: “But rather let us praise his greatness . . . ” (9:18-19a). The disciples are exhorted to praise, not to weep. They are reminded of what the Savior has done for them: “for he has prepared us and made us into human beings” (9:19b-20). Since the Savior’s grace and protection are assured for them, they should not be fearful of being subject to suffering, even death, in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. In their new existence as ‘human beings’ (πρός ἐν), they can cope with their fear and doubt, and carry out the Savior’s commission. The narrator gives the positive evaluation of Mary by commenting the result of her words and actions: “When Mary said these things, she turned their hearts to the Good, and they began to discuss the words of the Saviour” (9:20b-24). The narrator’s mention of ‘the Good’ recalls the Savior’s earlier teaching that ‘the Good’ came among the disciples to restore every ‘nature’ to its ‘root’ (7:17-19). The narrator’s comment on what happens to the disciples reveals to the implied reader that ‘the Good’ is now with them to help and empower them. The implied reader, being identified with the disciples as a whole, is positively disposed to
Mary by evaluating her words and actions according to the narrator’s positive comment. The changed atmosphere becomes the setting for Peter’s second appearance.

Peter, who has been with the other disciples and, thus, has not vanished from the scene, interacts with Mary to play an important role in regard to the implied reader’s perception of Mary: “Sister, we know that the Saviour loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the words of the Saviour which you remember, which you know but we do not, and which we have not heard” (10:1b-6). Since the implied reader’s point of view on the informational plane is aligned with the disciples, how to evaluate the character Mary depends on their perception of her. Peter, the representative of the disciples, reveals important information about Mary as the object of the Savior’s favor. The Savior loved her more than the rest of women. Moreover, the risen Savior told her something which the other disciples do not know. Peter’s acknowledgment of Mary’s esteemed status and her knowledge of the Savior’s words unknown to the other disciples prepare the implied reader to eagerly listen to what she will report. Since Peter evaluates Mary positively, the implied reader positioned in proximity to him is led to align his or her point of view on the informational plane with Peter’s. The implied reader emulates Peter’s respectful attitude towards Mary, and is disposed to embrace what Mary will report as the risen Savior’s authoritative words. There are missing pages in the Coptic text concerning Mary’s recounting of the Savior’s teaching, from pages 9 to 17. The importance of the event of her speech is emphasized by its length. The implied reader, who anticipates the resolution of the tension, knows that the disciples are not yet prepared to carry out the Savior’s commission. Since their hearts turned to the Good by Mary’s intervention, the implied reader expects that her speech further contributes to empower the disciples to cope with their fear and doubt, and to resolve the narrative’s tension.

Mary says, “I saw the Lord in a vision . . .” (10:10b-11). It was in a vision that the risen Savior appeared to Mary to convey his message unknown to the other disciples. By encountering Mary’s mention of ‘vision,’ the implied reader may bring to the text the contemporaries’ shared conception of ‘vision’ as a means to divine communication. It prompts the implied reader to recall well-known traditions, in which God’s chosen agents are entrusted with a divine message through visionary experience. The risen Savior, who appeared to the disciples to communicate his final message earlier in the narrative, made a previous appearance to Mary in a vision. The implied reader does not know the content of the Savior’s message conveyed to Mary, though he
or she does know why he did so. It is because the Savior loved her more than the rest of women, as Peter said. The risen Savior’s appearance to her alone indicates that she is the recipient of special divine favor. Mary’s esteemed status is emphasized by the fact that the risen Savior chose her to reveal himself, before his encounter with the rest of the disciples.

During Mary’s recounting of the risen Savior’s words, the implied reader can access Mary’s subjective experience and experience the story from the vantage point of Mary. Mary becomes the point-of-view character when the implied reader listens to the Savior’s words: “Blessed are you, for you did not waver when you saw me . . .” (10:14-15a). Mary’s esteemed status, acknowledged by Peter, is even more elevated by the Savior himself. The Savior calls Mary ‘blessed,’ of special divine favor, because she does not waver at his visionary appearance. She is thus worthy of being the agent of his message, because she is virtuous enough for receiving a vision. The Savior repeatedly mentions ‘mind’ (nous), before and after Mary’s question about visionary experience (10:15, 21). The emphasis given on the importance of ‘mind’ signals to the implied reader that it is Mary’s unwavering ‘mind’ that enables her to see the vision of the risen Savior. The exchange between the risen Savior and Mary functions to characterize Mary. The implied reader is persuaded to acknowledge Mary as a reliable figure, the Savior’s chosen agent, who is virtuous enough for receiving special divine favor and message.

After the missing pages in the Coptic text (pages 11 to 14) the narrative resumes in the middle of a story about the interactions between a soul and certain cosmic ‘powers’ (e3oyc, 15:11; 16:4, 13). The narrator of this story inside the main narrative is Mary (17:7-9). The scene probably concerns what Mary saw and heard in her visionary experience. The Savior does not appear in the scene. He is mentioned by the narrator only when Mary’s recounting ends: “When Mary had said this, she fell silent, since the Saviour had spoken with her up to now” (17:7-9; cf. without ‘with her’ in PRyl 464). The narrator’s comments suggest that the vision of the interactions between a soul and the powers is from the Savior, and that Mary recounts it vividly as if she were a spectator of the scene.

The spatial setting for this scene is somewhere beyond the visible world. The implied reader is expected to be familiar with the conception of the human ‘soul,’ and the invisible world where no physical beings, but spiritual beings reside. The cosmology represented by this vision is a dualistic world, which consists of the visible and invisible realms. In Mary’s vision, a soul,
who departed from the visible world (probably through death), journeys through the invisible realm populated by spiritual beings. It is where the soul encounters certain spiritual beings, who are called ‘powers’ (ενεσια). Though there is no textual indication about the temporal setting of this scene, the protagonist’s identity (i.e., a soul) suggests a postmortem period. When the soul enters the invisible world, a journey towards the higher realm begins. What Mary’s vision reveals is that in this invisible world, hostile powers in the lower realm try to hinder the soul from ascending to the higher realm. As literary characters, what the ‘powers’ say and do reveal who they are. The ‘powers’ typically exhibit hostility to the soul. All of them are antagonistic to the soul. They attempt to block the soul from attaining the ultimate rest in the higher realm.

‘Desire,’ which is the ‘second’ power with whom the soul encounters in the scene (15:1; cf. 15:10-11), claims that the soul belongs to it, in the lower realm. The basis for its claim is that it never saw the soul descend: “I did not see you descending. But now I see you ascending. Why then do you lie, since you belong to me?” (15:2-5a). In response, the soul denies its claim: “I saw you (but) you did not see me nor recognize me. I was to you (simply) a garment and you did not know me” (15:6-8). It is because of Desire’s ignorance of the soul’s true origin that it wrongly claims that he owns the soul. The soul did not belong to Desire, to the lower realm, from the beginning. What is implied in this exchange between them is that the soul tries to return to its true origin in the higher realm. The narrator (Mary) says that the soul departed rejoicing greatly, and thus confirms that the soul is the winner of this verbal contest (15:9-10).

‘Ignorance’ is the third power that hinders the soul from ascending to the higher realm. Ignorance, like Desire, claims that the soul belongs to the lower realm, because the soul is bound in ‘wickedness’ (πονηρα): “Where are you going? In wickedness are you bound. Indeed you are bound. Do not judge” (15:14b-16). The soul responds to it by revealing what Ignorance does not know: “I was not recognized, though I have recognized that the All is being dissolved, both the earthly (things)” (15:19b-22). The image of the dissolution of ‘the All’ (κηρια) reminds the implied reader of the Savior’s teaching on the fate of ‘All natures, all forms, and all creatures’ (7:3). The ‘All’ will be dissolved into ‘their own roots’ (7:5-6). Thus, what the soul says signals to the implied reader that Ignorance is indeed ignorant of the truth about the ‘All.’ The importance and efficacy of the Savior’s teaching, which revealed the truth about the invisible, ultimate reality, are emphasized by the narrator’s conclusion that the soul ‘had overcome the third power’ in this debate (16:1b-2).
Next the ascending soul encounters the fourth power which has seven forms (i.e., ‘darkness,’ ‘desire,’ ‘ignorance,’ ‘jealousy of death,’ ‘the kingdom of the flesh,’ ‘the foolish understanding of the flesh, and ‘the wrathful wisdom’), also called ‘the seven powers of Wrath’ (16:12b-13). The seven powers ask the soul: “Where do you come from, killer of men, or where are you going, conqueror of space?” (16:14-16). Their intention in asking the question is, without doubt, to hinder the soul from ascending to the higher realm. In response, the soul says: “What binds me has been killed, and what surrounds me has been overcome, and my desire has been ended, and ignorance has died. In a world I have been released from a world, [an]d in a type from a heavenly type, and (from) the fetter of oblivion which is (only) for a time. From this time on, I will attain to the rest of the time of the season of the aeon in silence” (16:17-17:7a). What the soul says reminds the implied reader of the names of the hostile powers, whom the soul met (e.g., ‘desire,’ ‘ignorance’). No power in the lower realm can block the soul’s journey to the higher realm, because the soul has overcome all the powers. Now the soul proclaims its final reach to the ‘rest’ in ‘silence’ (17:5-7). The soul is now free from what has hindered it from attaining what is of the utmost importance. The soul’s knowledge of its true identity, origin, and the truth about the ultimate reality beyond the visible world enables it to conquer the hostile powers and to reach the higher realm.

The narrator’s statement following Mary’s vision functions to assure the implied reader of the revelation’s reliability: “When Mary had said this, she fell silent, since the Saviour had spoken with her up to now” (17:7-9). The implied reader is privy to the reason for Mary’s silence, which is inaccessible to other characters. The implied reader knows the reason for her silence, which the disciples do not know. This information, which is given only to the implied reader by the narrator, functions to let a divergence in point of view between the disciples and the implied reader. Due to the difference in information possessed by them, the implied reader is distanced from the disciples who do not know the reason for Mary’s silence.

To the implied reader’s surprise, Mary’s vivid recounting of the Savior’s revelation is not immediately embraced by the recipients. Andrew negatively reacts to what Mary said, because of its newness or strangeness. Andrew does not talk to Mary, but to the other disciples: “Say what you (wish to) to say about what she has said. I myself do not believe that the Saviour said this. For these teachings seem to be (giving) different ideas” (17:11-15). Because the implied reader’s evaluative point of view on Mary’s report is aligned with the implied author’s normative one,
Andrew’s negative reaction serves to distance the implied reader from him. Andrew’s words are directed to the implied reader as well. From the implied reader’s perspective established by the narrator’s information, it is difficult to imagine that the Savior is not the source of Mary’s vision, which vividly deals with what happens in the invisible realm. The implied reader has already learned from Peter that Mary would reveal something ‘new,’ unknown to the disciples (11:14-15). Andrew’s complaint about the ‘newness’ of Mary’s vision thus functions to confirm what is already anticipated: Mary’s revelation is about something ‘new,’ unknown to them in the previous tradition. The implied reader is thus not surprised at the ‘newness’ of her vision.

Peter makes his third appearance on the scene and, like Andrew, talk to the other disciples, not to Mary: “He did not speak with a woman without our knowing, and not openly, did he? Shall we turn around and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?” (17:18b-22). In the Greek version, Peter’s words are expressed differently: “Did the Savior speak secretly to a woman and [not] openly so that we all might hear?” (PRyl 464 verso lines 12-14). Moreover, in the Greek text, Peter expects the Savior to speak openly to ‘us’ (i.e., all the disciples), so that ‘we’ all might hear his teaching (ἵνα πᾶντες ὑμεῖς ἀκούσατε). The Savior’s ‘secretly’ speaking to Mary and his ‘openly’ speaking to all the disciples are contrasted. What provokes Peter’s negative reaction is his realization that what Mary reported deals with such weighty matters about the invisible world. He believes that it should have been accessible by all of the disciples ‘openly,’ not by Mary alone. As indicated in his words in the Coptic version, Peter’s complaint is posed to the Savior, who chose Mary over ‘us’ to make her his agent for such an important revelatory message.

Unlike Andrew and Peter, the implied reader learned from the narrator about the reason for Mary’s silence (17:8-9). The risen Savior indeed had spoken to Mary, and Mary sincerely testified about it to the other disciples. The divergence in their points of view on the informational plane leads the implied reader to disapprove of what Andrew and Peter say. Since it was Peter himself who informed the implied reader that the Savior had told Mary something unknown to the other disciples, the implied reader already knows that Peter in this scene is contradicts himself, in denying what the Savior did (i.e., speaking only to Mary). His question about the Savior’s choice of Mary over ‘us’ (i.e., “Did he prefer to us?”) exposes his motivation to the implied reader, viz. his jealousy of Mary’s privileged access to the risen Savior’s important revelation regarding what happens in the unseen realm.
Another line of tension is created by the negative reaction of Andrew and Peter. The narrator says that Mary wept. Mary says, “My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I thought this up in my heart, or that I am lying about the Savior?” (18:2-5) The implied reader, who accepts her testimony’s reliability, feels sympathy for her. The narrator’s comment on Mary’s action is intended to influence the implied reader to feel more sympathetic to her. The effect of the description of weeping Mary is also intended for the remaining disciples. Mary is not a liar, but an innocent, reliable witness to the risen Savior’s words. By calling Peter ‘my brother,’ she emphasizes her relationship to him as a fellow believer, and that she has only genuine good will for him and other fellow believers. What is exposed to the implied reader by Peter’s words is that he, out of jealousy, wrongly responded to what the risen Savior entrusted to Mary. The implied reader knows that Mary is not a liar, because it is impossible to imagine that she would have made up all things about the invisible world, with a highly developed cosmological speculation. What she said in fact gains more credibility, because it is a mere woman, as Peter mentions, who reported it. For a mere woman, probably uneducated, it is impossible to make up all such complex things about the unseen realm with great vividness.

Since Peter’s words are directed, not to Mary but the other disciples, their response to Peter is naturally expected. As the implied reader does, the remaining disciples remember Mary’s positive actions and words, Peter’s previous positive evaluation of Mary and his respectful invitation of her to speak function to characterize and authorize her to be a reliable conveyer of the narrative’s normative evaluative point of view. The implied reader is positioned in the midst of them, when he or she listens to the words of Andrew and Peter, and feels sympathy for weeping Mary. When Levi responds to Peter’s questions, the implied reader would sense that Levi is talking right at his or her side. Levi rebukes Peter by saying, “Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you are arguing against the woman like the adversaries. But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you then to reject her? Certainly the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us” (18:7-15a).

Levi, who accepts Mary’s testimony as reliable, is this scene’s only character whose evaluative point of view is aligned with the implied author’s. With his defence of Mary, the implied reader is drawn into a position of proximity to him, and empathizes with him. Being positively disposed to Levi, the implied reader is inclined to approve what he says and does. Levi defends and corrects Peter, by repeating what Peter has already acknowledged before Mary’s
speech, viz. her esteemed status as the Savior’s favorite (18:10-15). Since repetition is an important rhetorical device that keeps signaling to the reader to adopt the author’s normative point of view, Levi’s repetition of Peter’s earlier saying about Mary’s esteemed status functions to answer Peter’s question by Peter’s own statement. The shared knowledge about the virtuous Mary, whom the Savior deems worthy, is Levi’s (and the implied author’s) concrete basis for resolving the tension created by Peter in the end. According to Levi, no further debate about the reliability of Mary and her message is necessary, since all of ‘us,’ including the implied reader, already know that she is the Savior’s chosen one, virtuous enough for receiving his favor, revelation, and special mission of conveying his message. The reason for Peter’s abrupt negative attitude towards Mary is supplied to the implied reader by Levi: Peter’s hot-temperedness. Peter does not react negatively to Mary because he denies that the risen Savior actually had spoken to her. What provokes his hot-temperedness is his realization of the importance of the Savior’s revelation given to Mary alone. Peter’s jealousy of Mary’s privileged access to such weighty matters functions to further elevate her esteemed status. As Levi says, the Savior knew her well, and loved her more than us’ (18:12b-15a). She is the Savior’s favorite, not merely among the women but among ‘us,’ viz. all the disciples.

4.5.4 Resolution of Tension (18:15b-21a)

Levi’s intervention to defend Mary and correct Peter functions to resolve the tension created by the negative reaction of Andrew and Peter. The fact that Andrew’s question remains unanswered until the end of the narrative, either by Mary or Levi, suggests that the ‘newness’ of the contents of the Savior’s private revelation to Mary is not an issue of debate. Peter’s complaint is, in fact, not against Mary, but against the Savior, who chose Mary over ‘us’ to entrust such an important revelatory message. After rebuking and correcting Peter by repeating what Peter already said about Mary, Levi exhorts all the recipients of the Savior’s revelation to fulfill their own missions: “Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect man and acquire him for ourselves as he commanded us, and let us preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Savior said” (18:15-21).

Those who should be ashamed are not restricted to Andrew and Peter. According to Levi, all of ‘us’ should be collectively ashamed of being reluctant in receiving and obeying the risen
Savior’s teaching and commission (18:15). The implied reader has listened to the risen Savior’s words alongside them until now, first from himself, and secondly by the mediation of Mary. Levi’s climatic exhortations prompt the implied reader to recall what the Savior said before his departure (8:14-9:4). The idea of the inner Son of Man in the Savior’s final instructions (πρωτεύω, 8:18-19) overlaps the image of the disciples’ acquiring and putting on ‘the perfect man’ (or ‘the perfect human being’; πρωτεύω ιελευς, 18:16). The Savior exhorted the disciples to seek, find and follow the inner Son of Man (8:19b-21a). The inner Son of Man is the one who guides and empowers the disciples to fulfill their own missions. Retrospection to Mary’s exhortations earlier in the narrative is prompted by the term πρωτεύω. According to Mary, the risen Savior has made the disciples into a ‘human being’ (πρωτεύω, 9:20). What the Savior has done for the disciples is the basis for the assurance of the Savior’s grace and protection for them in the future, when they preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The common theme of the ‘human being’ (πρωτεύω) is placed on the lips of the Savior, Mary, and Levi, in order to signal to the implied reader that they all share the implied author’s normative evaluative point of view. Levi repeats the Savior’s final warning against being constrained by rules and laws (18:19-21). His reminding of the Savior’s instructions signals to the implied reader that he is a reliable figure, and that his evaluative point of view is to be adopted by other characters as well as the implied reader. All the recipients of the risen Savior’s revelation should accept and obey it, as Levi does.

The narrative’s aim of persuading the implied reader to adopt the worldview and values of the risen Savior, as mediated by Mary, is meant to be fulfilled by accepting the evaluative point of Levi. According to Levi, the risen Savior’s teaching is doubly reliable. First, it is reliable because it is given by the authoritative means of divine revelation, in the form of vision. Secondly, it is reliable because it is mediated by the esteemed, reliable Mary, the Savior’s favorite and, not merely the favorite among the women, but among all of the disciples. The authority of the Savior’s teaching relies on his chosen means and agent for it. The conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous person is part of the implied reader’s extratexts. The efficacy of using these two models of making truth-authority claims to promote certain innovative religious ideas has been discussed in the chapter 3 of this study. The narrative’s fundamental tension is to be resolved only when the recipients are persuaded to accept and obey the narrative’s central part, viz. the risen Savior’s teaching mediated by Mary. Since the risen
Savior’s teaching transmitted by divine revelation, through the esteemed figure Mary, is thus doubly reliable, the implied reader is led to embrace it as true and authoritative.

4.5.5 Final Situation (18:21b-19:2)

The narrator states that the disciples in the end go to carry out the Savior’s commission (19:1-2). The fearful and weeping disciples in the initial scene are contrasted to the preaching disciples in this last scene. The portrayal of their changed attitudes confirms that the risen Savior’s teaching, mediated by Mary, is embraced by them, and that the narrative’s fundamental tension caused by their fear and anxiety is now resolved. Likewise the implied reader is called to emulate what they do, and to courageously fulfill the risen Savior’s commission. The rhetorical effect of the last scene in the Greek version, in which not the disciples but Levi goes to preach, remains the same. From the narrative’s normative evaluative point of view, all the recipients of the risen Savior’s revelation and commission are expected to make a shift in their worldview, values, and attitudes. The implied reader is called to identify himself or herself with Levi the model disciple, by adopting his evaluative point of view on Mary and her revelation, and imitating his courageous action. The fundamental problem of the disciples, their fear and anxiety, is meant to be resolved only by emulating Levi, by embracing the Savior’s teaching revealed to Mary.

4.6 Conclusion: the Divine Revelation of Mary the Savior’s Favorite

The narrative-critical exploration of the story world of the Gospel of Mary began by establishing the text, observing how the events of the narrative have been ordered, and how the implied reader was led to experience the narrative by its discourse, including emplotment, characterization, and point-of-view crafting. First, the variant readings of the Greek and Coptic texts were identified and discussed to determine whether they made significant changes to the interpretation of the Gospel of Mary. The result is that the overall meaning of the text is not significantly affected by the differences. One of the interesting findings is the contrast between the Savior’s ‘secretly’ speaking to Mary and ‘openly’ speaking to the disciples in the Greek
version of Peter’s words (PRyl 464 verso lines 12-14). The reason for Peter’s complaint is, according to the Greek version, the Savior’s choice of Mary over ‘us.’ Peter’s complaint is directed not to Mary but to the Savior, who revealed such an important message to her alone, not to ‘us’ openly. While the Coptic version lacks such contrast, Peter’s expression of jealousy of Mary’s esteemed status suggests the same reason, the Savior’s choice of Mary over ‘us.’

Secondly, with the insight from Bass’s form-critical identification of the symmetrical structure of the two parts of the Gospel of Mary (7:1-9:24 and 10:1-19:5), the rhetorical function of the structure of the text was examined. A series of (1) setting, (2) revelation, (3) objection, (4) response, (5) pronouncement, and (6) conclusion in the two parts of the text function to highlight the climatic utterance or ‘pronouncement,’ made by Mary in the first part, and Levi in the second part. By shaping the rhetorical structure of the two parts in this way, the exhortations of Mary and Levi are positioned in the climatic point of the narrative to form a dominant impression. The ‘objection’ made by the fearful disciples in the first part, and Andrew and Peter in the second part, functions to construct the setting for introducing the climatic utterance. The reason for the inclusion of the debate scene in the Gospel of Mary was discussed in terms of literary technique for making a dominant impression, as being exemplified by the pronouncement stories in the canonical gospels.

Thirdly, the purpose and function of the artificial narrative framework of the Gospel of Mary were examined in consideration of the text’s overall aim of impacting the implied reader. By applying conflict analysis, how the individual events contribute to the narrative’s plot, in the sequence of the initiation, development, and resolution of the tension, has been discussed. The relationship between the two symmetrically structured parts of the narrative was identified as constituting the plot development. The narrative’s tension, caused by the disciples’ unpreparedness in carrying out the Savior’s commission, is meant to be resolved by the narrative’s central section, the risen Savior’s teaching mediated by Mary. I have argued that the role of the debate scene, after the central section, should be understood in the context of how it serves the resolution of the narrative’s fundamental tension.

Fourthly, I discussed the roles of the characters as part of the rhetoric of persuasion, and the analysis of point-of-view crafting as a means to know the implied author’s evaluative guidance for the characters. The role of Peter in the debate scene has been interpreted as
reflecting the polemical stance of the *Gospel of Mary*. However, Peter’s abrupt negative attitude towards Mary in the debate scene should be understood with respect to his positive attitude towards her in the previous narrative. I have also considered how his negative response to Mary contributes to the development of the plot, and sets the setting for Levi’s climactic exhortations. Skinner’s studies on the uncomprehending characters in the Fourth Gospel illuminates how hot-tempered Peter functions to serve the narrative’s overall aim of persuading the implied reader to embrace the enclosed teaching or revelation section. When approached perspective-critically, the role of the character Peter is hardly the narrative’s major antagonist, from whose evaluative point of view the implied reader should distance himself or herself. Peter is given ‘syntactic prominence’ in the narrative as the representative of the recipients of the Savior’s revelation, as the one who introduces Mary as an reliable figure, and as the one functions to elevate Mary’s esteemed status as well as the importance of her vision, by expressing jealousy of her privileged access to it. By reading what Peter says and does in his interactions with the Savior, Mary, and the disciples as a whole, the implied reader is positioned in proximity to Peter and led to empathize with him, despite his hot-tempered reaction to Mary.

Lastly, a narrative-critical exegesis of the *Gospel of Mary* was conducted to understand how the implied reader is guided to experience it by the narrative’s discourse including characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting. How the debate scene contributes to the narrative’s overall plot development centered on the tension, created by the disciples’ unpreparedness in fulfilling their own missions, and how the implied reader is led to perceive and evaluate the character Peter were of special interest.

After the risen Savior’s departure, the narrative’s tension is initiated by the depiction that the fearful disciples do not properly respond to the Savior’s teaching and commission. Mary is introduced at this point to contribute to the resolution of the tension. Her actions and words for comforting and encouraging the fearful disciples function to characterize her as a reliable figure and, at Peter’s request, the risen Savior’s previous teaching given to her is introduced. The purpose of the positive characterization of Mary in the first part of the narrative is to prepare the implied reader to be positively disposed to her when she recounts the Savior’s revelation. Since the narrative’s fundamental tension has not been resolved yet, the Savior’s teaching in the second part of the narrative is expected to empower the disciples to carry out the Savior’s commission.
However, after the teaching section placed on Mary’s lips, the tension is not immediately resolved but rather develops, when Andrew and Peter do not properly respond to what Mary said because of their doubt and jealousy. In response, Mary weeps and defends the veracity of her testimony. Levi intervenes to defend Mary and correct Peter. Mary’s esteemed status as the Savior’s favorite is repeatedly emphasized as the sure ground for persuading the recipients, including the implied reader, to accept the Savior’s teaching mediated by her. Levi exhorts the disciples as a whole to be ashamed of their reluctance in carrying out the Savior’s commission, and repeats the Savior’s final instructions, and thus is characterized as a reliable figure for conveying the normative evaluative point of view. The ending scene in which the disciples (cf. Levi in the Greek text) go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles confirms that the narrative’s tension is resolved. The recipients of the Savior’s revelation finally cope with their fear and anxiety about suffering by embracing and obeying it.

The debate scene, when viewed from a narrative-critical perspective, is intended to be read not in a polemical context, but in the context of the insiders, the objects of the narrative’s rhetoric of persuasion. As a part of a coherent literary work meant to impact the reader, the debate scene is fundamentally concerned with making truth-authority claims, by appealing to the authority of divine revelation and to the authority of the shared knowledge of a virtuous, heroic figure Mary, the Savior’s favorite. The narrative’s aim of conveying the particular worldview and values, presented as the risen Savior’s teaching mediated by Mary, is fulfilled when the implied reader accepts it as true and authoritative, by relying on Levi. According to Levi, the risen Savior’s teaching is doubly reliable: it is first because it is given by the authoritative means of divine revelation, in the form of vision, and secondly because it is mediated by the esteemed, reliable Mary, the Savior’s favorite, not merely among the women but among all of the disciples.
In the *Gospel of Mary*, the later scene of the debate between the two parties, Mary and Levi on the one hand and Andrew and Peter on the other hand, has been interpreted with the predetermined, biased framework, as a source of the historical information. The assumed inter-group or intra-group polemical context has colored the interpretation of what Peter says in the story world. Peter, either as the representative of a rival proto-orthodox group, or as the representative of misogynic patriarchal leadership, is pitted against Mary as a major antagonistic figure. Peter’s negative attitude towards Mary after her recounting of the risen Savior’s revelation is understood as pointing to the text’s anti-Peter (or anti-Petrine tradition) polemic. The purpose of the inclusion of the debate scene, according to this view, is to counter Peter’s (and the historical opponents’) irreconcilably different views on the means (i.e., by private revelation) and the agent (i.e., through Mary a woman) of the Savior’s teaching. The debate scene and the *Gospel of Mary* as a whole are understood to be written to counter Peter’s negative view on private revelation and Mary, a woman.

This study began by arguing that such interpretation failed to keep the larger narrative in view and did not account for the plot, characterization, and literary techniques employed to impact the implied reader. This study took an alternative, narrative-critical approach to the text, by reading the text independently of the assumed polemical framework, which influenced the interpretation of the debate scene and the *Gospel of Mary* as a whole. From a narrative-critical perspective, the debate scene should be read as a part that contributes to the whole, not as a resource for the historical information. The predetermined framework of the anti-Peter polemic should not influence the interpretation of Peter’s statements. Since characters do not exist in isolation but only in relationship to other characters, Peter’s role and his relationship to Mary in the narrative should be understood not only by his negative attitude towards Mary in the debate scene, but also by his initial positive attitude towards her.

Chapter 1 dealt with the preliminary considerations about the text, such as provenance, date, genre, and literary unity of the *Gospel of Mary*, and the problematic category ‘Gnosticism,’
which was constructed by modern scholars over against the category ‘orthodox.’ In order to read the debate scene independently of the Gnostic versus proto-orthodox framework, this study noted and attempted to avoid the danger of defining ‘Gnosticism’ at the cost of the other. Assigning certain essential, contrasting characteristics to ‘Gnosticism’ and ‘orthodox,’ to define one over against the other, has resulted in a biased understanding of the means (i.e. by private revelation) and the agent (i.e., through Mary a woman) of the risen Savior’s teaching in the Gospel of Mary. By adopting De Boer’s typological definition of ‘Gnosticism,’ this study did not assume the ‘Gnostic’ character of the Gospel of Mary in approaching the debate scene.

Chapter 2 outlined the premises and methodologies employed in this study. By employing narrative criticism, this study attempted to explore the normative story world, and to understand the purpose and function of the portrayal of the debate among the characters in its own literary context. Methodological clarification was given to examine the roles of the characters in regard to the plot, and the debate scene’s contribution to the rhetoric of the whole narrative. Narrative criticism’s premises and procedure, the theories of characterization, emplotment, and point-of-view crafting, and the conception of ‘expected reading’ were outlined and discussed.

Chapter 3 reconstructed the extratextual information about the conception of divine revelation given to a virtuous figure, which the implied reader was expected to bring to the text in reading process. The means (i.e. by private revelation) and the agent (i.e., through Mary a woman) of the risen Savior’s teaching in the Gospel of Mary have been often understood as the disputable issues, which Peter regarded as unreliable. However, such understanding was problematized, in consideration of the fact that Peter by no means denied them in the previous narrative, and that in the story world the authority of the risen Savior’s teaching fundamentally relied on the means and the agent. In order to understand what is at stake in the debate in the Gospel of Mary, the use of the conception of divine revelation, and the use of the historical figures as vehicles for revelatory message or teaching were discussed in terms of the two models of authority widely used in antiquity, viz. revelatory authority and literary authority. Contrary to the view that the risen Savior’s teaching in the Gospel of Mary was doubly weakened by the unreliable means and the unreliable agent, in the story world the risen Savior’s teaching was doubly authorized, by appealing to the authority of divine revelation and the authority of the oral-scribal tradition of Mary the Savior’s favorite. How these two models of authority were used
in promoting revelatory knowledge in Jewish and non-Jewish sources in late antiquity shed light on that divine revelation and the shared knowledge about Mary the Savior’s favorite were part of the implied reader’s extratexts, which made the composition of the *Gospel of Mary* possible. They were essential for making truth-authority claims for its central message, introduced as the risen Savior’s teaching.

Chapter 4 conducted a narrative-critical exegesis of the *Gospel of Mary* by paying attention to how the events of the narrative were ordered, and how the implied reader was guided to experience the narrative by its discourse, such as emplotment, characterization, and point-of-view crafting. Beginning with the identification and discussion of the variant readings of the Greek and Coptic texts, this study dealt with the rhetorical function of the symmetrical structure of the two parts of the text. The reason for the inclusion of the debate scene, followed by Levi’s climatic utterance, was discussed in terms of literary technique for making a dominant impression, as being exemplified by the pronouncement stories in the canonical gospels. The relationship between the two symmetrically structured parts of the text was identified as constituting the plot, which developed around the tension initiated by the disciples’ unpreparedness in carrying out the Savior’s commission. The role of the debate scene was discussed in consideration of its contribution to the resolution of the narrative’s fundamental tension. A perspective-critical analysis of the dynamics of proximity and distance between the implied reader and Peter revealed that Peter was hardly the object of a polemic. The implied author’s point-of-view crafting was not intended to engender antipathy against Peter in the implied reader, but rather empathy with him. It was because Peter was given ‘syntactic prominence’ in the narrative as the representative of the recipients of the Savior’s revelation, as the one who introduced Mary as an reliable figure, and as the one functioned to elevate Mary’s esteemed status as well as the importance of her vision, by expressing jealousy of her privileged access to it.

When approached narrative-critically, the portrayal of the debate was fundamentally concerned with the narrative’s rhetoric of persuasion. The function of the debate scene was meant to make truth-authority claims in regard to the preceding teaching section, by appealing to the authority of divine revelation and to the authority of the shared knowledge about the esteemed figure Mary, the object of divine favor. In order to fulfill the narrative’s overall aim of conveying its particular worldview and values, presented as the risen Savior’s teaching, the
portrayal of the interactions among the characters was included. Because the narrative’s central part, viz. the risen Savior’s revelation mediated by Mary, was given by the authoritative means of divine revelation, through the reliable agent Mary, it was meant to be embraced by the implied reader. The role of the debate scene was not to counter the historical opponents’ irreconcilably different views on private revelation and female leadership, but to persuade the implied reader, identified with the reluctant disciples represented by Peter, to accept the risen Savior’s teaching as true and authoritative, and thus to carry out courageously the Savior’s commission despite the threat of suffering.
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