

Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 181. She draws upon the work of Frank M. Cross, "Prose and Poetry in the Epic and Mythic Texts from Ugarit," *HTR* 67 (1974): 1–15.

60. Suggested by Eunice Poethig, "The Victory Song Tradition of the Women of Israel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1985).

61. David Noel Freedman, "Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry," *JBL* 96 (1977): 20.

62. The verb in each case is a form of $\gamma\varsigma'$.

63. So William Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 547.

64. A late Hasmonean date (ca. 76–67 BCE) seems likely, with the mention of Judith in the late-first-century CE work 1 Clement providing a *terminus ante quem*; see Denise Dombkowski Hopkins, "Judith," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, expanded ed., ed. Carole A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 280–81.

3

Mary Magdalene, a Beloved Disciple

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Among those second- and third-century Christian texts in which Mary (Magdalene)¹ figures as an important character there are two that describe her special position by stating that the Savior loved her more than the rest of the disciples. In the Gospel of Mary, this characterization of Mary is articulated by Levi, one of the male disciples of Jesus, after the disciples have hotly debated whether the instructions imparted to Mary during a private appearance of the risen Jesus to her correspond to the teachings of the Savior known by the male disciples (18,14–15).² In the Gospel of Philip, the status of Mary as the beloved disciple of Jesus is recognized by her envious male colleagues, who demand that he explain why she has gained this special position among the disciples (63,30–64,9).³ In both of these writings the position of Mary as the beloved disciple serves specific functions that I hope to elucidate, but before I do this it is useful by way of comparison to look at some other early Christian texts that refer to the beloved disciples and see what functions and roles they have or do not have in these texts.

A "Beloved Disciple" as the Founder and Leader of a Christian Community

It is a commonplace that in the Christian writings of the first three centuries, and even more so in later apostolic legends, the earliest followers of Jesus, the apostles, were regarded as founders and leaders of Christian

churches and communities. This is already attested in the New Testament: Peter, James the Just, and John the Zebedee, the pillars of the Jerusalem church, as well as Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, are notable examples of this phenomenon (Gal. 2:7–9; 1 Cor. 3:10; Matt. 16:17–19; Gos. Thom. 12). In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius does not confine the missionary activity of Peter and John only to Jerusalem, but he knows of traditions that introduce Peter as the founder of the bishopric in Antioch (*Hist. eccl.* 3.36.2; cf. Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 6; *Ps.-Clem. Rec.* 10.69–72) and John as the missionary and founder of the first churches in Asia Minor (*Hist. eccl.* 3.1.1; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Quis div.* 42.2). In addition, Eusebius is aware of traditions according to which Thomas proclaimed the gospel and evidently established the first churches in Parthia, Andrew in Scythia (*Hist. eccl.* 3.1.1), and Bartholomew in India (*Hist. eccl.* 5.10.3).⁴ These observations invite us to ask whether the fact that an apostle is designated as a founder or leader of a Christian community is motivated by the fact that this particular apostle is regarded as a “beloved disciple” of Jesus.

If the texts dealing with Mary Magdalene are excluded at this point, it is to be noted that there is no text in which the “beloved disciple” motif is explicitly connected with one’s gaining or assuming a leadership role.⁵ Yet some scholars have insisted that the “beloved disciple” of the Gospel of John should be seen not only as the founder of the Johannine community but also as its (first) leader.⁶ As a decisive argument they refer to the final chapter of the gospel, in which the discussion about the destiny of the “beloved disciple” has been taken to have been written in order to deal with the perplexity the death of the leader of the community has occasioned. This argument is not very convincing, however. First of all, it is not clear at all that this text reflects the bewilderment caused by the death of a leadership figure. Rather, it seems to be related to the discussion about the delay of the parousia.⁷ The redactional comment on the reply of the risen Jesus to the question of Peter in John 21:23 stresses that the Johannine community should not panic even if the “beloved disciple” has passed away before the return of Jesus. The loss of a founder or a leader is not an issue. Secondly, although the “beloved disciple” can be regarded as the mediator and the guarantor of the Johannine tradition, and thus as an opinion leader (see below), it is by no means certain that he was regarded as the founder and the (first) leader of the Johannine community. As a matter of fact, the twenty-first chapter of the gospel seems to attribute the leadership role to Peter, who is described as the shepherd of the flock (21:15–17), despite the fact that he is not considered to be the one beloved by Jesus but to be the one who is expected to love Jesus more than others. In light of this evidence, it is not necessarily to

be expected that the Mary texts in which she is characterized as a “beloved disciple” would grant her a leadership role, but if they do they appear to be quite exceptional.

A “Beloved Disciple” as a Person of Deeper Understanding

If there are no clear examples of “beloved disciples” assuming a leadership position in second- and third-century Christian texts, there are several texts in which a “beloved disciple” demonstrates or receives a special ability to understand Jesus and his message. It is frequently implied that the object of perception is a special, even a secret, revelation. In the so-called Second Apocalypse of James in the Nag Hammadi Library, the Savior calls James the Just as his beloved (Coptic: *merit*) and grants him a gift of deeper understanding: “My beloved! Behold, I shall reveal to you those things that neither [the] heavens nor their archons have known” (56,16–20). Also in the First Apocalypse of James, James the Just is praised for his understanding of the message of the Savior (29,4–5). Even though he is not called the “beloved (disciple)” in the extant part of the text, it is quite obvious that he has to be regarded as one since the way he is described closely follows that of the Second Apocalypse of James. In both writings James and the Savior for example kiss and embrace each other as an indication of their special relationship (1 Apoc. Jas. 31,4–5; 32,6–8; 2 Apoc. Jas. 56,14–16). In the so-called Secret Gospel of Mark the writer refers to a young man who is depicted as a special favorite of Jesus. This “beloved disciple” is led by Jesus to “the mystery of the kingdom of God.”

In a third-century document Questions of Bartholomew, the protagonist of the text, the beloved Bartholomew, receives the promise from Jesus that he will get to know everything he wishes and even that which he does not know to ask (Quest. Barth. 1,5). In a Nag Hammadi tractate, the Apocryphon of James, two disciples, James and Peter, are portrayed as “beloved ones” who because of their knowledge and understanding can become “the cause of life for many” (10,29–34). In Pistis Sôphia I–III, too, the designation “beloved” is used of several disciples who impress with their perception, including Philip (PS 75,2–3), John (PS 129,8), James (PS 149,7; 175,3), and Matthew (PS 161,22–23).⁸ In the fourth book of Pistis Sophia the term “beloved disciple” no longer refers to a single special disciple but it is directed to all of the disciples since they all have been given the promise of “all mysteries and all knowledge” (PS 358,12–15). All of these texts suggest that the “beloved disciples,” irrespective of whether the writers refer to a single one

or whether many or all disciples are styled “beloved,” serve as the prototypes of Jesus’ followers who have or who are granted the extraordinary capacity both to grasp and to interpret the spiritual truths imparted by Jesus.

A “Beloved Disciple” as the Mediator and the Guarantor of a Special Revelation

A “beloved disciple” not only has a special ability of comprehension but also is assigned the task to act as mediator and authenticator of the message he or she has received. The classic example is the “beloved disciple” of the Gospel of John. In John 21:24 the “beloved disciple” is pictured as the one who by writing down the teachings and deeds of Jesus (or at least a small portion thereof) conveys them to later readers and makes it possible for them also to believe. At the same time, his/her special relationship as the closest disciple of Jesus and as an eyewitness makes him/her the guarantor of the truthfulness of the account. In this way the “beloved disciple” is also an opinion leader, although not necessarily seen as a person exercising supreme authority within the community.

A task of handing on the special revelation of Jesus is also given to James, the special confidant of the risen Savior in the First Apocalypse of James (36,15–38,11). He is the first one in a long chain of transmitters through whom the secret message is conveyed to further generations of hearers or readers. Unlike the “beloved disciple” in the Gospel of John, James is not the one whose task is to write down the teachings of Jesus. There is another non-canonical text, however, in which James is pictured as the one whose specific assignment is to note down the revelations of Jesus. In the Apocryphon of James, in which James is styled as a “beloved disciple,” he is said to have written two secret books, one containing revelations imparted to him alone, the other one to both him and Peter. In *Pistis Sophia* I–III, too, there are two “beloved disciples,” Philip and Matthew, who are given the task to write down the words and the deeds of Jesus (PS 71,18–22).⁹

As previously stated, the revelations “beloved disciples” receive and mediate are often secret. Usually they also have to be kept secret. Often this means that the revelation is transmitted only to a chosen group, to those who know how the message should be perceived. In the Apocryphon of James, the narrator of the text, James, warns his addressee not to disclose the secret revelation contained in the book to too many since it was not even divulged to all of the twelve. The revelation was meant only for those who can believe its message (1,8–28). This sort of language seeks to explain why the

book had not gained wide publicity despite its ostensibly ancient character and why it had a limited readership. A similar discussion is found in the Questions of Bartholomew. In that text Bartholomew explicitly asks (4,66–68):

Lord, may I reveal these mysteries to every man? (67) Jesus answered him: Bartholomew, my beloved, entrust them to all who are faithful and can keep for themselves. For there are some who are worthy of them; but there are also others to whom they ought not to be entrusted, for they are boasters, drunkards, proud, merciless, idolaters, seducers to fornication, slanderers, teachers of falsehood, and doers of all works of the devil, and therefore they are not worthy that they should be entrusted to them. (68) These things are also to be kept secret because of those who cannot contain them. For all who can contain them shall have a share in them.¹⁰

In these texts a “beloved disciple” is not only a revealer and a mediator of the secret teachings but also their guardian. His/her task is to discern those who are worthy of them and to whom they can be delivered.

A “Beloved Disciple” as a Lover of a Teacher

The term “beloved disciple” can also imply that the love relationship between the teacher and the disciple is not simply nonsexual. Since this option has been suggested in connection with those texts in which Mary has been called the disciple “Jesus loved,” it is important to ask whether the study of comparative material contains features that could support this kind of thesis.

It is interesting to note that in Greek philosophical schools a teacher could be styled as “lover” (*erastēs*) and a disciple as “beloved” (*erōmenos*).¹¹ Even though there is no reason to think that these designations always or often presupposed an erotic or a sexual relationship between the teacher and the disciple, it was not fully excluded either. Plutarch (*Moralia* 448E) gives us to understand that the use of the term *erōmenos* instead of *mathētēs* tends to imply that a pupil has a sexual relationship to his teacher. Is this possible in early Christian texts as well?

As far as the mere terminology is concerned one can at least say that the term *erōmenos* does not occur in Greek Christian texts to describe a “beloved disciple.” This would suggest that in Christian texts the love relationship between the teacher and the disciple is not perceived in sexual terms. There is

one Christian text, however, in connection with which the issue of a possible sexual character of the love relationship between Jesus and a "beloved disciple" has been raised. The text is the so-called Secret Gospel of Mark, which describes a nocturnal encounter between Jesus and a scantily dressed young man who is said to have loved him. It is the time of the meeting and the reference to the peculiar clothing of the young man that suggests to some scholars a sexual dimension in the encounter between the two men portrayed in the text.¹²

The significance of the undeniably extraordinary details of the story should not be overemphasized however. The point of the text is not that Jesus is teaching his disciple erotic skills, that is, the mystery of love, but, as the text says, "the mystery of the kingdom." The fact that the instruction takes place in the night does not stress its erotic nature but underscores the secret character of the teaching. In other words, the "beloved disciple" of the Secret Gospel of Mark is introduced into deeper spiritual wisdom that is not meant for every follower of Jesus. Based on this observation one can conclude that those Christian texts that introduce a "beloved disciple" do not generally lend support to an assumption that the love relationship between Jesus and his "beloved disciples" could have had sexual undertones.

Let us now move to the two texts that present Mary Magdalene as a "beloved disciple." They shall be examined in light of the four central themes in the other texts that referred to a "beloved disciple," although the order of the treatment will be different. Let me still emphasize one further point: the purpose of the following sections is not to settle historical questions but to see how Mary Magdalene is viewed in the texts and symbolic worlds of the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Philip.

Was Mary Magdalene Jesus' Lover or the Most Perceptive Disciple?

The fact that Mary Magdalene has more often than her male colleagues provoked a notion that the love relationship between Jesus and her is of a sexual or even marital nature depends not only on her sex but also on the way Jesus' and her relationship is described in the texts. Not only do the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Mary say that Jesus loved her very much, but the Gospel of Philip also states that she was the companion (*koinōnos* or its Coptic equivalent *hōtre*) of the Savior (59,6–11) and that he "[used to] kiss her [often] on her [mouth]" (63,35–36).¹³ In the case of the Gospel of Mary Jesus' love for Mary can hardly be interpreted in terms of a sexual relationship. That Jesus loved Mary more than the rest of the disciples, as

Levi puts it in the text (18,14–15), simply indicates her favorite position as a disciple who was in a special way equipped to receive and interpret authoritative revelations.

The characterization of Mary in the Gospel of Philip is more complex in many respects. To be sure, the fact that Jesus is said to have loved Mary Magdalene more than the other disciples finds its explanation also in the Gospel of Philip in her ability to understand Jesus better than do her (male) colleagues. When they ask Jesus why he prefers her to them (63,37–64,2) he says to them: "Why do I not love you like her? When a blind man and one who sees are both together in darkness, they are no different from one another. When the light comes, then he who sees will see the light, and he who is blind will remain in darkness" (64,5–9).¹⁴ But what should one conclude from Mary's status as Jesus' companion and the kisses between her and Jesus?

The term "companion" (*koinōnos* and its Coptic equivalent *hōtre*) can be used in several ways. It can connote an illegitimate sexual partner, for example. Since the word in the Gospel of Philip always appears in a positive sense, this meaning of the word is to be excluded. *Koinōnos* can also denote a marriage partner, a wife. This interpretation of the term is unlikely too. The Gospel of Philip frequently speaks about someone's wife; however, it never employs *koinōnos* in this sense, but always a more common Coptic word, *shime*. Hence, the use of the word *koinōnos* seems to imply that the companionship between Mary and Jesus is not to be viewed in terms of a sexual or marital relationship but in terms of a spiritual relationship. But what about the kisses? Do they not speak against this assumption?

The kisses do not have to be perceived from the perspective of a sexual partnership.¹⁵ First, in other contemporary religious writings there are plenty of examples where kissing functions as a metaphor for transmitting a special spiritual power.¹⁶ Second, in the only other passage in the Gospel of Philip where kissing is referred to it is mentioned without concrete sexual implications, as a metaphor of spiritual nourishment (58,30–59,6). Third, the altercation between the (male) disciples and the Savior in Gospel of Philip 63,37–64,9 suggests that kissing is not to be understood as an expression of sexual love. The question of (male) disciples shows that the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene is viewed in such a way that also male disciples can be jealous of her. In addition, when the (male) disciples ask why the Savior loves Mary more than the others, they do not point to any sexual motives but to her spiritual capacity to see better. Fourth, in the Second Apocalypse of James, which is the most interesting parallel to Gospel of Philip 63,34–37, it is said that when the risen Lord wanted to disclose his most secret mysteries to James he kissed him and called him his

“beloved” (2 Apoc. Jas. 56,14–20). In that context kissing is clearly a symbolic act that demonstrates James’s privileged standing. In light of these observations, the reference to Jesus kissing Mary in the Gospel of Philip is best expounded as having no sexual connotation but as being an indication of her supreme position as a disciple whose spiritual perception excels that of the others.¹⁷

Mary’s status as Jesus’ *koinōnos* is thus not a role of a lover. Neither is she to be regarded as a wife, but as a spiritual companion. In this way Jesus and Mary constitute a spiritual consortium that, in Valentinian terms, provides the prototype of the union between Christ and his Church that materializes when the spiritual elect are united with their angelic counterparts in the realm of light (Gos. Phil. 58,10–14).¹⁸

Mary Magdalene as the Mediator and the Guarantor of a Special Revelation

Although the Gospel of Philip emphasizes the extraordinary spiritual perception of Mary Magdalene, it nowhere refers to a special revelation obtained by her. Nor is Mary Magdalene described as a guarantor or a mediator of the traditions preserved in the Gospel of Philip. This is in line with the tendency in the Gospel of Philip according to which Mary is the confidant of Jesus during his earthly life, whereas the male disciples are jealous of her position and only after the resurrection gain a better understanding of deeper spiritual mysteries. After the resurrection, it is the collective witness of all the apostles and their followers by means of which the teachings of Jesus found in the Gospel of Philip are authenticated and mediated to further generations (74,17–18; 81,1–14).¹⁹

In the Gospel of Mary the situation is different. Mary is pictured both as the one who receives a special, authoritative revelation cast in the form of a vision and as the one who as the special favorite of Jesus guarantees its truthfulness. In this way the Gospel of Mary can be clearly linked with those texts in which a “beloved disciple” serves as an authenticator of the tradition underlying a text on which a community bases its understanding of its faith.²⁰

The peculiar thing in the Gospel of Mary is that in the text world of the writing the position of Mary is questioned. The readers are informed that Mary’s revelation is given a cold reception among the male disciples, especially by Peter and Andrew, who seriously doubt whether the risen Savior could have revealed something like that, especially to a woman and in a vision (17,10–22). The fact that the revelation obtained by Mary is not accepted

without reservations suggests that the author of the text is addressing an audience that is skeptical about the ideas related to Mary Magdalene of the text. In this situation it may not be accidental that Peter, probably representing skeptical voices, in inviting Mary to reveal some special teachings of the Savior does not characterize her as a “disciple Jesus loved” but as the one whom “the Savior loved more than the rest of women” (10,2–3). To balance this the author needs to introduce Levi into the narrative after Mary’s speech and its critical reception by the other male disciples. Levi supports Mary, and his defense is based on the fact that the Savior knew Mary very well and loved her not only more than the rest of women but more than the other disciples (18,12–15). According to Levi, she is the “beloved disciple” who is the best choice for the task of receiving and authenticating the authoritative revelation of the Savior.²¹

Mary Magdalene and the Question of Leadership Roles

Usually the “beloved disciple” motif is not connected with the question of leadership roles in early Christian communities. The Gospel of Philip does not seem to be an exception in this regard. Mary Magdalene is not portrayed as a paragon of a Christian leader in that writing. Rather, she is a prototype of a Christian who perceives deeper spiritual truths, to the extent that she together with Jesus can be seen as the symbol of the Church uniting with Christ in the final consummation in the realm of light.

Again, the Gospel of Mary discloses a somewhat different picture. The conflict between Mary and the male disciples, Peter and Andrew, which has a central role in the plot of the writing, brings a new feature to the “beloved disciple” motif. Here it also has to do with the question of spiritual leadership. While validating Mary’s teaching and her privileged status against accusations launched by Peter that the Savior would not have revealed such a special revelation to a woman that he did not tell to his male disciples, the Gospel of Mary affirms the legitimacy of women’s leadership role. As succinctly put by Karen King, Mary and her defender Levi “represent those Christians who question the validity of any apostolic authority that challenges the truth of their own experience of the Living Lord; for them, apostolic authority is not based simply on being one of the Twelve or on gender but on spiritual qualifications. Women who have those qualifications may exercise legitimate authority.”²² It is therefore worth noting that immediately after the risen Jesus departs from his disciples and before Levi grants a formal justification to her position as a spiritual authority Mary herself already takes the place of the leader and consoles and encourages her desperate colleagues (9,12–24).

Although the leadership role is questioned by Andrew and Peter, the support of Levi again returns it to Mary at the end of the gospel.

Conclusion

The two texts in which Mary Magdalene features as a “beloved disciple” draw a somewhat different picture of her. In the Gospel of Philip, she is a “beloved disciple” in whom the most dominant feature is connected with her ability to see and to understand spiritual realities. As a special consort of Jesus she also becomes a prototype for seeking unification with the realm of light. Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of Mary seems to expand the notion of a “beloved disciple” to a new direction. She is no longer a mere authenticator of an authoritative tradition, an opinion leader, but a supreme spiritual authority who is courageous enough to challenge old traditions if they tend to discourage and intimidate the followers of the Savior because of irrelevant issues, such as gender or restraining rules (18,7–21). It is the “beloved disciple” of the Gospel of Mary who better harmonizes with essays in this collection. As a receiver of a special divine revelation and as a spokesperson for a subdued group, namely women, Mary Magdalene of the Gospel of Mary joins in a long-standing prophetic tradition. And as a favorite disciple of Jesus she assumes the role of an apostle, along with the others who have mediated the message of the risen Lord.

NOTES

1. Whether Mary is Magdalene, as I assume (A. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 40 [Leiden: Brill, 1996]; A. Marjanen, “The Mother of Jesus or Magdalene? The Identity of Mary in the So-Called Gnostic Christian Tradition,” in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*, ed. F. Stanley Jones, SBL Symposium Series 19 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002], 31–41), or the mother of Jesus or a composite figure (see S. Shoemaker, “Rethinking the ‘Gnostic Mary’: Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Magdala in Early Christian Tradition,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 [2001]: 555–95; S. Shoemaker, “A Case of Mistaken Identity? Naming the Gnostic Mary,” in Jones, *Which Mary?* 5–30) does not affect the argumentation.

2. For the Coptic text and an English translation of the Gospel of Mary, see Robert McL. Wilson and George W. MacRae, “BG,1: The Gospel according to Mary,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott, Nag Hammadi Studies 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 453–71.

3. For the Coptic text and an English translation of the Gospel of Philip, see Bentley Layton and Wesley W. Isenberg, “Tractate 3: The Gospel of Philip,” *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XIII,2**, *Brit. Lib. Or.4926(1)*, and *P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655*, vol. 1: *Gospel according to Thomas, Gospel according to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*, ed. Bentley Layton, Nag Hammadi Studies 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 129–217.

4. For the apostles as missionaries, founders, and leaders of early Christian communities in early Christian traditions, see, e.g., Walter Bauer, “The Picture of the Apostle in Early Christian Tradition: 1. Accounts,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2: *Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses, and Related Subjects*, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1965), 35–74.

5. The term “leader” is not used here of an opinion leader in general but in the narrow sense of the word, referring to a person exercising supreme authority within a group or community.

6. For the discussion, see Ismo Dunderberg, “The Beloved Disciple in John: Ideal Figure in an Early Christian Controversy,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity—Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni, Supplements to NT 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 243–69. Some scholars suggest that the “beloved disciple” in the Gospel of John is Mary Magdalene. Most recently this is done by Esther A. de Boer, “The Gospel of Mary: Beyond a Gnostic and a Biblical Mary Magdalene” (dissertation, University of Kampen, 2002), 149–74. Despite her sometimes ingenious attempts to overcome the interpretive problems related to the identification of the “beloved disciple” with Mary Magdalene, such as the grammatical masculinity of the disciple “whom Jesus loved” and the obvious distinction between the “beloved disciple” and Mary Magdalene both at the cross and at the empty tomb, de Boer’s thesis remains unconvincing.

7. Dunderberg, 250.

8. In the present article, the references to Pistis Sophia are made according to Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, *Pistis Sophia*, Nag Hammadi Studies 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1978). The first number gives the page number of the Coptic text; the second number refers to the line.

9. Thomas is the third writer, but he is nowhere in the writing explicitly called “beloved.”

10. The translation is derived from Felix Scheidweiler, “The Questions of Bartholomew,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1: *Gospels and Related Writings*, 5th ed., ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 539–53.

11. Sjef Van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John*, Biblical Interpretation Series 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 85–87.

12. This possibility was already suggested by Morton Smith, the first editor of the Secret Gospel of Mark; see Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 251. Although

Smith primarily saw in the text a description of "a baptism administered by Jesus to chosen disciples, singly, and by night" he also thought that the union the baptism symbolized "may have been physical."

13. The lacunae of Gos. Phil. 63,35–36 can be plausibly reconstructed on the basis of the traces of the words and the discussion on Mary Magdalene and the function of the kisses in Gos. Phil. 59,3–9; for the arguments, see Silke Petersen, "Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit?" *Maria Magdalena, Salome und andere Jüngerinnen Jesu in christlich-agnostischen Schriften*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 48 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 145–47; Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 154.

14. Some scholars have insisted that the passage of the blind and one who sees does not belong together with the previous text dealing with the discussion between Jesus and his disciples about the relationship of Jesus to Mary Magdalene; see, e.g., Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium (Nag Hammadi-Codex II,3)*, Texte und Untersuchungen 143 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997), 336. For the arguments to the contrary, see Marjanen, *Woman Jesus Loved*, 163–64.

15. The following arguments derive from Marjanen, *Woman Jesus Loved*, 158–59.

16. Cf., e.g., *Jos. Asen.* 19,10–11; *Odes Sol.* 28,6–7; *Disc.* 8–9 57,26–28.

17. Schaberg, 155, insists that asking whether the kissing is an expression of "a spiritual love between a master and a disciple, or an erotic love creates a false dichotomy," but does not present any real arguments that would in the context of the Gospel of Philip speak for a more inclusive interpretation of the love relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

18. For the idea of the final spiritual consummation in Valentinianism and in the Gospel of Philip, see Marjanen, *Woman Jesus Loved*, 160–62. For the use of kisses in connection with the (Valentinian) eschatological reunification of the emanations with the Father in the realm of light, see also Gos. Truth 41,34–35.

19. For a more extensive presentation of this view, see Marjanen, *Woman Jesus Loved*, 165–69.

20. Unlike many other texts introducing a "beloved disciple," the Gospel of Mary does not appropriate the secrecy motif. Although Mary's revelation is received in a private vision, it is proclaimed openly, at first to the other disciples and later on to other people.

21. As has been cogently demonstrated by Karen King, "The Gospel of Mary," *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2: *A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 601–34, there is another feature in the gospel that seems to serve the author's desire to bolster the truthfulness of Mary's teaching in the eyes of the readers. It is the connection between the teaching of the risen Savior at the beginning of the text and the revelation obtained by Mary after his departure. Although the fragmentary nature of the Gospel of Mary does not give a full possibility to assess all the links between the two, some of them are quite conspicuous. The ascent of the soul that Mary's vision describes is a concrete illustration of the

restoration of the soul to its root (7,17–20). The right answers presented by the soul to the worldly powers are made possible by the true self-knowledge that Jesus' view of salvation implies. The soul's dialogue with the third power about the dissolution of everything (15,21–16,1) seems to presuppose Jesus' prior teaching on that topic (7,3–8). All this seems to suggest that the author wants to defend Mary's teachings by demonstrating their affinity with Jesus' own ideas.

22. King, "Gospel of Mary," 623–24.