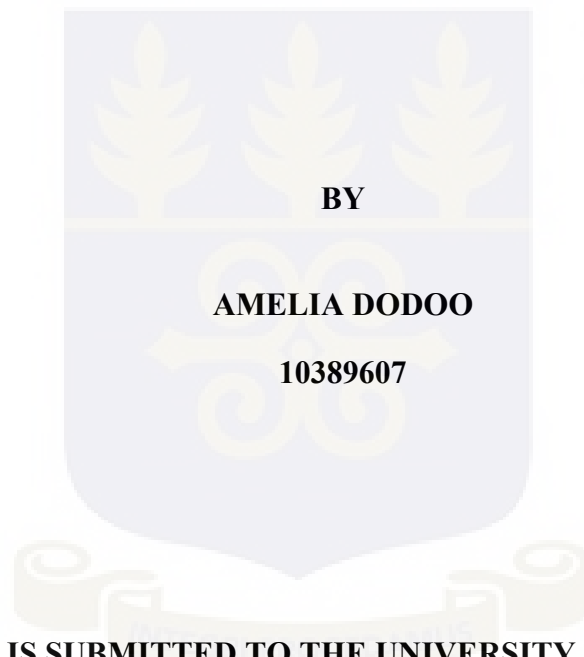


**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**“I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE THE CHRIST” (JOHN 11:27):
THE CHRISTOLOGY OF WOMEN IN JOHN’S GOSPEL**



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
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OF MPhil FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS DEGREE**

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Amelia Dadoo, under the supervision of Dr. Nicoletta Gatti and Rev. Fr. Dr. Alexander Salakpi, towards the award of M.Phil. Degree in Study of Religions in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana (Legon).

AMELIA DODOO
(Candidate)

DATE

DR. NICOLETTA GATTI
(Supervisor)

DATE

REV. FR. DR. ALEXANDER SALAKPI
(Co-Supervisor)

DATE

ABSTRACT

Women in John's Gospel played important roles in the ministry of Jesus. They contributed to theologizing and shaping the readers' understanding of Jesus' identity. Against this background, the research analysed how the narrator guided his readers to discover Jesus' identity through the words and the actions of four female characters, placed by the author in key moments of his narrative: Mary the Mother of Jesus (2:1-11); the anonymous Samaritan woman (4:4-42); Martha (11:17-27) and Mary of Magdala (20:11-18). The thesis further explored how the process of women involvement in Christological reflections continues in our African context through the words and actions of Prof. Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, the 'mother of African women theology.'

To achieve the goal, Ossom-Batsa's Communicative Approach was employed as the theoretical framework for the study. This approach follows three steps, namely: exegesis of the text; discovery of the call to action suggested by the text; and dialogue between the text and the context of the reader. Narrative Criticism was used to analyse the four texts and to discover the call to action suggested by the text to its readers. The third step was concretized through the 'encounter' between the Christological reflection of the four Johannine women and that of Prof. Mercy A. E. Oduyoye, the 'mother' of African women theologians.

The research revealed that the Johannine women challenged Jesus into revealing his identity. Furthermore, through the words and actions of the four characters, 'others' came to believe in Jesus and their lives were transformed. In addition, the research disclosed the following elements of the Johannine women's Christology: it is experiential and dialogical; independent from the male-figure; it challenges the status quo; it is able to transform the self and the other; it portrays women as capable of participat-

ing in theological reflections; and finally, it characterizes women as possessing leadership traits.

The interaction between the style of Christological reflection of the 'Johannine women' and Prof. Oduyoye revealed that notwithstanding their differences in time and socio-cultural set-up, they shared the same approach to theological reflection.

The study recommends further research into the portrayal of women in the New Testament and in the appropriation of women theologies in Ghanaian Churches. Furthermore, the research recommends that Ghanaian churches encourage women to study theology by providing scholarships for them; involve women in decision-making at all levels of the church; make women issues part of the pastoral plan of the church and to empower teenage-girls and young ladies to have a voice in the church.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to two important women in my life: Rev. Mrs. Grace Dodoo my biological and spiritual mother, and Madam Amelia Amene Oteng my adorable grandmother.

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“If it had not been the Lord who was on [my] side, let [Amelia] now say” (Ps 124:1). To God be the glory, great things He has done and greater things He is yet to do. With a deep sense of gratitude, I am grateful to the Lord for His grace and mercies which has brought me this far.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Background of the Study

The role of women in contemporary African Christian setting is an on-going discussion. Novieto asserts that until the rise of the African Independent churches, women's roles were limited to singing, ushering, taking care of churches and minimal general services in the church.¹ The situation was even worse in the area of theological reflection. In the early parts of 1970s, in fact, only one female voice was heard speaking through journals and other African theological bodies: the voice of Prof. Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye. It was only after the creation of the 'Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians' in 1989 that more women have been encouraged to be involved in theological debates and publications.²

Focusing on the Ghanaian landscape, from 1977 some mainline churches — such as the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Church — began ordaining women into the clergy. In recent times, the Pentecostal, Charismatic and neo-Prophetic churches are the leading denominations encouraging more women into leadership roles in their churches. Some of the roles they fill are heads of the deacon bodies, prophetesses, clergy and founding members.³

Soothill discusses the influence of Ghanaian women leaders in the Charismatic churches and their impact towards church growth and women empowerment. She

¹ Ernestina Enyonam Novieto, "Women Leaders in Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches" (PhD Thesis, University of Ghana, 2013), 75-87.

² Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³ Novieto, "Women Leaders," 75-87.

identifies Christie Doe Tetteh and Francisca Duncan-Williams as women leaders in the area of church growth and women empowerment.⁴

Notwithstanding, the history of the Church in Ghana can attest to the significance of women leaders towards church planting and growth. A few are outlined as follows: The Church of the Twelve Apostles was founded by a woman, Grace Tani. Through her, many joined the Christian faith, others found solutions to their spiritual and physical problems and others were able to identify and operate in their spiritual gifts. Prophetess Hannah Barnes, who, although not the founder of the Musama Disco Christo Church, held a leadership role as a prophetess and through her area of operation, drew many to the Christian faith as most of her prophecies and visions came to pass.⁵

Within the Catholic Church, although women are not ordained into the priesthood, they fill other important positions within the dioceses and the church as a whole. They are members of Pontifical Congregations and Commissions such as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples,⁶ and the Pontifical Biblical Commission;⁷ also they are Diocesan chancellors and judges. They teach in seminaries, and they are responsible for the pastoral care of parishes where they visit the sick, lead prayers, distribute Holy Communion, preach and even officiate the sacrament of marriage.⁸

⁴ Jane E. Soothill, "The Problem with 'Women's Empowerment': Female Religiosity in Ghana's Charismatic Churches," *Studies in World Christianity* 16, no. 1 (2010): 82-99.

⁵ Brigid Sackey, "Aspects of Continuity in the Religious Roles of Women in 'Spiritual Churches' of Ghana," *Research Review* 5, no. 2 (1989): 20-28.

⁶ Osservatore Romano, "Sr. Luzia Premoli, the first woman to be appointed a member of Congregation," accessed August 15, 2017 <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/sr-luzia-premoli-first-woman-be-appointed-member-c>.

⁷ "Pontificia Commissione Biblica," accessed August 15, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_14071997_pcbible_it.

⁸ In the Roman Catholic Church, marriage is considered a sacrament and in recent times there have been the inclusion of few women to join in the officiating of such sacrament. For example, "On the 20th of July 2017, the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments granted a Canadian, nun Sr. Pierrette Thiffault, the permission to officiate at a July 22, 2017 wedding in Lorrianville-

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letter on the *Dignity of Women*, commended Saint Theresa of Jesus, and Saint Catherine of Siena as ‘Doctors of the church’, which was conferred upon them by Paul VI on September 27, 1970 and October 4, 1970 respectively. He recognizes women at the centre of God’s salvific event by making reference to Gen 3:15 and the event of Mary as the mother of Jesus. He explains how women dignity was lowered by sin and redeemed by Jesus through his advocacy for women and his revolutionary attitude towards them. Pope John Paul II identifies Jesus’ reference to women as ‘daughters of Abraham’ (Luke 13:16) and ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ (Luke 23:28) as a way of confirming their dignity. Thus “Jesus of Nazareth confirmed their dignity, recalled it, renewed it, and made it a part of the Gospel and of the Redemption for which he is sent into the world.”⁹

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, commends women for the significant role they play in the church and in theological discussions:

The Church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess. I think, for example, of the special concern which women show to others, which finds a particular, even if not exclusive, expression in motherhood. I readily acknowledge that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families and groups and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. Because the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the work-

Canada; a community in diocese of Rouyn-Noranda in Northwest Quebec. According to the chancellor of the Rouyn-Noranda, Sister of Charity Madeleine Dumas, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, can. 1112 makes it possible for appointed lay people to officiate at Catholic weddings in the absence of Priests and Deacons. See, Lianne Laurence, “Vatican gives nun permission to officiate wedding,” accessed August 15, 2017, See, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/media-jump-on-story-of-nun-witnessing-at-catholic-wedding-but-its-nothing-n>.

⁹ Pope John Paul, *Mulieris Dignitatem*. Encyclical Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year (Rome: Vatican Press, 1988), accessed on August 28, 2017 http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

place and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures.¹⁰

In Africa, Christian women are becoming more and more aware of their dignity, and for such awareness, women movements have been formed to impact not only in the pastoral life of the church, but also in theological reflection. An example is the ‘Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians’ which has a woman as founder, Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, the first recognized African woman theologian. She is referred to as the ‘mother of African Women Theologies.’¹¹

With the rise of women’s involvement in various roles within the Christian landscape, a number of researches have been conducted concerning the extent to which women can be involved in the various roles within the church. Biblical scholarship offers different interpretation of the New Testament vision of women and church leadership. To scholars such as Ahiokhai¹² and Kasomo¹³ the problem of the inclusion of women in church leadership results from the first century Jewish and Hellenistic cultures that excluded women from holding leadership roles, affecting also the position of women in the apostolic community. Miller, on the other hand, blames the bible for not explicitly stating whether or not women are to involve themselves in church leadership, be-

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel (Rome: Vatican Press, 2013) accessed August 28, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

¹¹ Yolanda Smith “Mercy Amba Oduyoye,” accessed on August 28, 2017, http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/mercy_odyoye.

¹² The role of women should not be limited to what society prescribes. Women must be seen as equal to men because both are children of the Lord once baptized in Christ. Women are part of the royal priesthood of Christ.; See Simon Mary Ahiokhai, “New Perspective of the Role of Women as Ritualistic Agents in the Roman Catholic Church: A Comparative Theological Dialogue with Bede Benjamin Bidlack and Tracy Sayuki Tiemier,” Phd diss. University of Portland, 19-22, accessed on 25th June, 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316855277_NEW_PERSPECTIVES_ON_THE_ROLE_OF_WOMEN_AS_RITUALISTIC_AGENTS_IN_THE_ROMAN_CATHOLIC_CHURCH_A_COMPARATIVE_THEOLOGICAL_DIALOGUE_WITH_BEDE_BENJAMIN_BIDLACK_AND_TRACY_SAYUKI_TIEMEIER

¹³ The low class of women as a result of culture contributes to the kind of role women play in the church. See, Daniel Kasomo, “The Role of Women in the Church in Africa,” *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 2, no. 6 (2010): 126-139.

cause within the same patriarchal culture, some women were greeted as deaconesses (Rom 16:1) and other women were told to be silent in the church (I Tim 2:11-12).¹⁴

Denominations are also not united on the biblical bases for women's involvement in church leadership. For example, whereas the Apostolic Church of Ghana believes that it is unbiblical for women to hold leadership roles, most Charismatic churches in Ghana consider equity between men and women as a 'biblical mandate', and consequently ordain women as pastors and bishops.

Waltke argues that both men and women as equally created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), hence are equal in being, dignity, gifts and ministry. He argues that the same Spirit that calls and gives gifts to men, calls and gives gifts to women. He therefore, considers the bible as 'the number one' supporter of women's involvement in church leadership. To him, just as wives are to submit to husbands, so should all submit to authority, irrespective of the gender of the authority.¹⁵ Miller, however, disagrees with such assertion by arguing that first century women did not fill roles of preachers, apostles and elders.¹⁶

The debate on whether or not women are to hold leadership roles in the church is not a new phenomenon as the New Testament writings testify. In Romans 16, Paul mentions 12 women (11 by name and mother of Rufus), attributing them the title of 'Deaconess' (16: 1); 'Companion' (16: 3); 'Apostle' (16: 7); some are responsible of home churches; others "have given good proof in Christ" (16:10); many "have laboured in

¹⁴ J. David Miller, "Asking the Wrong Questions," *Priscilla Papers* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 4-7.

¹⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, "The Role of Women in the Bible," *CRUX* xxxi, no. 3 (September 1995), 29-39.

¹⁶ Miller, "Asking the Wrong Questions," 4-7.

the Lord" (16: 11.12). Paul regards them as sisters (16: 1); 'Mothers' (16: 13); 'Protectors' (162); people who 'risk everything for the Gospel' (16: 4).¹⁷

Unfortunately, when the church began the process of organizing and institutionalizing, the innovative force of the origins was attenuated in accordance with a patriarchal cultural context. The women were made invisible and silent (1 Tm 2.11-12); being a woman became synonymous with vainness and gossip (1 Tm 5: 13-15), weakness and sin (1Tm 2:13-15; Acts 2:20)¹⁸. For centuries, the biblical writings were interpreted in a male-perspective and sometimes, manipulated to subdue and dominate women.¹⁹

But “from the beginning it was not so...” (Matt 19:8). In the beginning, God created men and women equally in His image and likeness (Gen 1:27). In the fullness of time a woman (Mary) became the first bearer, home and voice of the Word (Luke 1:26-38); women followed Jesus as disciples (Luke 8:1-3) and were sent by the Risen Lord as testimonies of his resurrection. They did not only dialogue with Jesus but challenged Him (John 2:1-11; Mark 7:28).²⁰

Considering Jesus’ ministry as the starting event of Christianity, it is appropriate to ask: “What did Jesus say about women?” If there is no explicit answer in his teachings, it can be inferred from his behaviour. Jesus related with women and taught them (Luke 10:39; John 4:9-26), healed women (Mk 1:39), never rebuked them but often praised them for their faith (Mark 5:34; 7, 29). Furthermore, the Gospels present different roles played by women such as prophetess (Luke 2:36), friends of Jesus (Luke

¹⁷ Nicoletta Gatti, “Va’ dai miei Fratelli e di’ Loro (Gv 20, 17),” *Presbytery* 8 (2015): 651-672.

¹⁸ To expand the debate, Durham identifies I Timothy 14:33 and Titus 2:3-5 as other scriptures that prohibits women from leadership and identifies Acts 2:17; 8:26; 21:9 and Philipians 4:3 as biblical texts that supports women leadership. See, Lori Durham, “The Debate over Female Leadership in Ministry,” (October 2016): 1-19, accessed June 25, 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312167004_The_Debate_Over_Female_Leadership_in_Ministry.

¹⁹ Gatti, “Va’ dai miei Fratelli,” 654.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 660.

11:38), financial supporters (Matt. 27:55-56); disciples (Luke 8:1-3) and testimonies of his resurrection (John 20: 17-18).

Among the evangelists, a special approach to the role of women is taken by John. In the Fourth Gospel, in fact, women are introduced in key moments of the narrative and through women's words and actions, John guides his readers toward a deeper understanding of Jesus' identity. For example, Mary the mother of Jesus was present and instrumental to Jesus' first 'sign' (John 2:1-11), a woman was key to the opening of missionary work in Samaria (John 4:4-42), Mary Magdalene was the first to see the 'risen' Lord, and to carry the message of the resurrection to the disciples (John 20:11-18). As noted by Beirne, the Fourth Gospel provides a positive representation of women. They are presented in equal standing with men: "They are consistently portrayed in literary partnership as disciples in ministerial and apostolic leadership, and as catalyst for driving the Gospel's central purpose."²¹ In the Gospel of John, there is no difference between men and women in the community of disciples. Both play similar roles, such as evangelization and leadership.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women and their roles in the Fourth Gospel have recently received attention from New Testament scholars. For example, Maccini points out that John's Gospel and its emphasis on women continue to inspire widespread interest and intense study, which has led to the publication of several books and articles on the subject matter.²²

²¹ Margaret M. Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2003), 7-9.

²² Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony is True: Women as Witnesses According to John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 13-15.

The women in John's Gospel played significant roles to the ministry of Jesus. They contributed in theologizing and shaping an understanding of Jesus that was relevant for a specific context: such role can be argued as superior to being a pastor or a priest. The Gospel of John, in fact, recognizes women as the subject of deep and original understanding of Jesus' identity.

Against this background, the research analyses how John developed his Christology through selected female characters present in his narrative (2:1-11; 4: 4-42; 11:17-27 and 20:11-18).

John 2:1-11 was selected because it narrates the first 'sign' of Jesus. In such important event, a woman was present and instrumental to Jesus' performance of the miracle. Before Jesus' disciples believed, a woman already believed in Jesus and through her faith, she urged others to obey him. John 4:4-42 narrates Jesus' theological dialogue with a woman concerning living water and true worship. The anonymous 'Samaritan woman' not only was an active partner in the dialogue, but she became a witness, and through her testimony other Samaritans came to Jesus, sat at his feet and believed in him. In John 11:17-27, Jesus revealed himself to Martha as the resurrection and the life, and as a result of her faith in him, she declared Jesus as "the Messiah and the Son of God", a revelation declared by Peter in the Synoptic Gospels. The final pericope 20:11-18 identifies a woman, Mary, as the first to have seen the risen Lord and the carrier of Jesus' first message after his resurrection.

Each selected text focuses on a Christological statement about Jesus' identity. Journeying with these female characters, the reader is invited to listen, learn and discover who Jesus is, as well as to identify the role played by these women in the discovery of Jesus' identity.

The journey continues in our contemporary Christian context. In the awareness that the interpretation of the text is not complete, until it becomes relevant in the life of the contemporary reader, the thesis further explores how the process of women involvement in theological reflections continues in our African context, through an analysis of the Christological reflections of Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is guided by one main research question and one sub question. The main research question is: How did John's gospel develop its Christology through the female characters present in his narrative? The sub-question is: How does the process continue through the contribution of the 'mother' of African women theology, Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye?

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Introduction

The literature review was organized into two sections. The first part examined the role of women in John's Gospel, whereas the second section discussed the concept of Narrative Criticism.

1.4.2 Women in the Fourth Gospel

Scholars are not unaware of opposing voices concerning the role of women in the New Testament writings. For example, as pointed out by Brown, whereas 1 Corinthians 14:34 demands women to keep silence in the churches, 1 Corinthians 11:5, on the other hand, stresses the need for women to pray and prophesy. It must be noted that

prophecy is key as in Ephesians 2:20. The Church which is the household of God, is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.²³

Thiessen considers such opposing voices as having little or no consensus.²⁴ Brown, even though supporting Thiessen, however, thinks that such voices are not necessarily against women in ministry, instead he argues that those opposing women leadership were doing so to solve a situational problem.²⁵

These scholars also recognize how the 4th Gospel's has portrayed a positive image of women in the scriptures. While the debate whether or not John presented an alternative ecclesiology to the more 'male' oriented Synoptic Gospels, there is a general acknowledgment of the significant roles played by women and, their contribution to Christology in John's Gospel.

Various approaches to the reading of the biblical text have resulted in several interpretations of how the 'Johannine Jesus' perceived women. Brown accords that Jesus did not show any unique treatment towards women, as he considered both men and women as equally created in the image of God hence, treated them as such.²⁶ Thiessen,²⁷ Waweru²⁸ and Victor²⁹ contrast to the assertion of Brown, by identifying Jesus' attitude towards the women as more revolutionary than his attitude towards men. In their arguments, the Jewish culture made it impossible for women to be placed on the same

²³ Raymond, E. Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *Theological Studies* 36, no. 4 (1975): 689.

²⁴ Karen H. Thiessen, "Jesus and the Women in the Gospel of John," *Direction* 19, no. 2 (1990): 52-53.

²⁵ Brown, "Roles of Women," 688-689.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Thiessen, "Jesus and the Women," 53.

²⁸ Humphrey M. Waweru, "Jesus and the Ordinary Women in the Gospel of John: An African Perspective," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 96, no. 2 (2008): 141.

²⁹ Royce Victor, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: Liberation of a Dalit," *Asia Journal of Theology* 30, no. 2 (2016): 167.

level as men, thus Jesus relating with women as ‘equals’ required a revolutionary attitude.

Scholars identify various roles played by women in the Johannine community. They include: serving at table (12:2)³⁰, anointing the feet of Jesus (12:3) and witnessing (20:18). Contributing to the aim of the research however, discussions are limited to specific roles played by women towards revealing Jesus’ identity. Women are considered as individuals capable of engaging in theological discussions with Jesus. Thiessen points out Jesus’ discussions of ‘worship’ with the Samaritan woman and ‘resurrection’ with Martha as theological in nature.³¹ Both discussions ended in a new revelation of Jesus. Brown discusses how the Samaritan woman moved from a state of disbelief to the state of belief, and identifies that in the process of believing, she first declared Jesus a ‘Prophet’, until Jesus revealed himself to her as the one who is to come.³²

Supporting the assertion of women as individuals capable of engaging in theological debates, Kanagaraj identifies Martha’s declaration of Jesus as the Christ (John 11:27) as one of such examples. He argues that Martha’s Christological statement in the Synoptic Gospels was declared by a man, Peter. If both Martha and Peter find themselves in the same category, then one can argue that indeed women can share in theological discussions.³³

Again, the selected women are accorded the role of apostleship, that is to say they are capable of carrying the gospel to others. Mary Magdalene is referred to as an ‘apostle

³⁰ Brown, “Roles of Women,” 690.

³¹ Thiessen, “Jesus and the Women,” 54-58.

³² Brown, “Roles of Women,” 691.

³³ Jey J. Kanagaraj, “The Profile of Women in John: House-Bound or Church-Bound,” *ERT* 27, no. 1 (2003): 45.

to the apostles' by Brown because she was sent by the risen Lord to be a witness to the community of disciples.³⁴ Equally, the Samaritan woman became the first apostle to Samaria, when she carried the testimony of her encounter with Jesus to the people of Samaria, and through her testimony many Samaritans came to Jesus.³⁵ The mother of Jesus was also instrumental to the performance of Jesus' first messianic sign,³⁶ which resulted in the disciples believing in him.³⁷

Waweru describes the women as active and innovative ministers of the gospel, who do not allow cultural limitation to stop them from engaging with Jesus and spreading his message across. He cites the Samaritan woman as an example. The surprise expressed by the disciples in John 4:27 was an evidence of how she was able to break the status quo, engage with Jesus and go beyond to become a witness. By calling both men and women into discipleship, apostleship and as witnessing, Jesus challenged the culture, and validated women who find themselves in such roles.³⁸ Thiessen refers to such validation as the call of women into public ministry.³⁹ He further explains that Jesus did not create separate roles for men and for women, instead he used both men and women in similar roles at different places at different times.⁴⁰

The selected women are identified as able beings who did not need the validation of men before engaging in various roles. They did not wait to be encouraged by men before becoming witnesses to the identity of Jesus, neither did they go to men for further

³⁴ Brown, "Roles of Women," 692.

³⁵ Victor, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman," 174.

³⁶ S.J. Nortje, "The Role of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *Neotestamentica* 20 (1986): 21-28.

³⁷ Judith M. Lieu, "The Mother of the Son in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 117, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 61-64.

³⁸ Waweru, "Jesus and the Ordinary Women," 140-153.

³⁹ Thiessen, "Jesus and the Women," 53.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 62-63.

explanation about the theological discussions they had with Jesus. On their own, they were able to perceive who Jesus was and to testify it.⁴¹

However, one challenge identified by Victor was the response of the people towards the testimony of the women, although Jesus validated their call to public ministry. He cites the Samaritan woman as one of such examples: the Samaritans after hearing her words needed to come and see Jesus for themselves before fully believing in him (John 4:42). He thus refers to the Samaritan woman as a representative of all women, whose voices are neglected and forgotten.⁴²

In sum, there is a consensus concerning the relevance of women towards Christology however, whether or not their influence is accepted and appropriated by the Christian community is still debated

The literature review presented above, informs the researcher of the positive picture of women in John's gospel, and the validation of women by Jesus to engage in public ministry. The researcher is also made aware of the key roles played by the selected women in the Johannine community towards the ministry of Jesus. The research, therefore, is not adding further evidence to this regard, instead it aims at revealing Jesus' identity through women, and the characteristics of 'women's Christology'.

Various approaches to the reading of the Fourth Gospel have contributed to a variety of informed understanding of the roles of women towards Christology. Whereas Beirne employs the use of "Gender Pair" as proposed by scholars who approach the topic of women in the Gospel of Luke⁴³, Lieu utilizes inter-textual reading, to arrive at

⁴¹ Brown, "Roles of Women," 691.

⁴² Victor, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman," 164-174.

⁴³ Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, 11.

an understanding of the role of women in the Gospel.⁴⁴ Victor, on the other hand, in wanting to stress the importance of the reader, employed a reader-centred approach in reading the text.⁴⁵ In wanting to understand how readers in John's culture might have responded to his presentation of women as witnesses, Maccini employs the Narrative Criticism.⁴⁶ The study employs the use of Narrative Criticism with the aim of discovering how John guides his readers, to a deep understanding of Jesus' identity through the Christological dialogue of the women characters. It is a 'narrative Christology,' a journey of faith and discovery where women are protagonists.

1.4.3 Narrative Criticism

Present in the biblical text are the words of God, and the words and culture of humans. At different times and in various places, the biblical texts were written. The Bible is, therefore, a book made up of many books written by different authors of different times and with different vocations, addressing various needs. Thus, biblical revelation reaches us through word and culture; hence the need for biblical hermeneutics.

Various terminologies have been coined for the hermeneutical process such as exegesis and interpretation. Brown defines hermeneutics as, the "analysis of what we do when we seek to understand the Bible, including its appropriation to the contemporary world."⁴⁷ Ossom-Batsa depicts the term as, "the art of interpreting a biblical text in order to understand its original meaning and then delineate its significance for the con-

⁴⁴ Lieu, "The Mother of the Son," 61-77.

⁴⁵ Victor, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman," 161.

⁴⁶ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 15-22.

⁴⁷ Jeannine K. Brown, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: Scripture as Communication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 21.

temporary audience.”⁴⁸ Tate describes it as the study of the locus of meaning and the principles of interpretation using a bipolar approach; exegesis and interpretation.⁴⁹

Brown explains exegesis as, “the task of carefully studying the Bible, in order to determine as well as possible, the author’s meaning in the original context of writing.”⁵⁰

Kaiser and Silva describe it as, “the fancy way of referring to interpretation of the bible.”⁵¹ Exegesis is, therefore, the process of decoding the biblical text to reach an informed understanding of the text.

Once the biblical text has been ‘decoded’, there is the need to contextualize it into a contemporary context, and thus, the need for interpretation. Interpretation is the process of appropriating the biblical message to make it relevant for a contemporary audience.

In the historical development of Hermeneutics, there are three main approaches to doing biblical exegesis. There are the historical critical methods, the text-centred approach and the reader-centred approach. The research employed a text centred approach, which focuses on language and literary studies. There are, however, various methods under the text-centred approach umbrella. Examples are the Rhetorical Analysis and Narrative Criticism. With respect to the literary genre of the selected text, this research employed the use of Narrative Criticism.

⁴⁸ George Ossom-Batsa “Biblical Exegesis in the African Context: A Communicative Approach,” in *Unpacking the Sense of the Sacred: A Reader in the Study of Religions*, eds. Abamfo Atiemo, Ben-Wille K. Golo and Lawrence K. Boakye (Banbury, OX: Ayeiba Clerke Publishing Limited, 2014), 117.

⁴⁹ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), xv.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 23.

⁵¹ Walter Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 19.

Although the approach is not a new phenomenon, the name Narrative Criticism was proposed by David Rhoads.⁵² Marguerat and Bourquin define Narrative Criticism as “the method of reading the text, which explores and analyse how narrativity is made concrete in a particular text.”⁵³ In addition, Tate suggests that “the study of narratives focuses not only on the traditional narrative elements, such as plot, setting and characterization, but also on the role of the reader.”⁵⁴ Narrative Criticism is, therefore, the method of reading biblical narratives to bring out the meaning the author seeks to communicate. As pointed out by Marguerat and Borquin, at the core of Narrative Criticism are the ‘three poles’; the author or the dispatcher of the message, the message itself and the reader who is envisioned as the receiver of the message. By using Narrative Criticism, there is an interaction between the reader and the narrative.⁵⁵

Present in the narrative are two ideas – what the text says and what the text suggests. As a result, it takes competence on the part of the reader to bring out a more accurate meaning of the text. Therefore, in the process of deciphering the text, some elements the reader must take note of include the following: pretext, epitext, gaps, signals, repetitions and incipits.⁵⁶ At the end of deciphering, the reader must be able to identify the ‘sense of the narrative’ as well as the ‘significance of the narrative’. The sense of the narrative is the ‘meaning derived’ at, after deciphering whereas the significance of the narrative is the ‘effect of the meaning derived’ on the reader, that is, whether or not it brings about transformation.⁵⁷

⁵² Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Borquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 7-8.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 3.

⁵⁴ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Ricco-Maresca: Baker Academics, 2013), 335.

⁵⁵ Marguerat and Borquine, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 121-134.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 141-145.

Narrative Criticism is, therefore, used in the research to interpret the four selected text, which in order to reach an informed understanding of the message the author seeks to suggest to the reader. Once the biblical text is interpreted, as hermeneutics suggests, there is the need to make the text relevant to a contemporary audience. For purposes of making the message of the text alive to a contemporary audience, the research employs the African approach to hermeneutics.

African Hermeneutics is the branch of biblical hermeneutics that focuses on making the call to action derived from the biblical text relevant to the African context.⁵⁸ The process of engaging the text and the context is articulated by different African scholars. This has led to a wide range of approaches that can be used for interpretation in order to make the message alive to a contemporary context.

Amongst the African hermeneutics approaches are Inculturation Hermeneutics proposed by Justin Ukpong⁵⁹, Cultural Approach proposed by Musimbi Kanyoro⁶⁰, Contrapuntal Approach proposed by Humphrey Mwangi Waweru⁶¹ and, the Communicative Perspective proposed by Ossom-Batsa⁶².

Ukpong considers African reading of the bible as existential and pragmatic in nature, and contextual in approach. For this reason he defines inculturation hermeneutics, as a

⁵⁸ Ossom-Batsa, "Biblical Exegesis," 117.

⁵⁹ Justin Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation, in *The Bible in a World Context: An experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics*, eds. Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 17-18.

⁶⁰ Musimbi Kanyoro, "Reading the Bible from an African Perspective," *The Ecumenical Review* 51, no. 1 (1999): 18-24.

⁶¹ Humphrey Mwangi Waweru, "Reading the Bible Contrapuntally: A Theory and Methodology for a Contextual Biblical Interpretation," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 74, no. 3 (2006): 333-337.

⁶² Ossom-Batsa, "Biblical Exegesis," 128-129.

contextual approach that sees to make any community of ordinary people, or sociocultural context, the subject of interpreting the bible.⁶³

To Kanyoro, the culture of a person affects the meaning the person brings to the biblical text. He argues that our cultural heritage is the basis for understanding who we are, as well as the meanings we attribute to everything. That is to say, culture plays a key role in influencing the meaning we ascribe to biblical text. In this regard, he calls for a cultural approach in which cultural hermeneutics becomes the framework of scrutinizing culture, with the intention of testing its liberative potential for people. Thus, it analyses and interprets how culture conditions people's understanding of biblical text at a particular time and location.⁶⁴

The Contrapuntal reading of the bible proposed by Waweru is the process of reading the bible with one's own cultural text as the fundamental analogy. It is a two-way process in which two realities interact with each other until harmony is achieved. The biblical text remains the same, but the meaning of the text is dependent on the text and contemporary reality. The approach proposes reading the biblical text with an African oral text and listening to both for harmony. The first step is, therefore, to recreate the understanding of the biblical text. A similar oral tradition within the reader's context is, therefore, placed side by side and they interact till a new meaning is brought out. Thus, the approach acknowledges that the text and the reader's context both impact life, hence biblical text and context must interrogate each other.⁶⁵

By using the Communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa, the reader is challenged to read his or her life in light of the text, ultimately leading to a transformed

⁶³ Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics," 17-18.

⁶⁴ Kanyoro, "Reading the Bible," 18-24.

⁶⁵ Waweru, "Reading the Bible Contrapuntally," 333-337.

life able to transform his or her environment. The moral lessons drawn from the text are used to challenge the contemporary reader to bring about positive transformation, and the understanding that comes out of the text becomes the call to action for the real reader. The approach follows a three-step process. The first step is the adherence to the biblical text, followed by the call to action that emerges from the biblical text. The final step focuses on the engagement between the text and the contemporary audience.⁶⁶

1.4.4 Conclusion

The initial literature review proposed in this chapter, played a vital role as it provided the researcher knowledge of existing materials on the texts. By so doing, the researcher was able to identify a niche for her project, identifying the role of women in the Christological reflection of the Fourth Gospel and the elements that emerge from their engagement. Again, the literature review provided the researcher with the various approaches that have already been used to engage the text. As such, she was able to select Narrative Criticism as her method for exegesis. Finally, the researcher was exposed to a wide range of approaches to African hermeneutics within which she settled to employ the Communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa as her theoretical framework.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The Communicative approach to interpretation seeks to restore the word of God to a state in which it is given primacy above the context of the reader. It however does not neglect the context of the reader as it interacts with the reader's reality. The aim of the approach is, in fact, to allow the work of God influence and transform the lives of

⁶⁶ Ossom-Batsa, "Biblical Exegesis," 128-129.

readers. As stated earlier, it follows a three-step process. First, adherence to the biblical text, secondly call to action in the biblical text and finally in the context of the interpreter and reader.⁶⁷

The first step seeks to give due respect to the text. It does so by paying attention to the ‘linguistic’ and ‘non-linguistic’ elements within the text. This step advocates for a critical reading of the text by engaging all the available exegetical tools in order to reach an objective understanding of the text.⁶⁸

The second step focuses on the ‘actions suggested by the text’ to the reader. It challenges the reader to read his or her life in light of the text, leading to the transformation of the reader. It is only when the word of God challenges the reader positively that one can attest to the fact, that the word of God is alive and fruitful. As a result, the second stage of the theoretical framework focuses on the call to action the text offers to the reader.⁶⁹

The final stage of the framework emphasizes the dialogue that takes place between the text and the context of the reader: “The action suggested by the text is the same, but its realization is conditioned by the context of the community of readers.”⁷⁰ Ossom-Batsa concurs that it is at this point the reader brings into the interpretation his or her experience, that is to say, the reader reads his or her experience as a reflection of the call to action suggested by the text.⁷¹

⁶⁷ George Ossom-Batsa, “African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (July, 2007): 100.

⁶⁸ Ossom-Batsa, “African Interpretation,” 100-101.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 101.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 101.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 101.

1.6 Methodology

Following the theoretical framework, as step one, the research deals with an exegetical analysis of John 2:1-11, 4: 4-42, 11:17-27 and 20:11-18. Each text is analysed, taking into consideration the message of the text and the perlocutory effect of the text on the reader. Following the analysis of each pericope, is the journey of the reader towards a full discovery of Jesus' identity, and the elements that emerge as the selected women are placed at key moment of Jesus' self-revelation. This journey becomes, the 'call to action' suggested by the text to its reader.

As second step, the research explores how Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye engages in Christological reflections, and the elements that emerge as a result of her engagement. Data collection for the interpretive process was done through an interview with Oduyoye, as well as through secondary sources including her biographies, books and articles, and other materials written on her work.

The Christological reflection of the four Johannine women (in content and method) is engaged with the Christological reflection of Oduyoye, as the last step.

1.7 Organization of the Research

The research is structured into five chapters. Chapter one addresses introductory issues which include the following: background to the study, statement of the problem, research question, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology and organization of the work. Chapter two analyses the four selected texts (John 2:1-11; 4: 4-42; 11:17-27 and 20:11-18), with emphasis on the Christological statement and the perlocutory effect of the text on the reader. Chapter three addresses the journey of the reader towards a full discovery of who Jesus is and the kind of elements that emerge

as the women engage in Christological reflections. Chapter four explores how the process of women's involvement in Christological reflections continues in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity through the study of a contemporary African theologian, Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye. The final chapter brings the thesis to an end through a summary of the entire work, discussions of major findings and recommendations for both further academic study and pastoral benefits.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analysed the following texts — 2:1-11; 4:4-42; 11:17-27 and 20:11-18 — in order to ascertain, how John developed his Christology through the words and actions of four narrative female characters in line with the ‘Speech-Act Theory’ – texts do not only ‘say’ things, but also ‘do’ things. The chapter thus, seeks to understand the message the author intended to communicate to the readers through the text;⁷² as well as the perlocutory effect on the reader.⁷³

As elaborated in the methodology, Narrative Criticism proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin is the method employed for analyzing the text. The researcher analyzes how John uses narrativity as a theological tool to unearth the meaning of the text. This is done with the help of the pragmatic approach with special emphasis on the Christological statements in each text.

Pragmatic reading of a text is the task of selecting an appropriate sense of word from among various options available. The approach explores the way word meaning is modified and used. The use of the word in the text, constitutes the most crucial criterion for the meaning of the word. It brings about an informed understanding of the text as a result of the pragmatic effect of the chosen word.⁷⁴

⁷² Locution is what is said, illocution is what is verbally accomplished in what is said, perlocution is the response speakers evoke from hearers. See, Brown, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 32-35.

⁷³ Perlocutory effect is the intended effect of the text on the reader. It includes a whole range of what readers do in response to the text. However, understanding is the basic characteristic for the perlocutory effect, as it is the understanding derived from the text which will influence the kind of effect the text will have on the reader. See Brown, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 33.

⁷⁴ Gene L. Green “Lexical Pragmatics and Biblical Interpretation,” *JETS* 50, no. 4 (December 2007): 799-812.

The chapter then explores the following elements for each periscope. Its structure, the narrative situation, textual analysis with emphasis on the Christological statement and the perlocutory effect on the reader.

2.2 Do Whatever He Tells You (2:1-11)

Whereas scholars agree on v. 1 as the starting point of the narrative, there are disagreements on which verse the narrative ends, whether it is on v. 11 or v. 12.

Morris, for instance, opts for v. 11, arguing that the verse offers the theological climax of the narrative within which the glory of Jesus is revealed, causing his disciples to believe in him.⁷⁵ This presupposition is challenged by Moloney, who rather is in favour of v. 12. He argues that it is in v. 12 that the narrator returns to restating the characters of the narrative as well as their transition from Cana to Capernaum.⁷⁶ The aforementioned influenced his suggestion of v. 12 to be the end of the narrative. Brodie supports Moloney's argument but rather refers to the v. 12 as a transitional unit between two passages.⁷⁷ The researcher accepts Morris' narrative reason and considers John 2:1-11 a literary unity, but also agrees with Brodie on v. 12, which she considers as a transitional unit between the two passages.

2.2.1 Structure of John 2:1-11

John 2:1-11 has been analysed by many scholars, each of them proposing a unique structure. Moloney has four parts: Setting of the Account (vv. 1-2); Verbal Exchange (vv. 3-5); Miracle Story (vv. 6-10) and Effects on Disciples (v. 11). He employs a nar-

⁷⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 163.

⁷⁶ Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading the Fourth Gospel John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 77-79.

⁷⁷ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131.

rative criterion, paying attention to the different stages in which characters are introduced. In the first part, all the main characters are stated. The second division has the mother of Jesus as the main character. Jesus becomes the central character in the ensuing part, whilst in the final division the disciples are given special attention.⁷⁸

Keener on the other hand presents a five-part structure. These included Setting (vv. 1-3a), the faith of Jesus' mother (vv. 3b-5), mercy before ritual (v. 6), those who recognized the miracle (vv. 7-10) and manifesting his glory (v. 11).⁷⁹

The research adopts a structure motivated by narrative criteria and modelled after the structure of Moloney. In vv. 1-2, the author introduces the three main characters such as the mother of Jesus, Jesus, and the disciples (...καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ· ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταί...). Verses 3-5 gives special attention to the words and action of Jesus' mother. Jesus' words and actions become the spotlight in vv. 6-10 and finally in v. 11, attention is focused on the activities of the disciples.

The researcher's proposed structure has four sections:

1. Setting of the Account (vv. 1-2)
2. Christological Dialogue (vv. 3-5)
3. The Sign (vv. 6-10)
4. Jesus' Identity Revealed (v. 11)

2.2.2 Narrative Situation

“The narrative is rich in Johannine symbolism, and points forward to, many of the themes that will develop throughout the Gospel.”⁸⁰ There is the first mention of

⁷⁸ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 76-79.

⁷⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 495-516.

“hour” and the beginning of the series of “signs”. The theme of “water” (chapters 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9) and the revelation of the “glory” (1:14, 5:41-44, 7:18, 8:54, 11:4, 11:40, 12:23, 12:43, 13:31-32, 17:1-5, 17:22-24) are important throughout the Gospel.⁸¹

The phrase ‘mother of Jesus’ appears at two key moments of the Johannine narrative: at the beginning (2:1-11) and at the end (19:25-27) of Jesus’ earthly ministry. In both instances, there is an inference to the “hour”. Again, in the Johannine narrative, the “cross” represents Jesus’ glorification; as a result, the mother of Jesus was present when Jesus’ glory was first revealed at the beginning of his ministry, and at his glorification on the cross.⁸² The role of the mother of Jesus is thus, significant in the entire Johannine narrative.

The first sign of Jesus took place in Cana of Galilee, at a wedding ceremony on the “third day”. The introduction of the third day suggests to the reader that there is a link between the narratives in chapters one and two. A synchronic reading of the Gospel of John helps the interpreter to appreciate the link between the first two chapters. As a result, Barrett⁸³ and Brown count the call of Philip and Nathaniel as the first day (1:43), thus, suggesting that the next day was used to journey to Cana.⁸⁴ Moloney, however, accords a symbolic significance to the third day. He asserts that the connection between the third day and the marriage feast is a traditional symbolic sign of the messianic fullness.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 79

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁸² Kanagaraj, “The Profile of Women,” 28-30.

⁸³ The third day is to be reckoned from the last day mentioned in 1:43-51. See, C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: S.P.C.K., 1967), 158.

⁸⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1966), 97.

⁸⁵ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 80.

Creating a link between the call of Philip and Nathaniel, and the third day, has led Marsh into believing that the call of the first disciples which begun in chapter one, has its climax in the event at Cana. In effect, he considers the event at Cana as a continuation of the call of discipleship, which begun in the first chapter that those called to be disciples have finally believed in him. He therefore, feels that the miracle of turning water into wine is only a means to an end, and not the central focus of the narrative. Thus, the disciples' new born faith in Jesus becomes the focal event of the Cana story. It is a faith, caused by the vision of Jesus' glory (2:11).⁸⁶

2.2.3 Textual Analysis

A. Setting of the Account (vv. 1-2)

The setting of the account is introduced in the opening verses of the narrative (vv. 1-2); where time, place, type of event and key characters involved are indicated. It must be noted also that in the narration of the event, some other characters are featured, including the servants, headwaiter and bridegroom. As such, citing only the mother of Jesus, Jesus and his disciples in the setting of the account, is to draw the attention of the reader towards their roles in the narrative. The phrase τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ (the third day), serves as temporal indicator.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ John Marsh, *Saint John* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), 141-142.

⁸⁷ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, 36 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 34. Various interpretations have been given to be the meaning of "the third day." According to the likes of Lenski, the narrator starts his count from Jesus's interaction with Nathaniel and Philip. See Richard Charles Henry Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Columbus: Lutheran Books Concern, 1942), 184-185. This assertion is supported by Brown when he adds that day and the next were perhaps spent in journeying to Cana from the Jordan valley. However as pointed out by Brown, some scholars consider the reading of the third day as purely symbolic with reference to the resurrection. See Brown, *According to John*, 97. One example of such scholar is Lindars as he indicates that the third day is symbolic to resurrection as the sign at Cana is symbolic of the beginning of the new era. See Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1972), 128.

Bringing Jesus' mother before Jesus and his disciples in the story, the author gives an indication of the importance of 'Jesus' mother' to the narrative. Other assumptions have however been established by scholars.⁸⁸

The usage of the personal name, Mary, in place of the title, mother of Jesus, is present only in the Synoptic Gospels. This is not found, even once, in the Johannine narrative. Brown argues that in Arabic, the title; 'the mother of...' was an honourable title and perhaps has a similar use in John.⁸⁹ Landars is of a different opinion as he explains that the choice of using title and rather than name is a result of her minimal appearance in the Gospel (2:1-11, 19:25-27), as compared to Mary of Bethany (Mary Magdalene) who appears more than two times.⁹⁰ The narrative reading of the text can, however, help with the understanding of the usage of title and not name. By using the title, 'mother of Jesus', the narrator draws the attention to the relationship between Jesus and Mary. She is not just any woman present in the Gospel, but the one through whom the incarnate word dwells among humanity (1,14). The use of the title thus, suggests that the kind of relationship she has with Jesus makes it possible for her to know the identity of her son, to believe in him and to approach him with the problem of the shortage of wine.

The usage of the verb ἦν in relation to ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ indicates that Jesus' mother had a role to play at the wedding. This signal comes from the usage of ἐκλήθη translated 'invited' when referring to Jesus and his disciples. In sum up, three charac-

⁸⁸ Lenski concurs that she is crucial to the narrative, not only due to her actions, but because her presence becomes the justification for why Jesus was invited to the wedding. See Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 185. Brown adds that Jesus was present at the wedding because a relative was getting married. He hypothesizes that perhaps Nathaniel of Cana was the one who invited him to the wedding; See Brown, *According to John*, 98.

⁸⁹ Brown, *According to Brown*, 98.

⁹⁰ To that effect, John chose to give preference of the usage of name to Magdalene and not the mother of Jesus because, both women bore the same name, in order to distinguish her from Mary Magdalene; See Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 128. The researcher does not agree with Landars because what then, becomes the justification for the mention of Mary the wife of Clopas who appear only in 19:25?

ters are revealed in vv. 1-2: Jesus, his disciples who were invited, and the mother of Jesus who went there. The assertion is made clearer in subsequent verses when she becomes actively involved in finding solution to the shortage of wine.

B. Christological Dialogue (vv. 3-5)

After recording the setting of the scene, the narrator gives an account of the dialogue between Jesus and his mother. The mother in v. 3 approaches Jesus with the problem of wine shortage. In the Jewish culture, shortage of wine at a wedding meant disruption of the marriage festivity, and such disruption was considered an embarrassment to the bridegroom.⁹¹ The issue of the mother's interaction with Jesus as a statement or request, is an "age-old scholarly debate, to which there can be no final answer, as the text does not say so."⁹² However, as argued by Maccini, she could not have simply passed on a message to Jesus without having an expectation. Her expectation is not made explicit in the text, instead, by instructing the disciples to do whatever Jesus asked of them (v. 5), she demonstrated an act of faith in Jesus, irrespective of whether she simply informed or sent a request to Jesus.⁹³

As to why the mother approached Jesus with the problem, Lenski points out that she might have been part of those serving at the wedding, the reason she took matters into her own hands.⁹⁴ She knew who her son was; he had already been baptized (vv. 1:33-

⁹¹ The problem causes the mother of Jesus to enter into a dialogue with Jesus and, it is as a result of the dialogue Jesus performs the first sign causing the disciples to believe in him. Morris has indicated some problems associated with shortage of wine. They include the following; a slur on the host for not fully discharging duties of hospitality, poverty, or embarrassment thus rendering the bridegroom's family liable to a law suit; See Morris, *The Gospel*, 157-158. There is the argument of whether the wine was all used up or was inadequate to meet the demand throughout the festivity. Lenski indicates that the wine was not yet finished. See, Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 186. Beasley Murray and Brown simply speak of shortage of wine, not giving special reference to whether it was completely finished or it was in the processes of getting finished. See, Beasley-Murray, *John*, 34; Brown, *According to John*, 98. Landars interprets the shortage of wine to mean, the wine was not good enough. See, Landars, *Gospel of John*, 129.

⁹² Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, 48.

⁹³ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 98-100.

⁹⁴ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 186.

34) and had begun his ministry. Thus, her faith in him as a result of the knowledge she had about him caused her to approach Jesus instead of wine sellers, or the bridegroom. Her appeal to Jesus was more than just an ordinary appeal. She perceived him as the solution to the problem.⁹⁵

She is rather met by a sharp response from her son (v. 4); [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἦκει ἡ ὥρα μου (And Jesus said to her, woman, what have you to do with me, my hour has not yet come). Jesus' response to his mother has resulted in a wide range of interpretation.⁹⁶ It has been identified as a form of rebuke,⁹⁷ a colloquial usage for expressions such as “never mind, it has nothing to do with you, leave everything to me”;⁹⁸ and neither a rebuke nor an impolite language.⁹⁹ It has also been interpreted as an expression that seeks to separate the sign later performed by Jesus as having nothing to do with his humanity, but rather having everything to do with his divine nature.¹⁰⁰

Some scholars also think Jesus' use of the term γύναι in his response may sound harsher in translation, but indicated no form of disrespect in its original language.¹⁰¹ Others have argued that the use of γύναι may be an unusual way of addressing a mother, however, it carries an affectionate meaning.¹⁰² Scholars have, thus, sought to soften Jesus' use of the term. A careful survey of the word suggests that, Jesus usually

⁹⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 186-188.

⁹⁶ Cusin and Taylor however consider Jesus' use of 'woman' in relation to 'my hour has not yet come' as intentional, to imply a sharp reminder of her “incompetence of the domain with which she intrudes.” See, M. D. Cusin and S. Taylor, *Commentary on the Gospel of St John: With a Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1879), 5-6. Moloney, who shares in the view of Cusin and Taylor, adds that Jesus use of 'woman' was for the purpose of drawing a sharp line between him and his mother in order to stand in line with the Father before acting out his public ministry. See Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 81.

⁹⁷ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 81.

⁹⁸ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 188.

⁹⁹ Brown, *According to John*, 99.

¹⁰⁰ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 188.

¹⁰¹ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 129; Brown, *According to John*, 99; Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 188.

¹⁰² He cites an example of how Pheroras used the term for his affectionate wife when Herod ordered him to send her away. See, Beasley-Murray, *John*, 34.

referred to the proper names of those he personally knew (Lk 10:41, John 20:16), and those he did not know, he referred to them by using other names with “woman” inclusive (John 4:21, 8:10, Matt 15:28, Lk 13:12). Not once did he address women he personally knew by other names other than their proper names. Again, in all instances in the Gospel, Jesus referred to men he knew by using their proper names. As a result, referring to his mother as ‘woman’ was usual.¹⁰³ It is however important to note that Jesus does not only refer to his mother as ‘woman’ in v. 4, but also on the cross, when she was a passive character in the scene (19:26).

Jesus’ first reference to the “hour” is present in 2:4; οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου (“my hour is not yet come”). As to what hour Jesus was referring to is unclear in the passage.¹⁰⁴ Whether the ‘hour’ was referring to the time of the miracle, or the hour of the passion is not explicit in the narrative. A word analysis of the term, as used in the entire Johannine narrative, aids in the understanding of its usage in 2:4. A word search reveals that the term “hour” appears 26 times in 24 verses in the Gospel of John (1:39; 4:6, 21, 23, 52, 53; 5:25, 28, 35; 7:30; 8:20; 11:9; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16: 2, 4, 21, 25, 32; 17:1; 19:14, 27). Analysis of its usage is always in reference to time, however, in all the subsequent use of hour in relation to Jesus is almost all the time linked to his death (5:25, 28, 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1). One can therefore infer that the hour Jesus spoke of in v. 4 (ἡ ὥρα) was about his death. This assertion is supported by Brown.¹⁰⁵ Maccini further argues that “Jesus hour has a clear locus in his death but not literally confined there.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 101.

¹⁰⁴ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 130.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *According to John*, 100.

¹⁰⁶ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 104.

In spite of the response of Jesus, his mother instructed the servants: “do whatever he tells you” (v. 5). The words of Jesus’ mother are considered as an act of faith in Jesus. In the experience of the reader, she is the first to demonstrate trust in Jesus without first seeing any sign.¹⁰⁷ Her faith in Jesus is that which caused her to approach him in the first place, and by instructing the disciples to obey him, she points them towards him. By instructing the servants to obey Jesus, Mary had no idea of exactly what he was going to do.¹⁰⁸ This suggests to the reader that she acted on her faith in Jesus even when she did not know the end results.¹⁰⁹ She knew that irrespective of Jesus’ response, he was “not unmindful of the present situation, and that he would take what action was necessary.”¹¹⁰ Thus, Mary’s communication to the servants was an expression of trust in her son.¹¹¹

She is therefore portrayed as an ideal disciple who trusts in Jesus and shows others the way to do same.¹¹² In fact, it is her trust in Jesus that sets the sign in motion, which at the end of the narrative, reveals Jesus’ glory, causing the disciples to also believe in Jesus. She is therefore considered not as a “static functionary”, but instrumental to Jesus’ self-revelation.¹¹³

C. The Sign (vv. 6-10)

The scene in which Jesus produces new wine begins with the description of six stone jars (v. 6). Some scholars have argued that the number six represents imperfection, and the stone jars in later Jewish text are used for purification. Thus, Jesus’ use of six stone jars to produce new wine is symbolic to the imperfection of the Jews and how

¹⁰⁷ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 84.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *According to John*, 100.

¹⁰⁹ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 189.

¹¹⁰ Morris, *The Gospel*, 160.

¹¹¹ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 83.

¹¹² Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, 52-53.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

Jesus has come to in his fullness to give his grace sufficient for all.¹¹⁴ Others have argued, that John's Gospel offers detailed description of the stone jar, in order to impress readers with the quantity of wine produced.¹¹⁵ Another interpretation is that the stone jars, according to Jewish tradition is unable to attract uncleanness, perhaps a reason Jesus chose it to perform the sign.¹¹⁶

Jesus' involvement of the servants (his mother had instructed in v. 5) towards the production of new wine, re-echoes the significance of the mother to the narrative (vv. 7-8). The attention of the reader is, thus, drawn to the relationship between v. 5 and v. 7, an indicator that the mother of Jesus was instrumental to the performance of the sign. The term *διακονοι* (servants) does not indicate slaves, instead, individuals giving voluntary assistance; hence, they had the option to either or not obey Jesus.¹¹⁷ Jesus commands: "Fill the jars with water," (v. 5a) and in response, they filled the jars to the brim (v. 7b). There is therefore an imperative obedience to the mother by obeying Jesus.¹¹⁸

A number of interpretations have been raised concerning the quantity of wine produced by Jesus. There is the introduction of the two verbs *γεμίσατε* and *ἀντλήσατε*. Whereas *γεμίσατε* is translated as 'fill' which is usually used in relation to the jars, *ἀντλήσατε* translated 'draw' is usually used in relation to a well.¹¹⁹ Jesus first orders the servants to fill the jars to the brim, indicating fullness. Then, he orders them to draw some out to serve the *ἀρχιτρικλίνω* (master) of the ceremony. The issue of 'drawing out' is what posits the different interpretations. Brown identifies two posi-

¹¹⁴ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 84-85.

¹¹⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 192.

¹¹⁶ Landars on the other hand sees no significance to the number of stone jars used. Landars, *Gospel of John*, 130.

¹¹⁷ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 189.

¹¹⁸ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 85.

¹¹⁹ Morris, *The Gospel*, 161.

tions; all the waters in the jars are turned into wine as against only that which was drawn out was turned into wine.¹²⁰

Why ask the servants to make the jars full if they were not going to be used? By including such detail in the narrative, John draws the attention of the reader to the relationship between filling the jars and drawing out from them. The relationship, therefore, presupposes that then, all the jars filled with water had the water turned into wine. This detail informs the reader of abundance that is made available when Jesus' glory is revealed.

The process of the sign is only told parenthetically. After pouring the water into the jars, Jesus asks the servants to draw some out and send to the headwaiter (v. 8). It is only then, the reader can identify that which was drawn out as wine. When the headwaiter tasted what was brought to him, he knew it was of a different source, as a result commended the bridegroom for acting extraordinary from other bridegrooms. The scene of the headwaiter and bridegroom (v. 9-10) introduces two themes, "origin" and "bridegroom", that are of symbolic importance in the Johannine Gospel.¹²¹

D. Jesus' Identity Revealed (v. 11)

The import of the narrative as revealed in v. 11 is the first of Jesus' signs, a revelation of his glory, and the faith of the disciples. The act performed by Jesus is not just a 'miracle' but a sign that points to the glory of Jesus, causing the disciples to believe in him.¹²²

"Sign" is a significant theme in the Johannine Gospel. The author makes clear his purpose for including signs performed by Jesus in his narrative so that the reader

¹²⁰ Brown, *According to John*, 100.

¹²¹ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 86.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 88.

would believe in Jesus as the Christ and the son of God, and through believing, the reader will have life (20:30-31). As used in the narrative, the signs revealed the true identity of Jesus (2:18), as from God (3:2, 6:14, 9:16, 10:41), causing people to believe in him (2:23, 4:44, 6:30, 7:31, 12:37) and to follow him (6:2, 11:47, 12:18). This becomes a clear indicator of how the glory of Jesus was revealed, and why the disciples believed in him.

According to Beasley-Murray, the revealed “glory” of Jesus represents his creative power which was manifested in the turning of water into wine.¹²³ The Hebrew term for glory is *kabod*, which is interpreted as the external manifestation of God. The term *δοξα* (glory) is introduced in 1:14. It is used to show a relationship between God and Jesus. In the Johannine Gospel, “glory” used in reference to Jesus always points to God (9:24, 11:4, 12:41) as the source (5:41, 7:18, 8:50, 11:40, 12:43, 17:5; 22; 24), thus, revealing Jesus as from God (8:54). Therefore, the glory of Jesus manifested (2:11) was a revelation of his divine nature that will continue to be revealed in the Johannine narrative, till it is fully manifested in his death and resurrection.¹²⁴

Once more, there were many people at the wedding. The master of ceremony has tasted the results of the wondrous act of Jesus (v. 10); the servants were present and instrumental to the process of the miraculous sign (vv. 5-9). The scene text however closes with the faith of the disciples. The narrative which begun with the faith of a woman in action, prior to the sign (vv. 3-5), had its climax in the faith of the disciples after the sign (v. 11). Being witnesses to the manifestation of the glory caused them to believe in him.¹²⁵ Thus, the varied reasons that motivated the disciples to follow Jesus

¹²³ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 35. Landars comments on “glory” as the manifestation of the mighty power and works of his divine nature. Cf. Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 132.

¹²⁴ Marsh, *Saint John*, 147.

¹²⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 198.

in chapter 1, had now been changed into faith in him. From the revelation of Jesus' glory, the disciples had been born into faith in Jesus. "After being declared by John to be the Messiah, he manifested himself as such to his disciples...He now displays his glory before their eyes", causing them to believe in him.¹²⁶

2.2.4 Perlocutory Effect on the Reader

Behind the proposed reading of 2:1-11 lies a close relationship of events that led to the manifestation of Jesus' glory, causing the disciples to believe in him. At the close of the narrative, the reader comes into contact with the purpose of the narrative. He does not only tell a story, instead, he presents a sign through which Jesus' glory is revealed resulting in the new born faith of the disciples in Jesus.

The reader is, therefore, challenged to view discipleship as a call beyond following, to believing in him. Jesus had called the disciples, and they followed him with various reasons. The first two disciples followed him for the testimony they heard (1:36-37), Philip, because he had been called by Jesus (1:43), and Nathaniel followed Jesus because of the pre-knowledge Jesus had about him (1:45-50). For various reasons many follow Jesus, just like the community of the first disciples. However, only faith in him transforms one into a true disciple (2:11).

A passage with a stress on discipleship, depicts a woman bringing into the narrative an element which is not found in earlier discipleship, that is, the element of faith. Unlike the disciples, she believed in him even when she had not yet seen a sign. She saw a problem and presented it to Jesus because of her faith in him, and for the same reason she told the servants to do whatever he asked of them. It is as a result of her trust that the glory of Jesus was made manifest, as it became the catalyst for his perfor-

¹²⁶ Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), 134.

mance of the miraculous sign. Thus, “signs always require faith coupled with obedience on the part of those who want to see the sign.”¹²⁷ Therefore, Moloney comments that it took the unconditional trust of a woman and her commitment to the word of Jesus, in order for Jesus’ glory to be manifested.¹²⁸ An emerging element for the implied reader then is; “trusting acceptance of the word of Jesus by committing oneself totally to the word of Jesus (v. 5) so that others might believe (v. 11).”¹²⁹

The mother of Jesus is, therefore, presented as a model for discipleship. Who then is this Jesus whose glory is being manifested? The first answer to this question is available in the following pericope; “Could He Possibly Be the Messiah?”

2.3 Could He Possibly Be the Messiah? (4:4-42)

Scholars have provided various text boundaries for the Samaritan woman’s narrative. Some of these include vv. 1-42;¹³⁰ vv. 5-42 in which vv. 1-4 is considered an interlude as the narrator tries to explain why Jesus left Judea to Jerusalem and how he got to Samaria.¹³¹ Brown proposed vv. 4-42 and considered vv. 1-3 a transitional passage, which forms a framework for the Samaria incident which has not always been part of the Samaria narrative.¹³²

The research follows the suggestion of Brown and considers vv. 1-3 a transitional passage.¹³³

¹²⁷ Lenski, *The Interpretation*, 199.

¹²⁸ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 91-92.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to John: The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), 66-75.

¹³¹ Marsh, *Saint John*, 203-207.

¹³² Brown, *According to John*, 164-166.

¹³³ Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 66-67.

2.3.1 Structure of John 4:4-42

A number of structures have been suggested based on different criteria. An example is the thematic structure proposed by Moloney – Introduction (vv. 1-6), Living water (vv. 7-15), Worship (vv. 16-30), the will of the Father (vv. 31-38) and the faith of the Samaritans (vv. 39-42).¹³⁴ Brown emphasizes the succession of narrative and dialogue – Dialogue (vv. 4-14), Revelation (vv. 15-19), Dialogue and Revelation (vv. 20-26), Narrative (vv. 27-30), Monologue (vv. 31-38) and Conclusion (vv. 39-42).¹³⁵

The present research adopts a structure that is motivated by narrative criteria and modelled after Brown. Verses 4-6 introduce and describe the location where the narrative took place. It is also in this verse that the two main characters are introduced. Thus vv. 4-6 present the first stage of the narrative. The second division contains the dialogue Jesus had with the Samaritan woman (vv. 7-26). Jesus reveals himself to her in a progressive manner. For this reason, the second division is considered as a Christological Dialogue. Verses 27-38 present a new dialogical scene involving different characters, with his disciples as the audience. In this unit, the Samaritan woman leaves the scene. In vv. 39-42, the narrative is brought to an end as it records the import of the conversation Jesus had with the woman.

The proposed structure has four sections:

1. Setting of the Account (vv. 4-6)
2. Christological Dialogue (vv. 7-26)
3. Interlude (vv. 27-38)
4. Conclusion (vv. 39-42)

¹³⁴ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 174-175.

¹³⁵ Brown, *According to John*, 166-168.

2.3.2 Narrative Situation

A number of interpretations exist about Jesus' movement from Judea to Galilee. Howard identifies the jealousy of the Pharisees for the growing impact of Jesus' new movement above John the Baptist's, as the main cause for his departure.¹³⁶ His view is shared by Marsh.¹³⁷ Brown objects by arguing that the Pharisees were also in Galilee and their opposition to Jesus did not end once he moved to Galilee.¹³⁸

Jesus' presence in Samaria became one of the results from his movement to Galilee. At Samaria in a village known as Sychar (v. 5)¹³⁹, he encountered a Samaritan woman (v. 7), revealed his identity to her and she became a witness to the Samaritan people. Her testimony led others to believe in Jesus. The first concept he discussed with her was water (vv. 7-15), followed by the concept of worship, after she declared him to be a Prophet (vv. 16-26). In both conversations she perceived Jesus to be more than just a man standing in conversation with her. Her ability to discern led Jesus into revealing his identity to her (v. 26).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Wilbert F. Howard, "The Gospel According to St. John: Introduction and Exegesis" in *The Interpreter's Bible: Luke John*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 8:519.

¹³⁷ "The reason for the departure from Judea is given in the report that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John...and if John the Baptist was imprisoned for baptizing and Jesus was doing more than he did, then Jesus perhaps was considered as more hostile. Thus, Jesus knowledge of the Pharisees caused him to leave." See, Marsh, *Saint John*, 203.

¹³⁸ Perhaps he considers Jesus departure as an enforcement initiated by the Pharisees themselves, as they had already forced out John the Baptist to Aenon. See, Brown, *According to John*, 164-165.

¹³⁹ Brown reveals that the name Sychar is questionable, as many manuscripts reads the original word as Συχάρ, even though Morris tries to justify the reading of Sychar as correct; identifying it to be the village Askar near Shechem where there is reference in Gen 33:19 that Jacob bought a piece of land in the vicinity. See, Morris, *The Gospel*, 227. In the argument of Brown, Jerome identified Sychar with Shechem instead, commenting that there could have been a mistake of writing Sychem which means Shechem as Sychar. He states that to refer to Sychar as Askar, raises questions since the distance between Jacob's well and the town is 'inexplicable' as a result, the reading of Shechem is best fit to make sense of the woman's travel to Jacob's well. "The identification with modern Askar about one mile north-east of Jacob's well is probably wrong on several counts: The site is a medieval settlement; the dubious similarity of the name is useless since the Arabic name Askar does not reflect an ancient designation of the site but simply, that the place has served as a military camp site; Askar has a good well of its own, a fact which makes the woman's long journey to Jacob's well inexplicable. On the other hand, if the real reading is Shechem, everything fits, for Jacob's well is only 250 ft. from Shechem. Probably Shechem was a very small settlement at the time." See, Brown, *According to John*, 169.

¹⁴⁰ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 132.

Jesus' presence in Samaria is considered a divine one because of the verb $\delta\epsilon\iota$ (v. 4) used in association with Samaria. This is because, the verb is always connected with the divine will.¹⁴¹ For this reason, Jesus' presence in Samaria was not a result of geographical necessity since he could have easily gone through the 'Bathsan gap' instead of Samaria.¹⁴²

Moloney summarizes the narrative as follows:

As the disciples go into the town to buy food (v. 8), Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman. As the disciples come back, she returns to town (v. 28), and her fellow townsfolk begin to come to Jesus (v. 30). While they are on their way, Jesus addresses his disciples (vv. 31-38). The Samaritans arrive and ask him to stay with them (v. 40) and eventually come to faith in him.¹⁴³

The Samaritan narrative, therefore, reveals Jesus' presence in Samaria as divinely ordained by God for the purposes of revealing the identity of Jesus to the Samaritans. A woman avails herself to the divine revelation of Jesus and becomes the gate through which the Samaritans encountered Jesus.¹⁴⁴

2.3.3 Textual Analysis

A. Setting of the Account (vv. 4-6)

Samaria is identified by Marsh as having a special category in the theology of missions as recorded by Luke in Acts 1:8; "...you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria..."¹⁴⁵ For this reason, before Jesus charged his disciples to specific cities, he himself had already visited those places including Jerusalem (2:13-3:21), Judea (3:22-4:2) and now Samaria (4:4-42). That is to say, for the will of God to be established in those cities, Jesus himself had to be there.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Brown, *According to John*, 169.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁴³ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 133.

¹⁴⁴ Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 66.

¹⁴⁵ Marsh, *St John*, 203-204.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

While at Samaria, he settled at Sychar and rested by the well of Jacob (v. 6). Possibly, the well was located at the outskirts of the town. This assumption results from v. 8 in which the disciples are said to have gone to town to get food. It was at the well that he encountered the Samaritan woman. Brown places the site of Jacob's well at the foot of Mount Gerizim.¹⁴⁷

The time this event took place is recorded in the narrative, is the sixth hour which is noon.¹⁴⁸ This may explain why Jesus was tired (v. 6), why he later requested water (v. 7), and why the disciples had gone to the town to search for food (v. 8).

The background of events re-echoes the divine will of God imbedded in Jesus' journey through Samaria. "At noon by the well of Jacob in Sychar of Samaria, the disciples of Jesus had gone to town in search for food, leaving Jesus behind." Thus, the atmosphere was right for Jesus to enter into dialogue with anyone who was coming there to fetch water. His meeting with the Samaritan woman was, therefore, not a coincidence.

B. Christological Dialogue (vv. 7-26)

At the same time when Jesus was at the well resting, as a result of tiredness from the journey (v. 6), a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well. She was unconcerned about the stranger there until Jesus started a conversation with her (λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς). The first statement he made astonished the woman. Her surprise was not only because a man was speaking to a woman in a public place, but also because a Jew was making his request to a Samaritan, for Jews had nothing to do with Samari-

¹⁴⁷ Brown, *According to John*, 169.

¹⁴⁸ "The sixth hour is noon on our reckoning." See Morris, *The Gospel*, 228. Morris identifies the woman coming to the well as a common practice with reference to Exod. 2:15ff. See, Morris, *The Gospel*, 228. Brown considers the woman choice of time as unusual since, such a chore was usually done in the morning or evening. See, Brown, *According to John*, 169. Howard on the other hand suggests that the woman might have come to fetch the water at that time for men working on the field. See Howard, *According to St. John*, 521.

tans (v. 9).¹⁴⁹ She was able to recognize who the stranger was, even when he had not made known his descent to her. So, her conversation with Jesus begun with her ability to identify who Jesus was. Howbeit the kind of ethnic identity she saw in Jesus could not be compared to what he was going to reveal to her.

Jesus response to her indicates that he was more than what she knew him to be. Not only had she missed his real identity, but also she was unaware of what he possessed (v. 10). The conversation he had with her, thereafter, revolves around three themes: water (vv. 10-15), marriage (vv. 16-19) and worship (vv. 20-26). At the end of each thematic conversation, she received a partial revelation of who he was, through discernment, until the end of their last conversation when Jesus revealed his identity to her.

By introducing ὕδωρ ζῶν (living water), Jesus changed the direction of the dialogue. He identified living water as a gift of God which is freely offered to all who seek it.¹⁵⁰ But while Jesus was speaking about eternal life (the water of life), the woman was thinking of flowing water. This is evident in her speech, when she asked Jesus of the bucket he was going to use to collect the water.¹⁵¹ It was normal for her to think of flowing water as living water. Flowing water was identified with rivers and streams instead of cisterns or ponds. Such water was usually used for ritual purposes as it was considered purer. So, the misunderstanding on the part of the woman resulted from her experience. Jesus however, was expressing a deeper meaning. He was speaking of

¹⁴⁹ “The Samaritans are the descendant of two groups: (a) the remnants of the native Israelites who were not deported at the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722B.C. (b) foreign colonists brought in from Babylonia and Media by the Assyrian conquerors of Samaria (II Kings 17:24ff). There is a theological opposition between the northerners and the Jews of the South because of the Samaritans’ refusal to worship at Jerusalem. This was aggravated by the fact that after the Babylonian exile, the Samaritans had put obstacles in the way of the Jewish restoration of Jerusalem, and that in the 2nd century B.C. the Samaritans had helped the Syrian monarchs in their wars against the Jews. In 128 B.C. the Jewish high priest burned the Samaritan temple on Gerizim.” See, Brown, *According to John*, 170.

¹⁵⁰ Morris, *The Gospel*, 230.

¹⁵¹ Brown, *According to John*, 170.

a new life.¹⁵² Living water to Jesus thus referred to the ‘true’, ‘eternal’, ‘spiritual’ and the ‘spontaneous energy of unfailing interior grace’.¹⁵³

Jesus’ use of καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων σοι (and is the One saying to you; v. 10), informed the reader that he was pointing to himself as the gift of God, in whom living water is found. By so doing he reacts to the woman’s response in v. 9 that you only saw me as a Jew, but I am God’s gift in whom there is eternal life. The woman at this point had not yet caught the revelation Jesus was giving to her that was why she considered the water he was referring to as flowing water.

Jesus therefore, dwells on her existing knowledge to bring her to a new revelation. In v. 12 she made reference to Jacob and his household as all who drank from the well. Using this as the baseline, in v. 13 Jesus drew her mind to the limitation of the well. The well, he explained to her, was unable to satisfy the eternal physical thirst of man. Trying to make that clear, he proposed himself to her as the well, in whom living water with eternal properties is found (v. 14). The difference between the water that satisfy temporary thirst and the water which gives eternal life had nothing to do with location and length of use. The difference between both waters is the source from which each flows. At this point, the woman begun to share in the revelation Jesus had given her. This led her into desiring the water Jesus was speaking about, but the reason for her desire implies that she had still not gotten the full picture of the kind of life Jesus was offering to her (v. 15). The woman had only received a partial revelation of who Jesus was.

The introduction of ‘husband’ by Jesus into the conversation muddled the narrative; Jesus’ inquiry of her husband (vv. 16-19). When one rejects the revelation of Jesus’

¹⁵² Morris, *The Gospel*, 230.

¹⁵³ Howard, *According to St. John*, 523.

identity as the purpose of the narrative, it is difficult to identify the link between ‘living water’ and ‘go and call your husband’. For example, Morris does not see an apparent connection between the conversation about her husband and that of living waters. To him, it was a way of bringing the woman’s sin to the open.¹⁵⁴ Reading with the lens of ‘revealing Jesus’ identity’ one quickly recognizes that neither her husband nor marital status was the objective of Jesus, but rather, a means of revealing who he was to her.¹⁵⁵ The justification of such basis is made explicit in v. 19 when after the woman identifies Jesus as a Prophet, the conversation takes on a different trend.

Her ability to identify Jesus as a Prophet was based on his prior knowledge into her marital status.¹⁵⁶ Jesus ability to see and know all things made it possible for her to make a ‘Christological confession’: “Sir, I can see you are a Prophet” (v. 19).¹⁵⁷ In the Jewish community, a Prophet is somebody sent by God and represents God. He is one who is in unique relationship with the God of Israel (John 9:16-17). Therefore, by perceiving Jesus as a Prophet, the Samaritan woman had declared a Christological truth. However, was this how Jesus wanted the woman to identify him?

Her recognition of Jesus as a Prophet led her into asking him about his point of view on a profound theological problem existing between the Jews and the Samaritans concerning the debate on the true place of worship; whether it was on their mountains or in Jerusalem (v. 20).¹⁵⁸ Jesus revealed to her that true worship was not dependent on location. He spoke of a time to come, which was now, when neither their mountain

¹⁵⁴ Morris, *The Gospel*, 234.

¹⁵⁵ “Jesus introduces a new topic in v. 16 in order to provide a fresh angle on his identity...vv. 16-19 has been consistently misinterpreted, resulting in the popular portrait of this woman as a sinner.” See, Gail R. O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 567.

¹⁵⁶ Based on Jesus’ statements about her life which she had not disclosed to him, the woman realized that Jesus was no ordinary being but a Prophet. See, Morris, *The Gospel*, 235.

¹⁵⁷ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 567.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

nor Jerusalem will be essential to worship.¹⁵⁹ He presents a form of worship that is neither limited to the Jews nor the Samaritan but to all who will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. This, he refers to as true worship.¹⁶⁰

By calling YHWH ‘Father’ (vv. 23-24), Jesus reclaims a different and unique relationship with God rather than just one Prophet. At this point, the woman begins to echo her need for the coming Messiah who possesses all the full and authoritative teachings (v. 25).¹⁶¹ She is, however, unaware that he is who she is expecting and that all the revelation he was enlightening her with was to bring her to the point of identifying and believing in him as the Messiah. Her recognition of the need for the coming Messiah leads Jesus into revealing himself as ἐγώ εἰμι. Jesus identifies himself as the One, the Messiah she is expecting.

C. Interlude (vv. 27-38)

It is after Jesus reveals himself to the Samaritan woman that the disciples return to the scene. Moloney has noted that the inclusion of vv. 27-38 are not a new literary unit, instead a summation of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. He identifies John’s use of καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ v. 27 (and at that moment) as the linking phrase which makes it possible for the reader to read vv. 27-38 as part of the literary unit of the Samaritan woman’s narrative, which the disciples are not initiating but joining an ongoing one.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Morris, *The Gospel*, 238.

¹⁶⁰ Jesus in v. 22 affirms the role of the Jews in salvation history. His clarification of the superiority of the Jews over the Samaritan is to caution her, in order for her not to reject the Jews; as in rejecting the Jews she risks rejecting God’s offer of salvation. True worship in the new age is no longer defined by location instead is defined in spirit and in truth, an implication that God is spirit hence not bound to one location. Jesus’ presence in the world makes the ‘coming hour’ now ‘here’. See, O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 567-568.

¹⁶¹ The Samaritans were looking forward to a Messiah who was a Taheb (A prophet like unto Moses) and not an anointed king of the Davidic house. See Brown, *According to John*, 172.

¹⁶² Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 156.

The narrator's use of ἐθαύμαζον (wonder), in the imperfect tense, indicates more than just a 'momentary surprise' on the part of the disciples.¹⁶³ Their surprise was not because Jesus was talking to a Samaritan but to a woman (v. 27), for no rabbi was to be seen in dialogue with a woman. According to one of the 'Rabbinic statements':

...a man shall not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even with his sister or his daughter... A man shall not talk with a woman on the street, not even his own wife, and especially not with another woman on account of what men may say.¹⁶⁴

They were, however, unable to express their shock to Jesus. The narrator rather enters the story in v. 27 to tell readers what the disciples were unable to express: "what do you want from her?" "why are you talking to her?" The amazement of the disciples reflects that they shared the same problem of the Samaritan woman; "who at all is Jesus?" They were not present when Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah to the Samaritan woman (v. 26).¹⁶⁵

The woman left the jar behind and went back into the town (v. 28). Interpretations have been given to her reason for leaving the jar behind. One of such is that the jar was useless for the kind of living water Jesus was going to give her.¹⁶⁶ Another meaning, presented by O'day, is that the woman's concern for the living water Jesus promised (v. 15), had been superseded by Jesus' new revelation of being the Messiah.¹⁶⁷

The narrative grants to the reader an explicit reason for the woman leaving the jar behind. She had come to the well to get water. Verses 28-29 inform the reader that the woman left the jar behind because her direction had shifted. She was not going to where she had to send the water, instead she was going to the town to proclaim to the

¹⁶³ Brown, *According to John*, 173.

¹⁶⁴ Morris, *The Gospel*, 242.

¹⁶⁵ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 156-157.

¹⁶⁶ Brown, *According to John*, 173.

¹⁶⁷ O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 569.

people her encounter with Jesus. She had a new agenda and the jar was not going to interrupt it. The purpose for which she came to the well had been overshadowed by her conversation with Jesus.

In the town, she threw an invitation to the Samaritans; “Come and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ (v. 29)?”¹⁶⁸ Three important elements arise from her invitation; ‘Come’, ‘See’, ‘Judge’. These elements provide the reader with a rich concept of witnessing. She called the people to come and experience (testify) Jesus for themselves only after which they could decide whether or not he was the Christ. In her invitation, she made known to them of a man who she believed was remarkable, and who provoked some questions in her as to whether he might be the Christ.¹⁶⁹

O’day also identifies a threefold-witness from her proclamation (v. 29). First, she makes an invitation; ‘come and see’. Secondly she offers her own experience as the basis for her witness; ‘he told me everything I ever did’. Thirdly she introduces the question; ‘Could he be the Christ?’¹⁷⁰ Brown asserts that by presenting Jesus’ identity to them in a form of a question, she exposed her faith to be incomplete even though her expression suggests a ‘shade of hope’. This argument is based on the narrator’s usage of μήτι which often more expresses negativity.¹⁷¹ However, her style of witnessing; ‘Come, see, and judge’ as stated earlier, was what appealed to the people causing them to journey to Jesus (v. 30).

Jesus’ conversation with the disciples (vv. 31-38) follows a similar pattern of his dialogue with the woman in vv. 10-15. The discussion revolved around their misunder-

¹⁶⁸ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 157.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁷⁰ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 569.

¹⁷¹ Brown, *According to John*, 173.

standing of the food Jesus was referring to (vv. 31-33), just like the Samaritan woman misunderstood what Jesus meant by living water.¹⁷² The short dialogue between Jesus and his disciples (vv. 31-33) was followed by a monologue (vv. 34-38).¹⁷³

The disciples had urged Jesus to eat (v. 31) but his response to them (v. 32) caused them into asking one another the wrong question, ‘Has anyone brought him food?’ Jesus was, however, referring to his vocation as his food (v. 34). The Johannine concept of food in reference to Jesus is his divine commission and the ‘enactment’ of his relationship with God.¹⁷⁴

In vv. 35-38, Jesus shifts the discourse from his vocation to the role of the disciples. He draws from a proverbial statement (v. 35) and points their attention to the Samaritans who were coming to him (v. 30), and all who will later come to Jesus as the harvest they are to look forward to. Thus, he refers them to them the “importance of the events of the life of Jesus and the missionary role of the disciples as a consequence of these events.”¹⁷⁵

D. Conclusion (vv. 39-42)

The narrator brings the Samaria narrative to a close by focusing on the imports resulting from Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman.¹⁷⁶ The Samaritans initially believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony: ‘He told me everything I ever

¹⁷² O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 569.

¹⁷³ “An initial exchange of words leads to a monologue. There is no exchange of direct speech recorded after v. 33, as the disciples are not participating in a conversation, instead listening to a discourse, brief though it might be. See, Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 158-159.

¹⁷⁴ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 569.

¹⁷⁵ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 168.

¹⁷⁶ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 570.

did' (v. 39).¹⁷⁷ Their initial faith in Jesus became the catalyst that drove them into desiring Jesus to stay with them (v. 40).

Jesus' presence with them for two days (vv. 41-42) impacted upon their faith. They were persistent in their request for Jesus to stay with them. The use of ἠρώτων (ask) indicates a continuous effort in their petition. Through his words many more believed in him. Even those who early on believed in him because of the woman's word, no longer dwelt on her word but rather on the words of Jesus himself, as the basis for their faith in him (v. 42).

One can testify to a link between the narrator's use of the verb μένω (stay) in v. 40 with that in 1:38-39 Jesus meeting with his first disciples. In the Johannine narrative, 'to stay with Jesus' means to 'enter into a relationship with him'. It is, therefore, not a surprise that Jesus' presence with the Samaritans for two days led many into the new faith.¹⁷⁸

The journey of the Samaritans' faith which begun with the woman (v. 39), became whole in the relationship with Jesus (vv. 41-42). The wholeness of their faith led them into giving a personal answer to the question the Samaritan woman asked in her invitation; "Could this possibly be the Christ" (v. 29)? The answer they gave to the question was "Now we have heard ourselves and we know that this man is really the Saviour of the world" (v. 42).

2.3.4 Perlocutory Effect on the Reader

The Samaritan narrative is a story of the revelation of Jesus' identity as the Messiah who is the Christ. The Samaritan woman is placed at the beginning of the narrative,

¹⁷⁷ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 169-170.

¹⁷⁸ O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 570.

and like John the Baptist, she becomes the witness who brings the Samaritans to faith in Jesus.¹⁷⁹

The reader journeys through an experiential discovery of who Jesus is. Through the experiences of the woman and the Samaritans, the reader encounters the identity of Jesus in stages which is progressive in nature, ultimately revealing his full nature. First as a Jew (v. 9), then as God's gift who is the source of living water (v. 15), then as a Prophet (v. 19), the Messiah (vv. 25-26) and finally as the Saviour of the world (v. 26).

By the time the reader reaches v. 42, s/he also faces the question of Jesus' identity. One, like the Samaritan woman and the Samaritans must 'come' to Jesus (reading the narrative) and 'see' him (experience him through the reading of the narrative). It is only then that one can find answer (judge) to the question of who Jesus is. Like the Samaritans, the reader is invited to see Jesus as the ἐγώ εἰμι (I am);¹⁸⁰ the Messiah (vv. 25-26). This is the totality of the identity of Jesus revealed in John 4:4-42.

At Samaria, a woman first believed in the word. Irrespective of her gender and the cultural limitations that came with being a female, she challenged the status quo, entered into the public domain and became the first witness to her people. Her proclamation brought many to the saving knowledge of Jesus. Like the woman, the reader is challenged to draw people into faith in Jesus.

2.4 I Believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God (11:17-27)

The 'theological heart' of the entire Lazarus narrative is found in vv. 17-27. In these verses Jesus reveals himself as the resurrection and the life which leads Martha into

¹⁷⁹ "Her witness diminishes in importance when the Samaritans have their own experience of Jesus". Ibid, 570.

¹⁸⁰ ἐγώ εἰμι in the LXX is the rendering of the holy name of God.

confessing him as the Christ, the Son of God; the highest form of revelation which in the Synoptic Gospels, is declared by Peter.¹⁸¹ With respect to the narrative criteria, which focus on Jesus' self-revelation and Martha's confession, the research considers vv. 17-27 as a literary unit.

2.4.1 Structure of John 11:17-27

Different structures have been suggested. Godet outlines the text as follows: Introduction (vv. 17-19), Dialogue (vv. 20-24), Monologue (vv. 25-26), and Christological confession (v. 27).¹⁸² O'day proposed a similar structure that includes Setting of the account (vv. 17-19), Dialogue (20-26), Christological confession (v. 27).¹⁸³

The research settles a three-part structure. The first part introduces the setting and purpose of the account (vv. 17-19), followed by a Christological dialogue in which Jesus reveals himself as the resurrection and the life (vv. 20-26), upon which Martha declares her faith in Jesus (v. 27).

1. Introduction (vv. 17-19)
2. Christological Dialogue (vv. 20-26)
3. Jesus Identity Revealed (v. 27)

2.4.2 Narrative Situation

The literary unit of John 11:17-27 falls within a larger narrative; the story of Lazarus. At the time of Lazarus' death, Martha was at Bethany (vv. 1, 18) and Jesus was near the Jordan River (v. 10). Martha had already sent for Jesus (v. 3) but he stayed two days more, before setting off for Bethany (v. 6). Martha, as a result, blamed the ab-

¹⁸¹ O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 687. Vv. 17-27 is considered a literary unit for theological reasons Howard, *According to St. John*, 644-655.

¹⁸² Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 177.

¹⁸³ O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 687.

sence of Jesus as the reason for her brother's death: "if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 21).

At the time Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus, Lazarus was still alive (v. 3), but Jesus already knew his death (v. 4) and his raising up (v. 11). The θάνατον (death) of Lazarus was for a purpose, which was to bring glory to the Son of God (v. 4).

The true meaning of death is discussed in the narrative. The first suggestion is that illness leads to death (vv. 2, 21), but this position is rejected by Jesus. Illness does not always lead to death (v. 4). The second suggestion by the disciples is that human intention can lead to death (v. 8), but again Jesus rejects this position (v. 9). The concept of death is, therefore, beyond the ordinary understanding of humans.

And whatever it means, nature and human intention cannot be regarded as its ultimate cause because what they bring about, that is, physical death, in some sense is not death; and they cannot bring about death at all except according to God's will and design.¹⁸⁴

What humans may refer to as death may only be an illusion, a mere falling asleep, and a temporal event (vv. 11-15).¹⁸⁵

In addition, the narrator seeks to throw light on how death in the community of believers must be faced and understood. Martha and Mary were faced with the death of a loved one. Before he died, their hope was in Jesus to heal him, but now that he died, they were faced with the challenge of how to deal with death. When the sisters sent word to Jesus, they spoke of Lazarus as 'the one who you love' an indication that because Jesus loved him, there was the need for him to rush to the scene (v. 3). Jesus did the opposite of what they expected by staying two more days (v. 5-6). This attitude of Jesus, explains that 'absence' just like 'presence' is also an expression of love, be-

¹⁸⁴ Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 176.

¹⁸⁵ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 176.

cause even in his absence he knew what was going on.¹⁸⁶ The narrative thus explains the fate of the believers who die before the second coming of Christ¹⁸⁷

2.4.3 Textual Analysis

A. Introduction (vv. 17-19)

The text is introduced with the arrival of Jesus at Bethany (v. 17). The verse omits the information of Lazarus' death to Jesus, even though he had made his appearance at the scene. Instead it reports the duration of Lazarus' death; he had been dead for four (4) days. By placing emphasis on how long the man was dead, the narrator reminds the reader of the Jewish belief which states that the four days period of death marks the finality of death, beyond which there is no hope.¹⁸⁸

The narrator places emphasis on the Jews who will later witness (v. 45) the raising of Lazarus at the beginning of the text (v. 17). He refers to the short distance between Jerusalem and Bethany (less than two miles) as the reason for their numerous presences at the scene. O'Day argues that another reason for the geographical inclusion in the text was to remind readers of how close Jesus was to Jerusalem, the place where his life was at risk.¹⁸⁹ Pertaining to the stress on number of Jews, Brown suggests that the narrator included it to provide information about the number of people who will be witnessing the raising of Lazarus.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 178.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 176.

¹⁸⁸ "According to popular Jewish belief at the time of Jesus, the soul hovered around the body in the grave for three days after death, hoping to re-enter the body. But after the third day, when the soul sees that the colour of its face has changed, the soul leaves the body for good. See, O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 687.

¹⁸⁹ O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 687.

¹⁹⁰ Brown, *According to John*, 424.

Burial had already taken place on the day Lazarus had died (v. 17), yet people had come to comfort the bereaved family on the fourth day after death and burial had taken place.¹⁹¹

B. Christological Dialogue (vv. 20-26)

The narrator introduces Martha into the scene as rising to meet Jesus only when she hears of his presence in Bethany. Mary on the other hand stays in a motionless position (v. 20). The contrastive particle $\delta\epsilon$ (but) describing the state of Mary's position, suggests that she was equally aware of the presence of Jesus. Two sisters who were loved by Jesus (v. 5) and, had been awaiting his presence (v. 3) finally heard of his arrival. However, the two sisters expressed different response towards his arrival. It presupposes that Mary had lost interest in the arrival of Jesus because the purpose for which she needed him seemed futile at the time he came. This was an indication that she had given up hope, but only became interested when Jesus asked of her that she presented herself to him (v. 28)

Martha, on the other hand, who was also expecting Jesus, rose up and went to him when she heard of his presence. Her attitude suggests to the reader that she still had hope in him, unlike her sister Mary. No wonder her first expression upon meeting Jesus was to call him 'Lord' (v. 21); an indication of her recognition of his relationship with God.

The words that followed revealed the discomfort which was present in her heart; 'if you were here my brother would not have died. She recognized his lordship and yet,

¹⁹¹ Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 159-160. This is possible because, in an environment where embalming was not allowed, burial usually took place on the same day the person died before mourning could continue. "According to the custom of Jesus' time, the sexes walked separately in the funeral procession, and after burial the women returned alone from the grave to begin the mourning which lasted for thirty days." See Brown, *According to John*, 424.

only gave a lesser meaning to it when she limited his authority to his physical presence; “if you were here” (v. 21). It is another way of saying: You are Lord but your authority can only be extended where you are physically present that is why your delay (absence) could not save my brother. Other interpretations of Martha’s words in v. 21 indicate both reproach and assurance in Jesus.¹⁹² Her words expressed her regret in Jesus of his absence at the time Lazarus was ill.¹⁹³ Another view is that her statement was a complaint.¹⁹⁴

But as stated earlier, Martha’s words in v. 21 were rather influenced by her revelation of who Jesus was. The urgency with which she went to meet Jesus, and referring to him as Lord, shows an expression of her faith in Jesus. However, she was only partially aware of his identity, that reveals him to be Lord even in his absence, and for this reason she uttered the words “if you were here my brother would not have died.” Therefore, because her faith in Jesus was undiminished, she expressed it through her words – “even now I know that whatever you ask God, He will give to you” (v. 22) – an indicator that she was aware of the relationship Jesus had with God.¹⁹⁵

Her partial revelation about Jesus was challenged by him when he informed her that her brother was going to rise again (v. 23). O’Day comments that the narrator’s use of ἀναστήσεται (rise) in the future gives no intended timeframe and could therefore, be read as the future resurrection of the dead.¹⁹⁶ This presupposes why Martha may have also thought of Jesus’ words as referring to the last days (v. 24). The use of ‘...will rise again’ was a common phrase used for consolation in the Palestinian dialect,¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Howard, *According to St. John*, 643.

¹⁹³ Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 178.

¹⁹⁴ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 688.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 688.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 688.

¹⁹⁷ Howard, *According to St. John*, 643.

and the concept of resurrection among the Jews often related to their belief in the ‘last day’ (see; Isa 2:2, Mic 4:1).¹⁹⁸

Jesus did not repudiate the Jewish doctrine of resurrection but rather declared himself as the resurrection and the life they were expecting (v. 25).¹⁹⁹ By so doing, he interpreted the eschatological event of the ‘resurrection in the last day’ as a realized eschatology. As in the Samaritan narrative (4:26), Jesus again declared himself as ἐγώ εἰμι (I am). Godet sees Jesus’ use of ‘I am’ in this context as a way of informing them that their future expectation was a reality present amongst them. He was the replacement for their abstract notion of resurrection, that he is the victory over death,²⁰⁰ and “the present realization of what she expects in the last day.”²⁰¹ Thus, Jesus does not abolish the final eschatology but gives it a new dimension of depth, experienced with Christ in this life, and of eternal life.²⁰²

Upon such revelation of being the ‘resurrection and the life’ Jesus invites all who will believe in him to share in the life, such that even when the person dies, will live again and when alive, will never die (vv. 25-26). Jesus thus, “affirms his sovereignty over the present and future lives of believers.”²⁰³ At this point, Jesus invites Martha to share in the same faith: “Do you believe?” (v. 26)

¹⁹⁸ Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 161. O’Day on the other hand traces the general resurrection of the dead to Dan. 12:2. See, O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 688.

¹⁹⁹ Howard, *According to St. John*, 643-644.

²⁰⁰ Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 180-181. “In the “I am” statement in v. 25a, Jesus identifies himself as the fulfillment of eschatological expectations. The promise of the resurrection and life is not in some distant event but... available in the man Jesus.” See, O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 688.

²⁰¹ Brown, *According to John*, 434.

²⁰² Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 179.

²⁰³ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 688.

C. Jesus Identity Revealed (v. 27)

“Martha’s confession is addressed directly to Jesus in response to his self-revelation (ἐγὼ εἰμι) to her: Do you believe this?”²⁰⁴ Her response is considered a confession, because she begins her sentence with ‘I believe’; an introductory phrase which qualifies one’s statement as a ‘formal confession of faith’; a communication technique used in John’s Gospel.²⁰⁵ ...ναὶ κύριε, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος (I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who has come into the world); v. 27.

In her confession, she identified Jesus with a series of frequent titles; Christ and Son of God.²⁰⁶ Howard refers to these titles as messianic titles.²⁰⁷ To accord him with messianic titles was to imply that she perceived him as the expected Messiah; the carrier of the Jewish eschatological hope.²⁰⁸ At last, her long-held conviction was expressed in her confession.

Martha’s response is the most fully developed revelation of Jesus’ identity in the Fourth Gospel.²⁰⁹ She professes a truth about Jesus which is given high recognition in the Synoptic Gospels. In the other three Gospels, her confession is pronounced by Peter; the first of the twelve disciples (Matt 16:16, Mk 8:29, Lk 9:20) the rock, and the confession is described as a revelation which comes not from flesh but from God Himself (Matt 16:17).

Martha’s belief in Jesus’ word becomes her entrance into eternal life (v. 26). Schneider asserts that the scene ends not because Martha’s faith is inadequate, but because

²⁰⁴ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 180.

²⁰⁵ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 689.

²⁰⁶ Brown, *According to John*, 434.

²⁰⁷ Howard, *According to St. John*, 644-645.

²⁰⁸ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 689.

²⁰⁹ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 180.

by her response she initiates herself into the new life described by Jesus; which is the “horizon of all further experience.”²¹⁰

2.4.4 Perlocutory Effect on the Reader

As the reader traverses the narrative, s/he comes into contact with a believing community who are mourning because of the death of a loved one. It is within the state of mourning that Jesus presents to them eternal life. Martha mourns because Lazarus is dead, and Jesus invites her to share in eternal life. Thus, the reader is invited to share in this belief, which enables him/her to see that beyond death is eternal life, a life that can be experienced both while alive and when dead. Nevertheless, it is only when the reader believes in Jesus as the giver of eternal life that s/he enters into this reality.

The reader in the narrative encounters a woman, who like others is mourning a loved one, however she does not give up on hope when she encounters Jesus. Her revelation about Jesus was not whole at the beginning of the narrative, yet her faith in him did not diminish (v. 22). The reader is challenged to share in the faith of Martha that even in the midst of the unexpected one will not give up hope in Jesus.

Again, the reader is challenged not only to consider the presence of Jesus as the expression of his love. For even in his absence, when it seems as though he is not responding to our prayers, his love for us never ceases. Therefore, we are not to waver nor fret, but to rejoice knowing that the silence of Christ does not mean the absence of his love for us, and that he will present himself at the right time to deliver us and give glory to God.

Following the narrative from John 1:1 in which the identity of Jesus is being unveiled in a progressive manner, at the point of Martha’s confession, Jesus who was recog-

²¹⁰ Schneiders, *Written that You may Believe*, 180.

nized as the ‘Word’ in the first chapter is identified by the reader as the Christ, the Son of God; the highest revelation of Jesus’ identity. The reader’s knowledge about Jesus’ identity is incomplete if s/he refuses to share in the faith of Martha.

2.5 I Have Seen the Lord (20:11-18)

The pericope of John 20:11-18 is generally agreed as a complete literary unit.²¹¹ One basis for the argument is the difference in characters. Mary Magdalene and two disciples are the featured characters in vv. 1-10, whereas Mary Magdalene and Jesus are the main characters for vv. 11-18.²¹² Brown, however, includes vv. 1-10 to the pericope under study as he argues that the event in both narratives took place at the same location, that is, at the tomb. Hence, they cannot be isolated from each other.²¹³ Against this background, with respect to the narrative criterion of characterization the study considers vv. 11-18 an independent literary unit.

2.5.1 Structure of John 20:11-18

Godet structures John 20: 11-18 into three parts as the anxiety of Mary (vv. 11-13), Dialogue (vv. 14-16) and the resurrection message (vv. 17-18).²¹⁴ Howard, on the other hand, structures it into two as the Dialogue (vv. 11-16) and Message (vv. 17-18).²¹⁵ Moloney also follows a two-part structure but with a slight difference – No Faith (vv. 11-13), and Conditioned Faith (vv. 14-18).²¹⁶

²¹¹ Moloney considers John 20:11-18 as a complete literary unit. See, Francis J. Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998)156. His position is not disputed by Godet. See, Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 416.

²¹² Howard, *According to St. John*, 789-791.

²¹³ Brown, *According to John*, 979.

²¹⁴ Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 416. O’Day employs the same structure. See, O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 841-842.

²¹⁵ Howard, *According to St. John*, 792-794.

²¹⁶ Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor*, 156.

The proposed structure for the pericope, by the various scholars, is influenced by the actions of Mary Magdalene who she searches for Jesus (vv. 11-13), Jesus' appearance to her (vv. 14-17), and finally, her proclamation encounter (v. 18).

1. Introduction (vv. 11-13)
2. Christological Dialogue (vv. 14-17)
3. Jesus Identity Revealed (v. 18)

2.5.2 Narrative Situation

John 20:11-18 records the second episode of the resurrection narrative. The first is found in 20:1-10. Having gone to the tomb of Jesus on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene found out that the stone sealing Jesus' tomb had been rolled away (v. 1). Noticing the absence of the stone raises one critical question; "where is the Lord?" The first point of contact she could think of, was the community of the disciples. She quickly runs to Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loves, to inform them that Jesus was missing (v. 2).

Curious of where Jesus was, the two disciples rushed to the tomb to ascertain for themselves the truth about whether the stone has been rolled away. A great amount of detail is given to the reactions of the two disciples (vv. 3-10). In vv. 3 and 10 the disciples went to the tomb together and returned home together. At the beginning they were both seen as running together physically (v. 4), then in v. 4b they separated (v. 4b). They became witnesses to the empty tomb. Verses 5-8 report that both disciples entered the tomb and seen the cloth and linen wrapped on Jesus for burial, yet in v. 8 it is recorded that only the other disciple believed. The narrator does not make it explicit in the narrative what he believed. 'Believe' in the Fourth Gospel, usually sug-

gests “an active spiritual faith of personal adherence to Jesus,”²¹⁷ so for the ‘other disciple’ to believe simply means he adheres to Jesus, has faith in him and keeps trusting him.

Unlike the disciples who returned home, Mary the bearer of the message stayed at the cemetery (v. 11). Out of the three disciples who witnessed the empty tomb of Jesus, two returned home but Mary remained to keep searching (v. 12). She demonstrated a unique art of ‘following’. She followed Jesus even unto death and even in the absence of his physical existence. The reader is, therefore, presented with two models of disciples in Mary Magdalene and the two males. S/he is faced with the option of the dynamics of discipleship as seen in Mary who followed Jesus even in his absence, or like Peter and John who would follow Jesus only when he is present amongst them.

2.5.3 Textual Analysis

A. Introduction (vv. 11-13)

The introduction of δε in v. 11 compares the disciples’ and Mary Magdalene’s reaction towards the exposed tomb. While they left the scene, she remained there and was focused on the loss of the body of Jesus, which she identified as the loss of Jesus himself.²¹⁸ She had been standing there for a while, which implies that the narrator’s use of εἰστήκει indicates Mary’s stationary position over a period of time before looking into the tomb. While standing, she is described to have been weeping. For three times, the narrator places emphasis on her action (vv. 11, 13 and 15). By weeping, the words of Jesus in 16:22 are recalled (“So with you: now is your time to grieve...”) and it sets the stage for the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise (16:22; “...but I will see you again and

²¹⁷ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 209.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy”), which was realized after she encountered Jesus later on (v. 16-18).²¹⁹

Moloney comments that her act of weeping was an expression of her “inability to believe or understand what might have happened,”²²⁰ and so she finally looked into the tomb (v. 11). As she looked inside, she saw two angels sitting where the body of Jesus was laid.²²¹ She was consumed by her sorrow to the extent that the presence of angelic beings did not register surprise to her. Her response to the angels stressed on her desire to recover the body of Jesus.²²² Like the Cherubim in Exodus 25:22, 38:7-8, the angels sat one at the head and the other at the foot of where Jesus was laid. Schneider acknowledges that her grief had set her on the part of spiritual blindness; her inability to recognize anything else but the body of Jesus, such that she was rendered incapable of recognizing Jesus even when he first communicated with her.²²³

B. Christological Dialogue (vv. 14-17)

After she spoke to the angels, ‘she turned and saw a man’ (v. 14). The narrator’s use of ἐστράφη indicates a change in direction. Her spiritual blindness led her into seeing Jesus as a gardener, perhaps because she had a particular appearance she was looking out for. Thus, for Marsh, her inability to immediately recognize Jesus is intentional, because there was a distinction between his crucified body and his resurrected body (Matt 28:17, Luke 24:13ff).²²⁴ On his part, Westcott thinks, her mind was focused on

²¹⁹ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 841.

²²⁰ Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor*, 164.

²²¹ Morris, *The Gospel*, 739. Godet is of the view that she did not physically see, instead, perceived the angels. See Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 416. Westcott considers their sitting order, as like that of the Cherubim at the mercy-seat of God, between which the Lord dwelt. See, Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 290. Oday identifies that the presence of the angels were to draw renewed attention to Mary’s grief and not for the purposes of proclamation; also as an echo of Jesus’ eschatological promise of angels ascending and descending on the Son of man (1:51). See, O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 841-842.

²²² Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 291.

²²³ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 217.

²²⁴ Marsh, *Saint John*, 636.

one goal, that is, to find a ‘dead Jesus’ and not a ‘living Jesus’.²²⁵ Others presume that her inability was because she did not directly look at him at the first instance.²²⁶

The question raised by the angels (v. 13) was the same question raised by Jesus (v. 15), “Why are you crying?” is an indication that her search which begun in v. 1 was her ultimate concern. What made her sorrowful and also made her blind not realizing any other sign that did not directly address her need. However, Jesus further questioned her about who she was looking for, “who do you seek” (v. 15)? Jesus challenged her weeping as a means to refocus her ‘distracted attention’ from his physical body (what she was aware of) to his person (his real identity). In so doing, the narrator “dramatically prepares the reader to accept a new mode of Jesus’ presence.”²²⁷ What Mary Magdalene spiritually does in her response (v. 15), however, is to insist that “the absence of Jesus’ dead body constitute the absence of the living person of Jesus.”²²⁸

Jesus’ call to Mary made her to recognize him culminating in her response ‘Rabboni’ (v. 16). This recognition of Jesus by Mary, at the mention of her name, reminds the reader of Jesus’ words in John 10:3-4: “He calls his sheep by their name and the sheep recognize his voice”. Again, the narrator records a double ‘turn’ in order for Mary to recognize Jesus (vv. 14, 16). Whereas the phrase in v. 14 meant ‘turn around’, the phrase used in v. 16 translates ‘turn towards.’

The translation ‘turned toward Jesus’ explains Jesus’ prohibition in v. 17. Her turn towards him was a movement to him. “Do not cling to me” reveals Mary’s need for closeness after realizing the answer to her search was standing in front of her. The

²²⁵ Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 291.

²²⁶ Brown, *According to John*, 989.

²²⁷ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 217.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 218.

present imperative; “Do not cling to me” may prohibit either an action already in progress or an action yet to take place.²²⁹ It does not carry the import of rejection towards touching his resurrected body, because in v. 27, Jesus presented himself to Thomas to be touched by him. Instead, μή μου ἄπτου, οὕπω it is interpreted as ‘do not hold to me’. Godet notes the relationship between ‘do not hold’ and ‘but go’ to imply that Mary was not to enjoy the glorified Jesus alone but was to spread the good news to the community of disciples.²³⁰

Another reason for Mary not to hold on to Jesus is also visible in the relationship between ‘do not hold’ and ‘for I have not ascended to the Father’. Glorification in the Johannine narrative includes the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. So for Jesus to resurrect meant he was in his glorified state and that his implication to his ascension did not deny his present state of glorification.²³¹

In place of holding on to Jesus, Mary is given an alternative that “But go to my brothers” (πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς μου ἀδελφούς; v. 17). Jesus’ use of brother is better understood when he creates a relationship between them and God by calling God their Father.²³² The fatherly relationship between the community of disciples and God is therefore, significant in the record of the first Christian society.²³³ According to Brown, the present usage of ascension in the message Mary had to proclaim to Jesus’ brethren indicates that Jesus was already in the process of ascension only that he had not yet reached his destination.²³⁴

²²⁹ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 842.

²³⁰ Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 417-418.

²³¹ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 842.

²³² Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 293.

²³³ *Ibid*, 293.

²³⁴ Brown, *According to John*, 994.

Jesus' reference to God as his Father first before referring to Him as Father to the disciples, indicates a unique relationship between himself and God, that he shares with the community of disciples.²³⁵ The difference in relationship informs the reader of why Jesus did not simply say "I am ascending to our Father and our God."²³⁶ In the message of ascension, O'day asserts that it was only by returning to his Father that the disciples could fully share in his relationship with God.²³⁷

C. Jesus Identity Revealed (v. 18)

Upon this revelation, Mary sets out to proclaim the good news to the disciple: "I have seen the Lord." Thomas stated the need to touch him before believing him to be the Lord (vv. 27-28). Consequently, for Mary to proclaim the identity of Jesus without first touching him was a sign of her faith in Him, as the Lord. Her confession thus, was a result of her belief in Jesus. In the Johannine narrative Mary Magdalene is the first to experience, believe and profess Jesus as the 'risen' Lord, as God Himself.²³⁸

Mary Magdalene who at the beginning of the narrative was on the quest to 'find' Jesus had been given a new direction, which is the quest to 'proclaim' him to the community of his brethren. She had gone from sorrowfully searching to joyfully announcing. She becomes the official witness to the resurrection of Jesus in and to the community of the Fourth Gospel. She becomes the source of answer to her own question "Where is Jesus?" and to all who seek to find him in the now and in the future.²³⁹

²³⁵ Westcott, *The Gospel According to John*, 292-293.

²³⁶ Howard, "According to John," 795.

²³⁷ O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 842-843.

²³⁸ Ibid, 843.

²³⁹ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 223.

2.5.4 Perlocutory Effect on the Reader

Mary's discovery of the empty tomb sets the reader on the path of finding Jesus. In the earlier development of the entire narrative right from its beginning, Jesus was always introduced at the beginning of the Narrative (2:2, 4:4 and 11:17) but it is not so in this passage. The difference in this pericope makes the reader alert for what was to happen. The reader must therefore join the search for Jesus. 'Where is Jesus?' becomes a crucial question for all who are needful of him and do not experience him in their lives as they use to do. After enjoying the benefits of belonging to Jesus, you awaken to a tragedy. The first thought that seem to come to mind is "where is Jesus?" Thus, it becomes alarming for the reader who after experiencing Jesus throughout the Johannine narrative gets to a point where s/he must stop to join in the search for Jesus.

The reader is brought to terms with Mary's faith who in the absence of Jesus at the tomb does not turn back like the two disciples in 20:1-12, instead continues the search. Her faith in Jesus does not die but results in her persistency to find her Lord. She, therefore, becomes a true model of discipleship for the reader to emulate. Her art of following does not end with the physical absence of Jesus. Even when Jesus seems absent, she follows him, that is to say she follows Jesus till the end. Such should be for every true follower of Jesus in this age and in the age to come. This is the kind of followership the narrative proposes to the reader.

Again, the reader is faced with the question of whether or not s/he can identify the voice of Jesus. Mary again is presented as a true sheep of Jesus because in the midst of her blindness to every other thing – does not express surprise at the sight of the angels, does not identify Jesus at the beginning of her conversation with him - she was able to identify the voice of her master when he called out her name (10:3-4). The true

art of following is seen in the ability to identify the voice of Jesus, through his words in the bible and through our experiences.

Her willingness to follow Jesus till the end is what caused her to reach another stage in her journey of faith. The basis of her faith at the beginning was in the physical presence of Jesus but was now made whole when she confirmed her belief in the resurrection of Jesus by declaring “I have seen the ‘risen’ Lord”.²⁴⁰ Many shared in the incarnation of Word (Jesus) and his death but not all can come to terms with his resurrection. Believing in his resurrection is to enter into wholeness of one’s belief in Jesus. The reader is invited to share in this faith.

It is only when our share in the new faith of Mary that we become capable of extending the good news of Jesus Christ to others. Mary, the messenger of the empty tomb, became the messenger of the resurrection.²⁴¹ The message gives hope to the reader that Jesus is preparing a place for all who believe and will surely come again.

2.6 Conclusion

The chapter ends with the major finding from the analysis of John 2:1-11; 4:4-42; 11:17-27 and 20:11-18. In the four pericopes, the women played active roles in revealing the identity of Jesus (2:5; 4:19, 25; 11:27 and 20:18).

In addition, the analysis reveals that the women challenged Jesus into revealing himself. The mother of Jesus obliged Jesus into revealing his glory to the disciples (2:11). The Samaritan woman challenged Jesus into entering into theological discussions (4:10-24) with her and to reveal himself as Messiah (4:26). Martha challenged Jesus

²⁴⁰ Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor*, 168.

²⁴¹ Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 416.

to reveal himself as the resurrection and the life (11:25-26). Lastly, Mary Magdalene challenged him into charging her with his first message after resurrection (20:17).

Finally, the analysis reveals the imports of the women's words and action on the "other." In the narrative of the mother of Jesus, the servants obeyed Jesus (2:7-8) and the disciples saw His glory revealed and believed in Him (2:11). In the narrative of the Samaritan woman, many Samaritans came into contact with Jesus and believed in him (4:39-42). In Martha's narrative the import is seen beyond 11:17-27, when after the resurrection of Lazarus many came to believe in Jesus (11:45). In Mary Magdalene's narrative, her announcement led to the rebuilding of the community of disciples.

In summary, the chapter reveals the relevance of four female characters in realising who Jesus is. With respect to the second step of the theoretical framework for this research (call to action), their relevance suggests that there is the need to focus on the elements that results from the roles they played. Once the elements are outlined, it will be worth emulating by all women who wish to enter into various Christian vocations with the aim of revealing Jesus. The next chapter thus, focuses on the role of the women to Johannine Christology and the characteristics of their engagement.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A JOHANNINE WOMEN CHRISTOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first introduces the journey of the reader from the 1:1 to the beginning of the Cana story (1:1-51). The second studies how the Gospel guides its readers towards a progressive discovery of Jesus' identity through the four selected female characters. Finally, elements common to a 'Johannine women Christology' are identified and discussed.

3.2 Journey of the Reader (1:1-51)

The narrator of the Fourth Gospel presents a material, which does not aim at informing the reader about the historical facts of the earthly Jesus, but instead it reveals the divinity of Jesus. The first chapter of the Fourth Gospel proclaims the identity of Jesus in a movement from the Logos (1:1) to the Son of God (1:51). The first chapter, therefore, serves as the theological road map of God's revelation in Jesus, which is revealed in subsequent chapters of the entire Gospel.²⁴² After encountering the words of the first chapter, the reader is challenged to read the whole Gospel with the lens of discovering the identity of Jesus.

"In the beginning..." (1:1), is a deliberate phrase used by the narrator to echo a relationship between Jesus and the creative act of God (Gen 1:1). Its usage reflects the incarnation of the *λόγος* (Word) as a new beginning, which is not only limited to speech, but to the eternal purpose of God. The Word was in the beginning with God (v. 2), serving as a catalyst to creation (v. 3), and is presented as life; the source of

²⁴² O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 524.

light to all men (v. 4).²⁴³ Once present, darkness disappears (v. 5). The incarnation of the word means humanity can now see, hear and know God in ways that was once never possible.

Once the Word became flesh, he dwelt among humans (v. 6), and the revelation of his identity began through one's encounter and experiences with him. The witness of John the Baptist is an introduction of faith and human response to Jesus as the incarnate Word (1:7). Therefore, to deny Jesus is to deny the Word and to deny the Word is to deny God (v. 11) and to receive Jesus, then, is to enter into a new life with God (vv. 12-13). A drama of acceptance and rejection is placed before the reader while the narrator declares his acceptance of Jesus (v. 14), and invites the reader to share in his faith. By sharing in the belief, the reader enters into a new relationship in which one becomes part of God's children.

Jesus's association with John the Baptist (vv. 15-34) and his early disciples (vv. 35-51) becomes the starting point of his revelation to humanity. Thus, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among humans, he revealed himself to humans through his day to day encounters with them (vv. 19-51).

John the Baptist is described as one who "bore witness and cried" (v. 15). As a witness, he testified to the nature and titles of Jesus, and as one who cried, he spoke the inspired utterances of God under the influence of the Spirit (7:28, 12:44). John refers to Jesus as one who was before him (the pre-existence of the Logos; v. 15) and as the source of grace and truth (in his fullness implies his identity; vv. 16-17,) who is the only one to have ever seen God (he is the only begotten Son, the divine, who came from God, v. 18). When the identity of John was confronted by the Jews (v. 19), he

²⁴³ Marsh, *Saint John*, 93-97.

confessed and denied that he was the Christ (vv. 20-28) and went further to direct them to Jesus, as the one they were expecting (vv. 29-34). John as a result makes a three-fold declaration of Jesus – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (v. 29), ‘the One baptized with the Spirit’ (v. 33) and the Son of God (v. 34).²⁴⁴

In the last section of the chapter (vv. 35-51), the narrator describes who the first disciples perceived Jesus to be. Two disciples heard John’s testimony of Jesus as the Lamb of God (v. 35-37) and as a result, followed Jesus. When Jesus inquired from them what they were seeking (v. 38), in their reply, they referred to him as Rabbi (v. 38). Again, Jesus invited Philip to follow him and Philip extended the invitation to Nathaniel. Nathaniel, however, was not convinced of who Jesus was, and so when they approached Jesus, Jesus addressed Nathaniel in a manner which presumed his knowledge of him. Finding out that Jesus knew his earlier undisclosed location, Nathaniel professed Jesus as the Son of God and the King of Israel (v. 49).

Various identities of Jesus are thus, revealed at the beginning of the Gospel as follows: the logos (v. 1), the source of Life (v. 4), the source of Grace and Truth (v. 16-17), the Lamb of God (v. 29), the One baptized with the Spirit (v. 33), the Son of God (v. 33) Rabbi (v. 38, 49) and the King of Israel (v. 49).

In vv. 50-51, Jesus discloses to Nathanael that there is more to his identity than what has been revealed. This promise is not only to Nathaniel, but also to the reader of the Fourth Gospel. The writer as a result announces in Jesus’ own words that the testimonies at the beginning of the narrative, are only the beginning of greater works that are yet to be unravelled. For this reason, as the narrative progresses, the accolades in the

²⁴⁴ Howard, *According to St. John*, 467-484.

first chapter are “replaced, expanded, transformed or redefined by Jesus’ own words and works and ultimately his death and resurrection.”²⁴⁵

At this point, the reader is stupefied by the depth of the revelation or perhaps worried about the truth or has questions. Probably s/he perceives that there is a choice to make between light and darkness, welcoming and refusal, testimony and annihilation. Verses 50-51, which concluded the first chapter, inform the reader to watch out for more revelations of Jesus’s identity as s/he progresses with the narrative.

3.3 Towards a Female-Led Discovery of Jesus

The reader is invited to a deeper understanding of Jesus’ identity through selected female characters such as the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary Magdalene. How Jesus’ identity is discovered through the four women located by John in nodal moments of his narrative are the objects of our study. What is the perlocutory effect the author intends to provoke on his reader?

3.3.1 Mary: Faith in Action

The miracle performed by Jesus in Cana of Galilee becomes the first sign, which leads to the revelation of his glory. John’s Gospel, selected works and words of Jesus, which are identified as miracles in the synoptic Gospels, are called signs. The different terminology signals the intention of the author not to focus the attention of his readers on the miraculous acts, but to point them beyond the miracles towards the ‘person’ who has performed the ‘miracle’. The narrator explores seven of these miracles. These included the wedding at Cana (2:1-11), the healing of the official’s son (4:46-54), the healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-15), the feeding of the multitude

²⁴⁵ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 533.

(6:5-14), Jesus walking on water (6:16-24), healing of the man born blind (9:1-7) and the raising of Lazarus (11:1-45). The sign performed at the wedding at Cana points the reader to the identity of Jesus through his revealed glory.²⁴⁶

An attempt to include Jesus' dialogue with his mother in a passage in which the first sign is shown and his glory revealed, is to indicate that the woman played an important role towards the discovery of Jesus. "At Cana on the third day, a Jewish woman in a Jewish town at a Jewish celebration shows an unconditional trust and commitment to the word of Jesus."²⁴⁷ The reader must note that the mother of Jesus was the first woman to be involved in the revelation of Jesus' identity. Prior to her narrative, the first chapter does not specify any female character.²⁴⁸

Mary finds herself together with Jesus at a wedding and when the wine runs out, she communicates it to him and this engagement with him becomes the catalyst for the first sign. Her action towards Jesus presupposes that she perceived him to be the solution to the problem (2:3). By instructing the servants to obey whatever he tells them (2:5) she had no idea of the action he was going to take.

Although Mary had not witnessed any sign by Jesus, yet she had faith in him, unlike the disciples who only believed in him after his glory was revealed by the performance of the sign.²⁴⁹ She is the first to unconditionally make a choice for Jesus as requested in the first chapter. In the first chapter, Nathaniel declared his faith in Jesus (1:49) only after Jesus had shown undisclosed prior knowledge of his whereabouts. Jesus thus, referred to his faith as conditional (1:50). Mary therefore, becomes signifi-

²⁴⁶ Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 36-37.

²⁴⁷ Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 91.

²⁴⁸ The first woman is instrumental to revealing the extraordinary act of grace of greater things to come which was spoken by Jesus in 1:50. This revelation invites readers to share in the abundance of God's grace. See, O'Day, "The Gospel of John," 539-540.

²⁴⁹ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 113.

cant to the narrative because she demonstrates unconditional faith as a sign of true discipleship. Her kind of faith serves as a model for discipleship. In the process of telling a story about Jesus, the writer challenges and invites the reader to embrace her ‘kind of faith’ which is unconditional.

In addition, she is portrayed as an implicit witness. Even though she did not testify to the disciples, nor proclaim Jesus to be the Messiah, Mary instructed the servants to obey Jesus (2:5). Like John the Baptist (1:36-37), she led them into trusting the word of Jesus. As a result, the servants became ‘agents’, playing an important role to realise the sign (2:7-8).²⁵⁰ Her art of witnessing perhaps did not lead the servants into having faith in Jesus, however it led them into obeying him.

The first woman the reader comes into contact with in the discovery of Jesus’ identity is a woman of unconditional faith. The reader is challenged to make a choice between conditional (1:50, 2:11) and unconditional (2:3-5) faith. At the initial stage of the development of discipleship in the Fourth Gospel, a woman demonstrates the kind of faith Jesus demands of all believers in the present and in the future.

3.3.2 The Samaritan Woman: Inclusive Discipleship

The Samaritan narrative (4:4-42) presents to the reader a passage which “from beginning to end transforms and challenges the status quo.”²⁵¹ It is identified as a missionary story because in the first part, Jesus witnesses to the Samaritan woman (vv. 4-26), and in the second section, the woman sets out on a missionary journey (vv. 28-30). More so, Jesus informs the disciples about the necessity of missions (vv. 31-38), as he

²⁵⁰ Maccini, *Her Testimony is True*, 113.

²⁵¹ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 571.

finally witnesses to more Samaritans (vv. 39-42).²⁵² In the process of evangelizing Samaria, the narrative proposes a ‘community of disciples’ in which the female character is not side-lined but actively involved in evangelization.

Further, in the Samaritan narrative, the woman guides the reader into discovering who Jesus is. At the first contact the woman had with Jesus, she could only identify his ethnicity for a Jew (4:4). As she continued to dialogue with him, through his own words, she was able to recognize him as the source of living water (4:15). Once Jesus was able to foretell her past and present matrimonial situation, she perceived and declared him a Prophet (4:19). In so doing, she raised a theological issue concerning the place of worship and by the time Jesus completed his explanation of true worship, the woman through her speech expressed a strong desire for the coming of the Messiah (v. 25). It is then that Jesus revealed himself to her as the Messiah (4:25-26). Just as the dialogue of Jesus’ mother led to the revelation of Jesus’ glory (2:11), the Samaritan woman’s dialogue brought about a self-revelation of Jesus as the Messiah (4:26). Holding on to this new revelation, she went back to the town to proclaim her new discovery, however she called upon them to be judges for themselves that indeed he was the Messiah (4:29). By the end of the narrative the Samaritans believed in him as the Saviour of the world (4:42). Thus, in the Samaritan narrative, a woman leads the reader into identifying Jesus as the Messiah and the Saviour of the world (4:42). It is within her engagement with Jesus that the narrator introduces the first ‘I am’ formula (ἐγώ εἰμι; 4:26) which has such Christological importance in the Fourth Gospel.

The Samaritan woman, whose name is not given, becomes the first witness to the people of Samaria, and also the first woman in the Gospel of John to be involved in public witnessing. It was discovered earlier that the mother of Jesus was an implicit

²⁵² Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe*, 137.

witness (2:3-5), not so with the woman in 4:4-42. Upon hearing the words and revelation of Jesus, she left behind her possession²⁵³, went into the town and testified to the new faith she had found (4:28-29). Not only did she testify, she also invited others to share in her faith: Come and see and judge for yourselves (4:29). She practices a persuasive form of witnessing which does not only testify but extends invitation in an appealing manner, that stirs up interest in the 'other' in wanting to share in her faith (4:30). Many of the Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. Her art of witnessing is not only presented as persuasive, but also able to build up faith in people (4:39). In a mission-oriented narrative, the Samaritan woman is presented as a model for witnessing. "The witness of a believing disciple brings a person to Jesus but then the disciple fades away as the prospective disciple encounters Jesus himself" (4:42).²⁵⁴

In many societies, the role of a woman has mostly been limited to the needs of her husband and family. The Samaritan woman, however, by engaging in theological reflection, has demonstrated that a woman can be more than just a household worker. She asked questions (4:9, 11-12), challenged Jesus (4:11-12) and demonstrated her knowledge, as she discussed her theological position (4:19-20). She was never afraid to challenge Jesus and was ready to listen to him which culminated in him opening a new horizon of knowledge to her. The Samaritan woman, therefore, challenges and invites the reader to engage in theological debates as it results in the gaining knowledge.

As Jesus is revealed in the Samaritan narrative, the reader cannot fail to be challenged by Jesus' inclusion of women in male-oriented vocations in matters as 'discipleship'

²⁵³ Schneider, *Written That You May Believe*, 102.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

and ‘theological reflection’. Therefore, to exclude women from the above mentioned vocation is to deny the will of God through the principles set by Jesus.²⁵⁵

3.3.3 Martha: Death in the Community of Eternal Life

Martha plays the lead role in 11:17-27 in relation to Jesus. It is within her dialogue with him that Jesus fully reveals himself. “Jesus challenges Martha with the revelatory word that must finally be accepted by anyone who wishes to belong to Jesus.”²⁵⁶ In the passage, she takes the role of Peter (in the synoptic Gospels) in the proclamation of Jesus as the Christ, Son of the living God (v. 27). The passage finds itself within the context of death of a believer, in which Martha and her sister Mary identify the absence of Jesus as the reason why Lazarus died; should Jesus have been there in time he would not have died (11:21).

The first element of the identity of Jesus the reader encounters in the passage is the healing presence of Jesus. This is seen in Martha’s speech to Jesus; “if you had been here (when my brother was sick) he would not have died” (v. 21). In addition, she presented him as one who had a relationship with God; “but I know that even now God will give you anything you ask” (v. 21). When she could not identify the lordship of Jesus over death (v. 24), he revealed himself to her as “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 25) the highest form of Jesus self-revelation in the Johannine Gospel. Finally, she professed her faith in him when she declared him as the Christ and the Son of God. In the midst of the crisis, Jesus revealed himself to a woman and she professed her faith in him. The reader is, therefore, challenged to also believe in Jesus as the resurrection and the life, it is then that the reader can share in the community of eternal life (vv. 25-26).

²⁵⁵ Schneider, *Written That You May Believe*, 146-148.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 105.

Schneider presents Martha as “the representative of the community left behind, which must face the challenge to its faith in Jesus as the Life,” when faced with the issue of death of a believer.²⁵⁷ Mary was already a disciple of Jesus. She was part of his inner circle friends; loved by him and devoted to him; thus, she already believed in him (v. 5). Perhaps, she believed in his healing power, and saw in him the solution to Lazarus sickness. But when Jesus did not answer, as death had entered in her house, her faith was challenged. Martha needed to ‘purify’ her vision of Jesus. It is her faith in Jesus that caused her to call for him when Lazarus was dying (v. 3), to reply in the manner in which she did (v. 21) and to identify Jesus’ relationship with God (v. 22). Even though Martha expressed faith in Jesus, it was inadequate and needed to be “purified by a new and deeper encounter with Jesus in the crisis event of physical death.”²⁵⁸

For this, Jesus challenged her faith when, after revealing himself as the resurrection and the life asked her if she believed. Her answer was going to become the proof, if she was still clinging on to her initial faith or if she had entered into a new horizon of faith in Jesus. Martha had to make a choice and she made the right one when she replied “I believe”; (v. 27). As a result, Martha informs the reader of how once faith can be challenged especially when crisis arises, such as death of a loved one. In doing so, she proposes her kind of faith to the reader and calls upon him/her to believe in the highest form of Jesus’ revelation (vv. 24-25) which renders him as Lord over all that lives and dies; the only source of eternal life.

Representing the ‘community left behind’, Martha stands for all who have lost a loved one and is faced with the inadequate truth that death can only mean the absence of Jesus (11:21). She looks at death only from the physical point of view; what Jesus re-

²⁵⁷ Schneider, *Written That You May Believe*, 105.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 105.

fers to ‘falling asleep’ (v. 11) and questions why death must be present in the community of eternal life. Jesus, however, enlightens her on the concept of death and informs her that nature or human intention cannot be the ultimate cause of death, except it is according to the will of God (v. 23). Therefore, what Jesus requires from Martha and those in the community of eternal life is to recognize and believe in him as the source of eternal life; the life that prevails over this life and death (vv. 25-26). By believing in Jesus, one enters into this new life. In addition, Jesus requires from Martha and all believers to recognize in his ‘intimate real presence’ even in his physical absence. This hidden presence is what will sustain believers in time of suffering and death in this life. The reader comes to terms that whether one faces physical death or lives, once the person believes in Jesus, s/he shares in his eternal life.²⁵⁹

Martha did not only recognize Jesus as the ‘Christ’ but also as the Son of God. Her confession is the first and complete audacious proclamation of faith in the Fourth Gospel. It resulted from the kind of faith that was opened to challenge and growth as it encountered Jesus. At the end of the narrative, the reader must answer the same question: “Do you believe” (v. 26)?²⁶⁰

3.3.4 Mary Magdalene: Encountering and Proclaiming the ‘Risen’ Lord

The journey of the reader comes to its climax after Mary Magdalene encounters Jesus and makes her confession. The Word which came down from God (1:14) was finally returning to God (20:17). The narrative is, therefore, on the threshold of the return of Jesus to the Father. Mary Magdalene becomes the first to experience the Christophany (20:14-17, Matt 28:1, 9-10 and the Markan appendix of 16:9-11). In the first Christian

²⁵⁹ Schneiders, “Death in the Community of Eternal Life: History, Theology and Spirituality in John 11” *Union Seminary Review* 41, no. 1 (1987): 48-52.

²⁶⁰ O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 695.

community, a woman was regarded as the primary witness to paschal mystery and the guarantee of an apostolic tradition. Unlike Peter, she was not unfaithful to Jesus during the passion and unlike Paul she never persecuted Jesus but like both she saw the risen Lord.²⁶¹

The narrative begins with a search for Jesus (20:11) and ends with an announcement of him (20:18). A woman is identified at the centre of this quest who at the beginning of the narrative, had a picture of Jesus in mind (20:2) as one who was dead and buried. Unaware to her, she carried a blind identity of him. She did not know that it was only time-based for him to die and that it was his death that was going to bring the community of discipleship into sonship with God (20:17). In addition, even though Jesus was dead, Mary still identified him as her Lord (20:13) and again as Rabbi after she recognized him (20:16). As the reader moves along with her, s/he is brought to the limelight of Jesus' identity as the 'risen' Lord (20:18). Mary's proclamation of Jesus as Lord resulted in her encounter with him at the tomb. She was unable to recognize him when she first responded to him, until he called her by name and she turned the second time to see him (v. 16). A second look at Jesus confirmed her proclamation, "I have seen..." in v. 18 thus, her proclamation of Jesus arose from seeing Jesus and speaking with him (v. 14-17). Jesus who was at the beginning of the entire narrative was referred to as the 'Word' (1:1) is at the end of Johannine narrative referred to as the Lord (20:18).

Mary Magdalene does not appear in the Fourth Gospel until the hour of Jesus' glorification. She is present to witness his death (19:25), his resurrection (20:1, 16) and 'the beginning' of his ascension (20:17).²⁶² She is the first of the four women and in the

²⁶¹ Schneider, *Written That You May Believe*, 112-113.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 110.

community of disciples to encounter the 'risen' Lord. Introduced at a point where the male disciples were far from the scene, she proved herself to be a true follower of Jesus. Her faith in him was not limited to his day to day living presence with them. She kept following, even when his male disciples had betrayed (18:2), denied (18:17), and deserted (20:10) him.

Like the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman and Martha, Mary Magdalene exhibited her faith in Jesus through her art of following and like her three companions, her faith in Jesus was challenged when she was unable to recognize him as he spoke with her (20:15). Perhaps, this was due to her 'traditional' faith in Jesus as Messiah, which did not incorporate the death and resurrection of the Messiah. In view of this, she needed to go into a new understanding of Jesus as God. It is only then that she will be able to comprehend the possibility of his resurrection. So after Jesus reveals to her his relationship with his Father, she believed and professed her new found faith: "I have seen the Lord" (20:18).

Her new-found belief in the resurrection of Jesus was not built on 'clinging to Jesus' but instead, believing in his words (20:17); unlike Thomas, who professed the need to touch him before believing in his resurrection. Jesus cautioned Thomas and pronounced blessing on all who will not have to touch before believing in his resurrection (20:25, 27-29). Mary Magdalene presents to the reader a model of faith which is not dependent on touching and feeling the physical presence of Jesus.

Jesus commissioned Mary with a message to his disciples. The message was not 'I have risen'; rather it was to inform them that the work of the Word made flesh is complete, and its fruits are available to his disciples. In the first chapter the narrator referred to all who believe as children of God. It was the fulfilled mission of Jesus on

the cross and his resurrection that brought all who believed into being children of God (1:12). This is why for the first time in the entire narrative he referred to his disciples as brothers (20:17). The reader identifies at this point that the first message of Jesus to the disciples had the reality of their relationship with God as Father and children as its content.

At the end of the reader's journey through the selected female characters, it is evident that the Gospel of John regarded women's testimony as, "valid, effective and approved by Jesus."²⁶³ Through their words and action, they played unconventional roles towards the revelation of Jesus' identity. In view of their importance, the final section of the chapter is dedicated to identifying elements common to the four characters, as they contributed to the development of a 'woman' Christology.

3.4 Elements of Johannine Women Christology

There is no doubt, as stated by Schneiders, that the bible is 'androcentric' and as a result, scholars who try to elevate women from this 'male dominated' book are faced with many challenges.²⁶⁴ Amidst the nature of female suppression in scriptures, some women have been found playing significant roles in the bible. The four women discussed above are no exceptions.

The Gospel of John introduces four women with difference in backgrounds. Whereas some were Jews (Mother of Jesus, Martha, Mary Magdalene) another was a Samaritan, an indication that Jesus inclusion of women is not limited to a particular race. Some of these women were married (the mother of Jesus and the Samaritan woman) the others were not (Martha and Mary Magdalene), a signal that Jesus was not inter-

²⁶³ Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe* 111.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

ested in status. One was related to Jesus (his mother), some were friends (Martha and Mary Magdalene) and the other was a complete stranger. Jesus' selection of women is undefined, all that qualifies one to engage in the various vocations within the Christian setting be it theological reflection or pastoral ministry, is to be a person. Women like men, were created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and by virtue of that can be used by God for revealing his glory.

The study identifies two methods employed by the women in doing Christology; experiential and dialogical. In the four passages, it is clear that the starting point of the women's encounter with Jesus was experience, either personal (Samaritan woman, 4:9; Martha, 11:21; Mary Magdalene, 20:11-13) or the experience of the 'other' (mother of Jesus, 2:1-3). Life experiences caused them to seek for answers in Jesus and by the time their conversations were over, he revealed his identity to them. In addition the conversations of these women with Jesus took the form of dialogue. One must be aware that the women were free to express their views (2:3; 4:19; 11:21, 24; 20:15-16), as well as ask questions (4:9, 11) and challenge Jesus (4:12). They were not placed at the end of the conversations to be portrayed as mere recipients instead they were actively involved in the conversations at all times. When they lacked understanding they interrupted the conversation to receive clarity (4:11). Johannine women, therefore, contribute to Christology, 'experience' and 'dialogue' as methods proven to be effective and approved by Jesus.

In their involvement in revealing the identity of Jesus, these women did not depend on the male-figure for assistance. All four women were portrayed dialoguing with Jesus without the need of a male mediator or permission. They did not need their endorsement in order to dialogue with Jesus. The mother of Jesus on her own accord initiated

a conversation with him. The Samaritan woman did not have to return to her town to seek permission before dialoguing with him. Neither did Martha nor Mary Magdalene depend on a male figure before engaging with Jesus. On their own, they were able to proclaim to the Johannine community, the reader and all generations to come that Jesus is a prophet (4:19), the Christ (4:29, 11:27), the Son of God (11:27), and the ‘risen’ Lord as God (20:18).²⁶⁵ Johannine women are therefore, portrayed as individuals who can encounter Jesus on their own without the help of a man.

It is without doubt that the discussions of these women with Jesus took place in the public domain. Living in the period in which it was unlawful for women to interact with males in public, not even with their husbands, these female characters challenged the status quo and engaged with Jesus in public.²⁶⁶ The wedding ceremony (2:1-11), the well of Jacob (4:4-42), the courtyard of Martha’s home (11:17-27), the grave yard (20:11-18) were all public places the four women encountered Jesus. In all cases, the women had the opportunity to desist from engaging with him because their traditions did not allow that. Staying in the on-going dialogue was an indication that they consented to the conversation, as the tone of the conversation informs the reader that Jesus did not coerce them into joining in. In this regard women are portrayed as characters that are willing and able to challenge the status quo of any society or law, in order to get involved with Jesus.²⁶⁷

The women are portrayed as individuals capable of engaging in theological discussions. The Johannine community welcomes women with various levels of knowledge

²⁶⁵ Schneiders is therefore, right when she states that “the Johannine women did not depend on their husbands or male counterparts for permission for their activities with Jesus. See, *Schneiders, Written That You May Believe*, 114.

²⁶⁶ Despite living in an egalitarian community, Jesus offered acceptance and love to women. In doing so he was able to reach out to them; See Victor, “Jesus and the Samaritan Woman,” 160-166.

²⁶⁷ Jewish purity laws forbade association with Samaritans. Yet, Jesus crosses the social order and breaks the purity law to reach out to the Samaritan woman. She also crosses cultural boundary to speak to a stranger in public place; See Victor, “Jesus and the Samaritan Woman,” 165-166.

and experiences into theological education. The Samaritan woman brought into the dialogue her understanding of worship (4:20) and her theological knowledge of the well of Jacob (4: 11). In addition, she was able to defend her theological position (4:9, 12, 20), and open up to new horizon of knowledge (4:13-15, 25). Martha was also involved in theological education when Jesus revealed himself as the 'I am' and as the resurrection and the life (11:25). Her ability to confess her faith in him was an indication of her understanding of theological issues. She, however, brought into the discussion her theological position on resurrection (11:24), and her belief was challenged and enhanced by Jesus: she was able to see beyond the 'Rabbi' to discover in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth (1:14), the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God (11:27). Mary Magdalene after realizing that who she taught was the gardener was actually the 'risen' Jesus, run to cling to him. He had to prevent that and explain to her the magnitude of his resurrection (20:17). Her drawing back from clinging to him, and the excitement with which she testified of seeing the risen Lord is an indicator that she had understood Jesus' explanation of the necessity of his ascension after resurrection (20:18). The women thus challenged the rabbinic traditions that exclude women from theological reflection, by showing forth their ability to comprehend, understand and partake in theological discussions.

In addition, their engagement with Jesus leads to transformation on two levels involving the transformation of the 'self' and transformation of the 'other'. The Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary Magdalene after encountering Jesus, had their lives transformed as they gained new knowledge of his identity. The transformation was evident in their new horizon of faith and their urgency to spread the good news of Jesus (4:19, 29; 11:27; 20:18). In return, these women became instrumental to the transformation of others. Through the mother of Jesus, the servants obeyed Jesus (2:5, 7-8) and the

disciples believed in Jesus (2:11). The Samaritan woman influenced the Samaritans' saving knowledge of Jesus and as a result, believed in him (4:39-42). Mary Magdalene's word to the disciples became the starting point for rebuilding the community of disciples (20:18), dispersed after His death.

It is important to note that the aforementioned women played leadership roles in one way or the other. As stated by Schneiders, "women are remarkable for their initiative and decisive action."²⁶⁸ The mother of Jesus identified the problem of shortage of wine and was keen in finding a solution to that (2:3).²⁶⁹ Her leadership trait caused her to seek the answer in Jesus. It was due to this same initiative that moved her to instruct the servants to do whatever Jesus asked from them (2:5). The Samaritan woman on her own initiative after encountering Jesus, left her jar behind and returned to her town to inform the people of who she had encountered (4:29). Her influence caused the Samaritans to move from their comfort zones to meet a stranger, who was from a clan that despised them (4:30). Her influence caused them to listen to him and by so doing they came to believe in him (4:39-42). Martha took the initiative to run out to meet Jesus in order to discuss the death of her brother. She was able to comprehend his ability to ask the Father for anything and to obtain response (11:20-22). Mary Magdalene took the initiative of looking for the body of her master (20:11-14). She was able to identify the risen Lord, when he called out her name, and became the bearer of Jesus' message to the disciples.²⁷⁰ All four women acted based on their own leadership initiative to bring others into the revelation they had found in Jesus. Women are encouraged to reach beyond their limits, identify the various leadership roles they possess and act on their own initiative.

²⁶⁸ Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 101.

²⁶⁹ Kanagaraj, "The Profile of Women," 36; Brown, "According to John," 692.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

It can be generally acknowledged that in the majority of our African churches, women who usually show interest in being instrumental to the message of Jesus are in many situations, limited to women and children ministry, as well as other insignificant positions. Only few are found in key positions, and those who find their way into theological reflections are outnumbered by the men. It is as though it can be pinpointed from biblical texts that women usually ministered to their fellow women and children, even if there is not biblical evidence of this assumption. It is not so about the Johannine women. The servants who were instructed by the mother of Jesus were not all females. In fact the Greek language of the biblical text uses τοῖς διακόνουις which is in the dative masculine plural an indicator of the inclusion of both males and females (2:5). The Samaritan woman in 4:28 left her water jar behind, went to the town and spoke to τοῖς ἀνθρώποις which is literally translated as ‘the men’. Mary Magdalene was instructed to send a message to the brothers of Jesus (20:17-18). Nowhere in the Johannine community were women found ministering to women and children. In fact, there is no biblical justification for such activities. The mother of Jesus was significant to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The Samaritan woman was instrumental to the beginning of the Samaria missions. The highest form of Jesus’ ‘I am’ statement was revealed to a woman. Mary Magdalene was a central witness to the resurrection of Jesus as well as the first messenger to proclaim the good news of the ‘risen’ Lord to the disciples. For this reason she is defined by the Fathers of the Church as the “apostle of apostles.”²⁷¹ Women must therefore, free themselves from the limitation imposed by culture, society and churches. Like these women who played key roles to the development of Christology, they must get involved in significant pastoral roles as well as in theological reflections.

²⁷¹ *Schneiders, Written That You May Believe* 111.

Other elements emerging from the women's participation in Christology include women's ability to perceive the needs and distress of others (2:3, 4:9), their ability to perceive and confess the identity of Jesus (2:3; 4:19, 29; 11:27, 20:18) and their ability to demonstrate intimate relationship with Jesus (11:3,5).²⁷²

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, in a period in which women were among the marginalized, sidelined from public life and were limited only to their biological roles,²⁷³ Jesus treated women as valuable individuals and demanded from them much, just as he demanded from his male disciples. He included them in theological reflections (the Samaritan woman and Mary) and approved of their missionary initiatives (the Samaritan woman 4:29, 39-42) as well as commissioned them with the proclamation of the good news (20:10-11).²⁷⁴

When the disciples once asked why Jesus was speaking to the public in parables (Matt 13:10), he acknowledged them (the disciples) as the recipients of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven which was not privileged to the public (Matt 13:10-11). Women were included as recipients of such mysteries in the Johannine narrative an indication of the validity of their inclusion to the community of disciples. The Johannine Jesus did not require them to stop being women instead, he viewed them as individuals who were capable of receiving and being ministers of God's word.²⁷⁵ For this reason, because Jesus accepted them just as they were, they expressed originality in their relationship with him as well as in their activities within the community.²⁷⁶

²⁷² Brown, "According to John," 694.

²⁷³ Waweru, "Jesus and the Ordinary Women," 142.

²⁷⁴ Thiessen, "Jesus and the Women," 60.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 56.

²⁷⁶ Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 114.

It is as a result of their original participation that the elements discussed above emerge. Their unique characteristics are summarized under the seven (7) proposed elements of Johannine women Christology:

1. Johannine Women Christology is experiential and dialogical;
2. It is independent from the male-figure;
3. It challenges the status quo;
4. Transformation of the self and the other;
5. They demonstrated the ability to participate in theological reflections;
6. Leadership is seen in one's ability to use self-initiative to find solutions to problems;
7. They held significant positions in the entire journey of discovering and revealing the identity of Jesus.

In the awareness that the interpretation of the text is not complete until it becomes relevant in the life of the contemporary reader, the next chapter explores how the process of women involvement in theological reflection, continues in our African context, through the analysis of the Christological reflections of Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFRICAN WOMEN CHRISTOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three studied how John's Gospel placed specific female characters in nodal points of the narrative to guide the reader to discover Jesus' identity. In studying them, some common elements emerged about their personality and about the characteristics of a woman Christology according to the Fourth Gospel. The elements include; experience and dialogue, independence from the male-figure, the ability to challenge the status quo and transform lives, leadership initiatives, the ability to engage in theological reflection as well as hold significant positions.

In the history of the early church, women Christological reflections were not recognized and developed. However, there is hope for the future because, over the past 50 years, a growing number of women have entered into theological studies. One of such is an African, Prof. Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye and called the 'mother of women African theology'

This chapter focuses on her for her involvement in theological reflections about Jesus. For the 'communal' approach that characterized women theology, meeting Prof. Oduyoye, is meeting the 'Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians', and many other women with whom she has reflected, written and worked with in sixty (60) years of experiential theology. Reading her own published works, and articles written on her, listening to her at conferences and dialoguing with her during personal interviews would suggest a clear picture of who she is in the area of Christology.

The chapter is thus divided into three parts. Part one looks at the context of an emerging African women Christology in general, specific analysis of Prof. Oduyoye's Christology follows, and finally a comparison of Johannine women and Oduyoye.

4.2 Context for an Emerging African Women Christology

At the centre of theology is to “understand who God is and to discern how he is present and active in the world.” One therefore, engages in theology when s/he expresses one's faith in action.²⁷⁷ Western theology tried to present a reflection that was universal in scope. The universality, however, was unable to address diverse concerns of the non-western world. So as Western theology did not engage in a reflection that was relevant to other parts of the world, it led to the rise of non-western theologians who began to engage in reflections that were more contextual and experiential. Non-Western theologians realised that if “Christianity was to engage the heart and minds of believers, then it must take the context that shapes their lives, yet without reducing the theological expression to a mere reflection determined by context.”²⁷⁸

For this reason, Soares-Prabhu asserts that to theologize is to contextualize one's faith.²⁷⁹ Contextual theology is, therefore, a term used to “designate theological reflections which explore the dialogue between social context, scripture and tradition.” It does so by taking into consideration the experiences of the people and the context within which they live.²⁸⁰ The Gospel in Africa, therefore, attempts to reflect an African cultural identity. African theology is thus contextual and liberational. It is contex-

²⁷⁷ Carl R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 8.

²⁷⁸ Merline Areeparampil, “A Relevant Theology of Women Empowerment in the Contemporary Catholic Church and Society in India, with Special Reference to *Mulieris Dignitatem*” (PhD diss., Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2009), 11-12.

²⁷⁹ George M. Soares-Prabhu, “From Alienation to Inculturation: Some Reflections on Doing Theology in India today” in T.K. John (ed.) *Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991), 55.

²⁸⁰ Areeparampil, “A Relevant Theology,” 13-14.

tual because it is founded on the reality of people, their problems, cultures, values, questions, etc. It is liberational because it focuses on liberating people from cultural enslavement and any other chains that imprison life expressed as “oppression is found not only in culture but also in political and economic structures and the dominant mass media.”²⁸¹

It is within such an African theology which is both contextual and liberational that African Women Theology emerged. As a result, African women theologians focus on the liberation of African women who are enslaved by culture and traditions.²⁸² They are committed to “abolishing all forms of oppression against women through a critique of the social and religious dimension both in African culture and Christianity.”²⁸³

At their horizon of theological reflection is the experience of women. Considering Genesis 1:26 as their point of departure – women are equal to men because both are created in the image of God – the theology focuses on the oppressive areas of life such as patriarchy, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and sexism.²⁸⁴ African women theologians, therefore, do theology with their whole being making sure that the situations of African women are reflected in African theology.²⁸⁵

African women identify themselves with Jesus more than with any other male character in the bible and so they view Christology as a relationship and not a discourse. They consider Jesus as a friend, healer, advocate and the source of transformation. Jesus is the source of hope for all women bound by religion and culture, drawing such

²⁸¹ “Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians” *Voices from the Third World II* (1998): 27.

²⁸² Areeparampil, “A Relevant Theology,” 38.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 39.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 39.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 40.

conclusions based on their lived experiences. They, thus, name Jesus as a ‘mother’ who nurtures life and cares for the weak.²⁸⁶

Just as the Fourth Gospel placed women at key points of the narrative, Rakoczy proposes that “the development of African theology will be incomplete without women voices and contributions.”²⁸⁷

4.3 The Christology of Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye

Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, the director of the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture at Trinity Theological Seminary, is affectionately known as the “mother of African women theologians.” She is a renowned African theologian, an educator, a writer and a mentor. Her work began in the area of Youth Ministry and Christian Education, as she served as the Youth Education Secretary in the Christian Education and Youth Department of the World Council of Churches (WCC). She later became the Youth Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and the Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. She became the First Woman President of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). Oduyoye is the founder of the ‘Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians’, a platform that encourages African women to research, write and publish their own books and articles on African issues. She has worked to address issues of poverty, healthcare, youth empowerment, women right, destructive cultural and religious practices as well as global unrest.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 41.

²⁸⁷ Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004), 120.

²⁸⁸ Yolanda Smith “Mercy Amba Oduyoye” accessed on August 28, 2017, http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/mercy_odyoye.

4.3.1 Biographical Overview

Oduyoye was born on the 21st of October, 1934 to Rev. Charles Kwaw Yamoah and Mrs. Mercy Yaa Dakwaa Yamoah. She was the first of nine children. According to her, on the 8th day of her birth, her grandfather acknowledged her arrival with a common Akan ritual during the yam harvest; the planting of new yam. The ritual symbolized her connection with the land, community and extended family.²⁸⁹

The presentation of Oduyoye's biography follows three phases of development that characterises her life and contributions to theological reflections. The period of her theological education (1953-1973), the second phase focuses on her critical and analytical reflection on patriarchal cultures and practices and their influence on women (1974-1994), and finally the shift from 'a woman theologian' as a social critic to a healer of society (1995 to present).²⁹⁰

A. The First Phase: Her Theological Education (1953-1973)

Growing up, Oduyoye did not plan to enter into theological education until 1959. While studying at the University of Ghana, then University College of Ghana, Noel King a professor of Church History in the Theology department encouraged her to pursue theological studies. Her study of theology thus began in 1959 after she enrolled into the Intermediate Bachelor of Divinity programme from the Theology department of University of London. In 1963, she became the first female to be awarded a degree in the Intermediate Bachelor of Divinity programme in the University College of Ghana. Her decision to enter into theological studies surprised many, since it

²⁸⁹ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May24, 2018.

²⁹⁰ Christina Landam, "Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye: Mother of Our Stories" (2007): 1, accessed November 29, 2017, https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=12661364750494356981&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5&sciodt=0,5#d=gs_cit&p=&u=%2Fscholar%3Fq%3Dinfo%3A9VXeZCg0tq8J%3Ascholar.google.com%2F%26output%3Dcite%26scirp%3D0%26scf%3D1%26hl%3Den

was a male-dominated vocation. She gained scholarship to study Dogmatics at Cambridge University (1963-1965) and graduated with Bachelor of Arts in Theology. She became interested in the Christian History of Africa.²⁹¹ In 1969, she graduated with a Master of Arts in Theology from Cambridge University.²⁹²

Her first appearance into international and ecumenical work was in 1966, through an invitation from a representative from World Council of Churches (WCC), to attend a meeting in Bolden (Switzerland) on the topic, “Christian Education and Ecumenical Commitment.” From 1967-1970, she served as the Youth Education Secretary of the World Council of Churches.²⁹³

After marriage (1968), she relocated to Ibadan, Nigeria (1970) and taught ‘Biblical Criticism and Strategies for reading the Bible’, at Lagelu Grammar School for Boys. Her primary goal was to make the Bible relevant in the lives of students, so they could find meaning in the biblical text and also raise critical questions about oppressive aspects of the text.²⁹⁴

The first phase of her life introduced her into theological education. It was the next phase she emerged as a “prolific writer and a social critic of growing influence.”²⁹⁵

B. The Second Phase: The Social Critic (1974-1994)

From 1974-1987, Oduyoye lectured in the Religious Studies department of the University of Ibadan. While at the University two incidents occurred; she was asked to

²⁹¹Issues emerging from her study led her to write her first theological work titled “Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa” (1986); See, Yolanda Smith, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, 2016. Accessed on August 4, 2017, http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/mercy_odyoye/

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ BBC - Heart and Soul, “Africa’s Mother: 500th Anniversary of the Reformation,” accessed on March 1, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csw5y7>.

²⁹⁴ Smith “Mercy Amba Oduyoye.”

²⁹⁵ Landman, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 3.

prepare tea for her colleague lecturers during one faculty meeting, even though a male administrator was responsible for that. The second event occurred when she was paid lesser vacation allowance as compared to her male colleagues because she was a woman, with an excuse that the male lecturers had a bigger responsibility of taking care of their wives. It was at this moment her fight for equal right begun.²⁹⁶

In 1987, she became the Deputy General Secretary for the World Council of Churches, the first African to hold the position. Many voices rose up concerning her decision to apply for the position. Some discouraged her simply because she was competing with men, whilst some others said the World Council was not ready for a woman in that position. A friend and a colleague of hers who was part of the panel told her: “I don’t think this is a good image for African women.” She was required to submit an approval letter from her husband, as a sign of his support for his wife’s decision to move to Geneva for the work.²⁹⁷ During her time as the Deputy General Secretary, she focused her works on three themes: re-writing African religious history, the need for ecumenism and the empowerment of women.²⁹⁸

Focusing on women empowerment and liberation, she has always used the bible as the main tool for women liberation. For example, during the 1987 meeting for Women in Churches and Society (World Council of Churches), Oduyoye drew from the Resurrection narrative (Mk 16:1-7) to frame critical discussions around the question raised by the women at Jesus’ tomb: “Who rolled away the stone?”²⁹⁹ She considers the Gospel narrative, a “spring board for uncovering the stone of oppression in the form of sexism, racism, classism and exclusion of women from full participation in

²⁹⁶ Smith “Mercy Amba Oduyoye.”

²⁹⁷ Heart and Soul, “Africa’s Mother.”

²⁹⁸ Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 3.

²⁹⁹ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

the church and in the wider society;”³⁰⁰ and a vision for hope and transformation of African women.

In this period of her life, she criticised the church and society for being silent on patriarchy in African traditions and became the voice of the oppressed.

C. The Third Phase: The Healer of Society (1995-Present)

In 1995, she published one of her major works *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. She used African myths as the point of departure, “for finding values for the Christian future in Africa.”³⁰¹ This became the beginning of her proposal of a healing process for the African society.

Through the ‘Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians,’ the formation of the ‘Institute of Women in Religion and Culture’ at Trinity Theological Seminary, her publications into many Journals and lectures at conferences, she has been a source of hope, healing, liberation and transformation for women.³⁰²

As part of her healing solutions, she indicates that it would have been much easier for the liberation and empowerment of women if the church had given significant attention to the words and attitude of Jesus in the Gospels, instead of the paying attention to the early church in the New Testament, since they, like the Church today was also struggling to understand Jesus. It is only in the period of the incarnation of the Word that irrespective of culture and tradition, all women who encountered Jesus walked in

³⁰⁰ Smith, “Mercy Amba Oduyoye.”

³⁰¹ Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 7.

³⁰² Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

liberation and empowerment. Because Jesus treated them as human beings, they were able to make significant impact to his ministry and the revelation of his identity.³⁰³

She proposes the need for the church and society to pay attention to the words and actions of Jesus if there is going to be a total turn around for women in various vocations of the Christian setting. “Women are created in the image of God and just like men are capable of impacting the church and theological reflections. I am an example, and so are all women who are currently participating in various vocations of the Christian setting.”³⁰⁴

Oduyoye has played a key role towards revealing the identity of Jesus to African women, the church in Africa and to the African society at large. The following section is committed to studying her Christology so as to identify who Jesus is to her, and also the modalities of her engagement in theological reflections.

4.3.2 Elements of Prof. Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye’s Christology

This section aims at answering two questions as follows: who is Jesus to Oduyoye?

What are the characteristics of her engagement in Christological reflections?

The most concrete image of God is Jesus and so we try to get close to him as much as possible. For me, he is the best person you can go to who was ‘sensible enough’ to see women as human beings created in the image of God and can do whatever humanity can do. That is the picture of Jesus I write about.³⁰⁵

Oduyoye was born into a family which believed in Jesus and considered him a part of their worldview. She indicates three stages in her life that helped in shaping her perception of Jesus. At a tender age, she identified two basic characteristics of Jesus. As a friend, one she could freely talk to through prayer, and the source of all knowledge. She discovered in Jesus a paradigm figure for how far one could push him/herself as a

³⁰³ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁰⁴ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁰⁵ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

human being in order to bring out the divinity in one's self. Her theological studies formed the second stage, able to challenge the identity of Jesus she once believed in.

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As I got into theological studies my faith was challenged when I took the New Testament and compared it with the Old Testament and Church History. I realised that there were mysteries about Jesus I would never understand; He is more God than I ever imagined.³⁰⁷

She recognizes the 'Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians' as a platform that challenged her views about Jesus even further.

The 'Circle' made practical, the abstract identities of Jesus my Dogmatics raised. For example, I was challenged to identify Jesus as a friend from a new perspective; today the friend is there for you, tomorrow s/he is not, but in the absence, they never stop thinking about you (John 11:4-6,11-15). Most women in the 'Circle' believe we find ourselves in a period in which most men refuse to be friends; instead they want to be 'bosses', 'lovers' and 'rapists.' Jesus is the only man who sees women being tormented and immediately asks for the men involved. It is the 'Circle' that had me identify Jesus as pro-women. Women look at their lives and look at what is written in the Gospels and find out one person (Jesus) who supports their human make-up.³⁰⁸

Oduyoye guides the reader into identifying Jesus as one who is just, and treats people in like-manner; he is revealed as one who upholds the humanity of women.³⁰⁹

Like the female characters in the Gospel of John, Oduyoye was born in an era within the African context where women were considered among the marginalized. She identifies the African culture as one that ensures women to be dependent on men such that in the absence of men, the woman is unable to survive.³¹⁰ Serving the needs of men is, therefore, considered the key value of life for the African woman. Oduyoye argues that like the punishment for the woman caught in adultery is death by stoning, without

³⁰⁶ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁰⁷ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁰⁸ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁰⁹ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³¹⁰ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Gender Based Violence in Religiously Pluralistic Societies: The West African Experience," in *Religion and Gender-Based Violence: West African Experience*, eds. Rosemary Amenga-Etego and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2013): 1.

repercussions for the male involved in the act, so is it for the African woman.³¹¹ Men are seen as higher and better human beings than women.

In her experience as an African, the belief of the woman does not matter. A good woman is one who moves from her religion of birth to that of her husband. Women are thus born to serve and honour the men in their lives.³¹² This identity placed on the African women led her into seeking for answers in her faith. In her quest, she found out that the God of the Christians considers both male and female as equally created in the image of God; and so a woman is fully human just as a man is.

In her Christological voyage, like the Johannine women, Oduyoye demonstrates the ability for African women to receive theological education, as well as to be involved in theological reflections. Growing up as a young lady, Oduyoye, unaware, was already involved in addressing African issues. This is evident in her two non-academically published books. In those books, she had begun thinking about the education of girls, as well as other issues affecting them. Her later education in Theology became a platform for shaping her beliefs as well as providing her with the tools necessary for engaging in well balanced theologizing. Her studies enlightened her into knowing that women are integral to creation, hence, must be treated as such. As she furthered her education and engaged the experiences of women with her studies, so was her theological reflection on Christ developed.³¹³

Her engagement in the ‘world of tertiary learning’ is the period within which she developed her knowledge and skills in theologizing. She gives instances where at one

³¹¹ Oduyoye, “Gender-Based Violence,” 4-5.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹³ Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 2.

time in the company of women theologians, life was not too easy yet exciting because in the uneasiness they were able to theologize:

Sometimes water shortage meant talking about the life of the rural women was an existential matter. The complaints about strange foods and the joy of familiar ones demonstrated for us the unity and diversity that is Africa...The context of our deliberation was real life as lived by a great number of Africans.³¹⁴

Believing that women were capable of engaging in theological reflections led her into establishing the 'Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians'. The 'Circle', since then has created the opportunity for women theologians to research into issues affecting the church and women generally.³¹⁵ Women are able to "think, reflect and study theological issues"³¹⁶ as they share common concerns with men in theology.³¹⁷ For this reason, the main purpose for being a member of the Circle is to be "committed to the concern about the lack of theological literature by women in Africa and the willingness to change the situation."³¹⁸

To further promote education and women engagement in theologizing, one of her main achievements has been to institutionalize and structure the voices of African women theologians through the establishment of the 'Institute of African women in Religion and Culture' at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, which is active in promoting women education and theologies.³¹⁹

³¹⁴ Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, "The Search for a Two-Winged Theology," in *Talitha Qumi: Proceedings of the Convocation of African Women Theologians* (Accra: Sam-Woode Press, 1989), 33.

³¹⁵ Oduyoye and Kanyoro, "The Search for a Two-Winged Theology," 41-42.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

³¹⁸ Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro "Beads and Strands: Threading More Beads in the Story of the Circle," in *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye*, eds. Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012): 21-23.

³¹⁹ Landam, "Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye," 6-7.

In her ability to theologize, Oduyoye retells the stories of Africa as “stories in which women are worthy human beings.”³²⁰ Thus, her involvement in theological education and reflections challenged and shaped her faith in Jesus. This is evident in the identity of Jesus she places before the reader.

The element of experience is present in Oduyoye’s engagement. She brings into her reflections the experiences of African women. That is to say, her study about Jesus is not done in isolation rather she brings the challenges and concerns of women before the Lord and listens to the answers he places before her through his word. In so doing she identifies the experiences of women as the point of departure for Christological engagement.³²¹

With her keen interest in the word of Jesus, above any other human words, one of the questions she raises when reflecting is “what does Jesus’ humanity mean in view of sexism and racism?” Like the women in the gospel of John, she chooses and holds on to the word of Jesus above any other word. This unique character is what has driven her over the years to keep advocating for women rights even when the African culture frowns on it, and tries to shut her up. Her belief in the word of Jesus above all has led to liberation of many women who are bound by society and culture.³²² As a result, she recognizes Jesus as “the one who saves,” and the need for salvation from colonialism, slavery and all forms of bondage at all levels of human needs continue to be instrumental to people’s acceptance of the faith which is found in Jesus.³²³

³²⁰ Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 1.

³²¹ Zorodzai Dube, “The African Women Theologians’ Contribution towards Discussions about Alternative Masculinity,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37, no. 2 (2016): 1-2.

³²² Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 98.

³²³ Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*, 98-99.

Her reflection embraces the experiences of women and Africa in areas as exclusiveness, sexism, racism and marginalization, amongst others. In view of this, by considering Christ as the Saviour, she finds in him the power to liberate all who are under various forms of oppressions and bondages. She, therefore, considers appropriate scriptures in which Jesus is seen as liberating and exposing injustice, as well as liberating both women and men from domination at all levels.³²⁴ Her Christology thus draws from the rich experiences of Africa and African women.

Oduyoye's engagement emphasizes the need for communion through the formation of the 'Circle'.³²⁵ The formation has brought many women into one community for the purposes of theologizing, debating and the publication of more theological articles that address the needs of African women.³²⁶ In one of her publications, she states that:

Women are persons in communion, not persons who 'compete' the other ... We may need to reorient our thinking so that we see communion as a relationship devoid of hierarchical relations and power-seeking. When we have learned more about our humanity perhaps we will also be able to understand what God is telling us about divinity.³²⁷

In the community, she proposes that, there is decentralization with a minimum of formal co-ordination for the purposes of placing all women as equals.³²⁸ It is within such community that women are found dialoguing with each other.

Just like the women in the Gospel of John who dialogued with Jesus about their experiences, so it is for Oduyoye. When these women meet in the community to theo-

³²⁴ Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*, 101.

³²⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield; Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2001), 37.

³²⁶ Oduyoye and Kanyoro, "The Search for a Two-Winged Theology," 38-39.

³²⁷ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Women and Rituals in Africa," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*, eds. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoyo (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 9.

³²⁸ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 71.

gize, they share their experiences and seek for answers to their questions and problems in scriptures by reading the Bible through the eyes of African women.³²⁹

In a society in which women are identified as ‘second class citizens’ and until associated with men are of less importance, Oduyoye presents a Christology in which women are fully human and do not need the presence and thoughts of men in order to engage with Christ.³³⁰ Through the readings of the Gospels, she indicates that Jesus exposed the structures of oppression which operated in his time and also he liberated women who were under all forms of social and religious bondage.³³¹ Thus, she states that Christ is more relational to African women than what has been expressed in traditional Western theology. He is present and shines on all social relations as well as the struggle of God’s children.³³²

Sometimes Africans go beyond biological sex to define being a man or a woman by using status. They define women as individuals with lower status and men as individuals of high status. It is in this regard that when a woman is flourishing and making a name for herself, she is tagged ‘a man’, and when a man is behaving with lower standards, he is considered ‘a woman’.³³³ The African construction of the importance of a man above a woman makes it almost impossible for a woman to make it on her own.

Oduyoye challenges such status by arguing that African women have always been theologians. Through their songs and poems, they have retold the Bible to suit the Af-

³²⁹ Phiri, “Doing Theology in Community,” 180.

³³⁰ Oduyoye and Kanyoro, “The Search for a Two-Winged Theology,” 39.

³³¹ Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing*, 101-102.

³³² Oduyoye and Kanyoro, “The Search for a Two-Winged Theology,” 46.

³³³ Oduyoye, “Gender-Based Violence,” 1.

rican context. And without consultation with men, they have brought up their children in the fear of God and have encouraged some to become pastors.³³⁴

She presents an alternative Christology, within which she debates the images of Jesus as Lord, Messiah and other masculine titles as patriarchal and culturally influenced. Hence through the same scriptures, using the lens of an African woman, she identifies Jesus as loving, caring, and one who offers hope. These she defends are common traits found in African women. Just like a woman, she sees Jesus as one who “suffers with the poor and oppressed and like a mother, empathizes by incarnating into the experiences of those who suffer.”³³⁵ From these arguments, her Christology considers women as abled beings who do not need the permission of men before entering into theological debates.

She, therefore, encourages women to believe in themselves and try as much to be self-sufficient or collaborate with other women. The idea is not to promote exclusivism, instead to remind women that they, like men, are created in the image of God and can survive in the absence of the male figure.

Another element that arises from her reflections on Christ is her leadership traits. She builds her leadership on the foundation of Jesus’ words to his disciples found in Mark 10:44-45; that in order to be great, one must be a servant. Thus, she defines leadership as servanthood, and the ability to give hope to all in need of it. She asserts that, the ability to respond to the “needs and moods of the community,” as well as the ability to nourish and inspire others to bring out the best in them, qualifies one to be a leader. Leadership, to her, is found everywhere once there is the gathering of two or more

³³⁴ Oduyoye and Kanyoro, “The Search for a Two-Winged Theology,” 47.

³³⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “The Christ for African Women” in *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology: Reflection from Women’s Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians*, eds. V. Fabella and M.A. Oduyoye (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 32.

people, a leader emerges. She, however, considers effective leadership as dependent on the nature, context and challenges of the group. For this reason, she defines a good leader as one who is positioned as an “enabler, mentor and collaborator, respecting the humanity of others, enabling and appreciating their agency.”³³⁶

She has held various leadership positions as a result of her engagement in theological studies and reflections, some of which are listed below:³³⁷

- ✓ World Council of Churches/World Council of Christian Education, Geneva, Youth Education Secretary, 1967-70;
- ✓ All Africa Conference of Churches, (Ibadan Office) ,Youth Secretary, 1970-73;
- ✓ Lagelu Grammar School For Boys, Ibadan, Nigeria, Teacher, 1973-74;
- ✓ University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Faculty Religious Studies Department, Lecturer 1982-87;
- ✓ Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, Assistant Editor, 1974-76 and Editor 1976-87;
- ✓ Harvard Divinity School Cambridge MA, Visiting Lecturer and Research Associate, 1985-86;
- ✓ Union Theological Seminary, New York, Henry Luce Visiting Professor, of world Christianity 1986-87;
- ✓ World Council of Churches, Geneva, Deputy General Secretary, 1987-94;
- ✓ Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana, Adjunct Faculty, 1998 to date;
- ✓ Initiates and Directs the Institute of African women in Religion and Culture at the Trinity Theological Seminary Legon, Ghana, 1998 to date.

³³⁶ Julius Gathogo, “Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother of African Women’s Theology” *Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 34, no. 1 (2010): 2

³³⁷ Gathogo, “Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother,” 4.

Her involvement in Christology has led to the transformation of herself and others. Through her studies and reflections, she concludes that “Christology is not meant to analyse the nature of Christ, but to identify his saving acts and to cling in hope of liberation” this is because to her and to all African women, the story of Jesus is the story of One who saves, brings and lives the good news.³³⁸

Finding Jesus means entering into a state of transformation. Her knowledge, of Jesus is what has set her on the path to bringing others to him, through imparting the knowledge of the truth as well as liberating all who are under oppression. This is because; the Christ-like African woman “heals society through listening, caring and telling stories of hope and paradise.”³³⁹

Oduyoye has, therefore, contributed to the transformation of many African women who joined the Circle, read her publication, sat under her lectures and all who are beneficiaries of her advocacies.³⁴⁰

Describing her, Landam states:

Fifteen years ago, third world women theologians, including myself, were forced to use the work of first world feminist theologians as their intertexts and points of departure, simply because we ourselves had not identified the sources for third world women’s theologies clearly. Oduyoye has, since then, brought us back to our sources.³⁴¹

Her involvement in theological reflections has not only brought transformation to others and herself but also to ongoing African issues.

Few of such issues are outlined below:

³³⁸ Gathogo, “Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother,” 9-10.

³³⁹ Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 6.

³⁴⁰ Gathogo, “Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother,” 5.

³⁴¹ Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 9.

- a) Within the area of an intensified struggle against ‘fundamentalist and anti-women usage of the bible’ she has introduced the method of, ‘retelling and de-dogmatizing Christian mythology to accommodate women’s needs and experiences.’
- b) She has contributed to cultural hermeneutics by leading the way in ‘deconstructing cultural sexism and reconstructing healing stories based on cultural heritage using African and Christian mythology as her sources.’
- c) She has pioneered and promoted the enhancement of theological and ministerial formation amongst women and plans to publish women’s sermons.
- d) She is engaged in ‘retrieving and publishing women’s stories on their contribution to society as religious people’.
- e) She promotes cross-gender and cross-religious dialogues as well as is working to include Women’s Theology as an academic discipline.³⁴²

That is to say, Oduyoye has played and is still playing key and transformational role in the liberation of African women and the African culture as a whole.

Going further, She does not limit her reflections to only women. According to her, growing up in a matrilineal environment formed her orientation that both male and female were equals. At home as a young girl, there were no clear-cut chores for boys and for girls. If a female could grind pepper, then a male could do same. It was when she got married into a patrilineal system and also a patriarchal culture that she came to the awareness of gender inequalities. Invited to study theology, she entered into a field where insignificant number of women found themselves.

³⁴² Landam, “Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye,” 11-12.

Born under colonial rule and reflecting on the true meaning of Commonwealth nations, she made a decision to always, “look to the margin, to look for the people whose voices are not heard and who do not benefit from their own productive culture.”³⁴³ Thus “Liberation theology” became her theological voice offered to all who were under oppression.

Oduyoye does not limit her Christological thinking to only women, instead opens up the discourse to include anyone under oppression be it male or female, young or old, nation or continent. For example, she wrote her book *Hearing and Knowing* not for women, but for students, in order to help them link together theology and church history.³⁴⁴ Women are thus encouraged to explore issues affecting Africa at large, unlike the “Church” which limits women’s role to women and children ministries.

One reason for her attention to women issues is because, in her early days, few women were doing theology, and so when a voice of an African woman was to be heard, she was called upon. For this reason, she saw the need to find and bring together African women who had had theology as part of their general degree. Upon finding some, she coined the term “African Women Theologians” for all such women, so that together, they address and debate issues affecting the African woman.³⁴⁵

Another reason for her focus on women was to help build up African Theology. While teaching at the Department of Religious Studies in the University of Ibadan, she became partially aware that the African male theologians were developing an African Theology with a “male face”. For this reason she was convinced that “there could not be a comprehensive and integrated Christian anthropology if a feminine

³⁴³ Oluwatomisin Oredein, “Interview with Mercy Amba Oduyoye: Mercy Amba Oduyoye in Her Own Voice,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 32, no. 2 (2016): 153-164.

³⁴⁴ Oredein, “Interview with Mercy,” 153-164.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 153-156.

perspective was left out.”³⁴⁶ Thus in order to experience the fullness of the “Being” there was the need for the right representation of both the male and female sex. Since there was no recognized female face in this regard, she identified women theologies as lacking and needing restoration.

This clearly explains that her involvement in women issues is not a result of her being a female but because like men she is created in the image of God, having the ability to address any rising issue, having identified women liberation and empowerment as ‘lacking’, she set out to bring it at par to men.

Being born in an era when women were considered as second-class citizens, Mercy Amba Oduyoye has risen to the limelight of African theology, precisely women theology. She has gained international recognition in her area of study, publications and advocacies. Who then said a woman cannot rise to impact the Christian faith? Like the women in John’s Gospel, Oduyoye was placed at key moments of the African Theological History, and through her words and actions, the African women can identify with Christ. From the analysis, it is possible to identify the elements of experience and dialogue, the ability to engage in theological education and reflections, leadership qualities, independent of men, transformation, challenging the status quo and not limiting to women issues as inherent in Oduyoye’s Christology.

4.4 ‘The Circle’: The Johannine Women and Mercy A. Oduyoye in Dialogue

The following pages deal with the last step of our theoretical framework: the engagement between the text and the reality. In the study, it is portrayed as an engagement between ‘women’. What could happen if the four ‘Johannine women’ and ‘Auntie

³⁴⁶ Kwok Pui-Lan, “Mercy Amba Oduyoye and African Women Theology,” *Journal for Feminist Studies in Religion* 20, no. 1 (2004): 9.

Mercy' sat in a 'Circle' to engage in Christological reflections? This is what the reader will discover reading the last section of the chapter.

The point of departure for these two groups will be the way society defined the female gender. In the first century, women were marginalized and considered outcast as they did not have a juridical personality. In the 21st century, the period in which Oduyoye finds herself, women are still struggling with the liberation of their identity from patriarchy and cultural suppression. Sharing the same stigma, they reflect on what Jesus thinks about them.

For the Johannine women, Jesus is their advocate (11:23) and friend (11:5), the source of their hope (2:8-9, 4:25-26, 11:25, 20:17). He never looked down upon them; instead he considered them as individuals capable of participating in his self-revelation to humanity. For Oduyoye, Jesus is truly a friend and companion liberating women from patriarchal societies and accepting them for who they are. "I have not yet seen in the Jesus story a time where he referred to their gender as a means of limiting them."³⁴⁷ To both groups Jesus is the only male-figure around who considers them fully human and with whom they can fully express views without being judged because they are women. He appreciates their gender and gives to them the same space he gives to men. Around him they never feel like a lesser human being. The four women in John and Oduyoye will prefer to be in the company of Jesus than in those men from their societies.

The Johannine women are described by the evangelist as women of faith. This is due to their unconditional trust and commitment to the word of Jesus. They go beyond having faith to demonstrating it (2:5, 4:28-29, 11:27, 20:18). The same kind of faith is

³⁴⁷ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

present in the life of Oduyoye. Identifying Jesus as a just judge who liberates women from all forms of oppression, Oduyoye manifested her faith in Jesus by joining in his crusade of liberating women from the shackles of society and giving them a voice. She does such amidst the challenges present in a male-dominated society. Both groups of women exhibit the same language of faith in Jesus.³⁴⁸

When faced with the question of the kind of method they use in their engagements, both groups are quick to speak of ‘experience’ as the starting point of Christology. The Johannine women bring into the engagement their own experiences (2:3, 4:9, 11:21, 20:13) and Oduyoye brings into the engagement the experiences of an African woman and the African society at large. They all enter into Christological engagement bringing real life issues.

When confronted with the criterion for the involvement of women into theological reflections, both groups acknowledge the many differences amongst them and settle on ‘gender’ as the only connection they share with one another. Mary was a Jew, married and a mother (2:1), the woman protagonist in 4:4-42 was a Samaritan (4:9), unmarried at the time she met Jesus but had a history of many husbands (4:17-18), Martha was a Jew and a friend of Jesus (11:1, 5), Mary Magdalene was described by Luke as demon possessed (Lk 8:2) and Oduyoye is an African and a married woman without biological children.³⁴⁹ From their engagement, it is clear that no life-situation can exclude women from participating in Christological reflection.

Both groups boast about their independence from men, when they engage in reflections. The women from the Johannine community did not depend on the male figure

³⁴⁸ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁴⁹ Oduyoye further attests to this truth, by referring to members of the Circle as coming from various African backgrounds with various level of education, age and marital differences. See, Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

in their relationship with Jesus. So, is it for Oduyoye, as she constantly reminds women that they are created in the image of God and without them humanity is not whole because it takes a man and a woman to experience the wholeness of ‘being’ “So God created man in his own image...male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). Both groups agree to the truth that a woman does not need the ‘male-figure’ in order for her voice to be heard.

They also agree that women Christology is transformational, so they share their involvement in the transformation of ‘other’ lives. Mary compels Jesus to manifest so that servants and disciples saw his glory and believed in him. The Samaritan woman can boast of being not just the first female but also the first missionary to bring the good news to Samaria. Martha can testify to being the recipient of Jesus’ highest form of self-revelation and also the one to declare a higher Christological statement like “You are the Christ, the Son of God” (11:27). Mary Magdalene is also privileged for being the first to see the risen Lord and also being the first bearer of his message. Just like them, Oduyoye can attest of being the initiator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians which has brought significant transformation to many women theologians who join. She can go further to testify to being the voice and advocate for women under bondage and their liberation.³⁵⁰

In the Johannine community, women engage in theological discussions and reveal Jesus as a Prophet, the Christ, the Son of God and the Lord. Oduyoye refers to Jesus as the Christ, High Priest and Just Judge in whom there is no prejudice. Though their

³⁵⁰ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

reflections did not begin with theological education, they stress the need for knowledge as it remains key in shaping one's understanding of Jesus.³⁵¹

Both groups reveal that trusting their own initiative and embarking on the quest to find solutions to problems is the starting point of leadership (2:3, 5; 4:29; 11:20, 20:18). Oduyoye adds that all those who bring hope to the hopeless and become the source of their liberation are leaders.³⁵²

Women in John's Gospel present the reader with a rich concept of discipleship which has its goal in not just talking about Jesus but bringing people into relationships with him. In many publications and lectures, Oduyoye is seen talking about Jesus and further to introduce Jesus to African women. By encouraging women to engage in theological reflections, she calls on to them to interact with Jesus on their own.³⁵³

Oduyoye, however, stresses on the need for African women to enter into Christological reflection with the lens of a woman. She proposes the method of reading the biblical text and theological publication with women's eyes, in order to bring to light the contributions of women in biblical and church history that have been suppressed. She thus, encourages women to be more proactive when looking for the contributions of women in biblical and church history as well as in theology, sermons, hymns and at the community at large. In addition, she proposes the need for the use of inclusive theological language. She argues that what she proposes is not to fight men, but simply to bring to light what men missed out in their theological reflections.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁵² Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁵³ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

³⁵⁴ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

In summary, Oduyoye identifies Jesus as one who upheld the humanity of women and argues that the Church would have been developed if it had simply followed the words and attitude of Jesus. She identifies the current state of the church as ‘pro first tradition church’ (The Letters and Epistles in the New Testament) and appeals to the current and future leaders of the Church who are instrumental to shaping the theology to be ‘pro-Jesus’. It will be simpler then, for women to be included in all vocations of the Church’s life.³⁵⁵

4.5 Conclusion

The chapter focused on an in-depth study of Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye’s Christology. It was discovered that Jesus to Oduyoye is the concrete revelation of God. In addition, analysing Oduyoye’s Christological reflection and method, the researcher was able to recognize the seven characteristics emerging from the textual analysis including experience and dialogue, independence from the male-figure, the ability to challenge the status quo and transform lives, leadership initiatives, the ability to engage in theological reflection as well as hold significant positions. This convergence reveals to the reader then that the elements enlightened in this thesis are uniquely associated with the feminine ‘gender’ as they cut across ‘culture’ and ‘time’, by presenting themselves in the Christology of the Johannine women and that of Oduyoye.

Oduoye further emphasised the sense of community in theological reflections and introduces reading the bible with the lens of a woman, as well as the use of inclusive language to the methods associated with women Christology.

³⁵⁵ Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye, Interview granted the researcher, May 24, 2018.

Finally, she stresses on the need for the Church and all involved in theological reflections to consider the words and attitude of Jesus when addressing the needs of women, to be able to look beyond the ills and weaknesses of culture and tradition and appreciate the inclusion of women in all facet of the Christian setting.

Having accepted Christ as refugee and guest of Africa, the woman seeks to make Christ at home and to order life in such a way as to enable the whole household to feel at home with Christ. The woman sees the whole space of Africa as a realm to be ordered, as a place where Christ has truly a “tabernacle.” Fears are not swept under the beds and mats but are brought out to be dealt with by the presence of the Christ. Christ becomes truly a friend and companion, liberating women from assumptions of patriarchal societies, and honouring, accepting, and sanctifying the single life as well as the married life, parenthood as well as the absence of progeny. The Christ of the women of Africa upholds not only motherhood, but all who, like Jesus of Nazareth, perform “mothering” roles of bringing out the best in all around them. This is the Christ, high priest, advocate, and just judge in whose kingdom we pray to be.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ Oduyoye, “The Christ for African Women,” 35.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter covers the summary, conclusion and recommendations. The summary focuses on an overview of the work, taking into consideration the statement of the problem, research question and the framework that guided the study. The conclusion dwells on the main findings that emerged from the study, and the recommendations comprises areas for further studies as well as indications for pastoral practices.

5.2 Summary

The role of women in the contemporary Ghanaian Christianity is still not clearly defined and it therefore remains an object of passionate discussion. While all churches acknowledge the indispensable contribution women are making in the body of Christ, they differ in the actual role(s) women can play in their respective churches. Interestingly, both 'pro and anti-women supporters' defend their arguments with scriptures.

In searching for answers, the researcher discovered that even the New Testament is not united on the subject matter therefore, there is the need to look at the subject from Jesus' perspective considering he is the starting point of Christianity. In selecting which Gospel to refer to, in order to understand the attitude of Jesus towards women, attention was giving to the Gospel of John for two reasons. First, women are introduced in key moments of the narrative, secondly, through their words and action, John guides the reader towards a deeper understanding of Jesus' identity.

Against this background, the study conducted an exegetical and theological analysis of four selected texts 2:1-11, 4:4-42, 11:17-27 and 20:11-18. The research explored

how the author guides his readers to a progressive discovery of the identity of Jesus, through the words and actions of four female characters situated in nodal narrative moments. In the awareness that the hermeneutical cycle is not complete until the text is contextualized in the lives of contemporary readers, the research further explored the relevance of the texts to contemporary 'women Christology.' For a purpose, the characteristics of 'women Christology,' which emerged from the textual analysis, were compared with the Christological reflection of the 'mother of Africa women theology' In the person of Professor Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye.

In order to achieve this goal, the researcher employed the three-step approach suggested by Ossom-Batsa's Communicative Perspective, as the guiding framework. The first step is "adherence to the biblical text," which for this study was the narrative analysis of four pericopes: John 2:1-11; 4:4-42; 11:17-27 and 20:11-18. The second step, the "call to action in the Biblical text", concretized with the research of the characteristic elements of a Johannine 'women Christology'. The final step is "context of the interpreter and reader," which in this work was the engagement between Mercy Amba Oduyoye's Christology and the selected Johannine characters' perception of Jesus' identity.

Chapter two was, therefore, devoted to the analysis of each of the four selected text, by paying attention to the linguistic and non-linguistic elements as suggested by the narrative criticism proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin. In so doing, it offered a proposed structure for each pericope, followed by an elaboration of their narrative situation. Attention was then given to the Christological statements central in each pericope as well as in the perlocutory effects on the reader.

The exegesis revealed three major elements relevant for the study. The first was the presence at the centre of each narrative of a Christological statement professed by the respective female character. In the first narrative, the statement was implicit: “Do whatever he tells you” (2:5). This statement reveals the faith of Mary and suggests to the reader that Jesus was more than just a ‘guest’ at the wedding feast. It was his untold identity that made it possible to perform the first sign by turning water into wine, that led the disciples into seeing his glory and believing in him. In the Samaritan narrative, the Christological statement identified was “...could this be the Christ (4:29)?” In the journey of ‘progressive revelation’, the Samaritan woman anticipated what Martha states “I believe you are the Christ, the son of God” (11:27) which shows a true revelation of Jesus’ identity, that in the Synoptic Gospel was proclaimed by Peter, the leader of the twelve disciples. In the final narrative of Mary Magdalene’s declaration “I have seen the Lord (20:18) constitutes the theological climax of the Gospel, revealing the ‘risen’ Jesus as God.

The second is the effect of the Christological statement on the Johannine Jesus. In the four texts, Jesus was challenged by the women to reveal himself deeper. Mary, his mother, challenged Jesus to ‘anticipate’ the hour and to reveal his glory (2:10). The statement professed by the Samaritan woman challenged Jesus into entering into a theological dialogue with her, revealing the will of God as well as professing his own identity, as giver of living water, prophet and Messiah (4:14, 19, 26). In the case of Martha, Jesus revealed himself to her as the “Resurrection and the Life,” even before Martha confessed her faith. Mary Magdalene’s steadfastness manifested in searching for her dead Rabbi, challenged Jesus into entrusting her with the ultimate revelation – his resurrection.

Finally, the women's involvement with Jesus led to the transformation of "others." In the narrative of the mother of Jesus, servants and disciples were brought to obey and believe in Jesus (2:7, 10, 11). The Samaritan woman ran to her town, and through her testimony many came to Jesus, listened to his teachings and believed in him. Furthermore, Jesus revealed the will of the Father to his male disciples, after they questioned his engagement with her (4:30-39). Finally, the testimony (20:18) of Mary Magdalene rebuilt the community of the disciples after the 'scandal' on the cross.

The third chapter constituted the second step of the theoretical framework. Firstly, it studied the journey of the reader in the Gospel of John towards the discovery of Jesus' identity, starting with the full revelation of the first chapter (1:1-50). It further illustrates a continuum, through the words and actions of the four characters such that the 'dogmatic' proclamation that the reader heard in the first chapter was confirmed and clarified through the 'experiential' proclamation of four women disciples.

The second part of the chapter identified seven (7) common elements, emerged from the texts, that constitute what the researcher called the identity of 'women Christology'. They include the following: Experiential (11:20, 20:18) and Dialogical (2:3-4, 4:7-26, 11:21-27, 20:15-17); Independence from the male figure (11:20, 20:18); Challenging the Status Quo (2:3-5, 4:15, 20:18); Transformation (4:28, 29, 42); Theological Education (4:9, 11-15, 20, 25; 11:24-25); Leadership Traits (2:3, 5); and Holding of Significant Positions (2:1-11, 4:4-42, 11:17-27, 20:11-18).

Presented in Chapter four was step three of the framework. It began with the engagement between the text and the contemporary readers. The 'elements' of 'Women Christology' emerged by the analysis of the Johannine texts were compared with the elements of the 'Women African Christology' proposed by the works of Mercy Amba

Oduyoye. It begun with an elaboration on African Women Theologies as contextual and liberational. It proceeded to outline Oduyoye's biography and concluded with an in-depth study of her Christology through extensive reading and an in-depth interview.

Analysis of her Christology revealed that she shares similar characteristics with the Johannine women as all seven elements are present in her Christological reflection and method. This suggests to the reader that time and culture are not the determinant factors for the kind of elements that evolve when women engage with Jesus. These seven elements are considered as integral to the feminine gender, as emerged when Oduyoye and the Johannine women dialogue with Jesus, irrespective of the time and cultural differences.

5.3 Conclusion

It is by now clear that the purpose for this research, as set out from the onset — to analyse John 2:1-11; 4:4-42; 11:17-27 and 20:11-18 with the resolve of discovering the presence and the peculiar elements of a 'Christology of women' in John's Gospel — has been accomplished. Having noticed that the women in the Gospel of John and African Women Christology, as it emerged in the reflection of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, share the same characters, we conclude that experience, dialogue and community, independence from the male-figure, the ability to challenge the status quo and transform lives, leadership initiatives, the ability to engage in theological education as well as hold significant positions are considered as basic characteristics of women's engagement in theological and pastoral reflections.

The awareness that women are proposed by one canonical Gospel as 'guide' to a deep and progressive revelation of Jesus, widens the horizon of the contemporary readers

and empowered Christian women. Therefore, as the experience of Mercy Amba Ewudziwaa Oduyoye demonstrated, when African women are encouraged into theological reflections, they will be influential and beneficial to the entire body of Christ. The difference in time and context between the Johannine women and Ghanaian contemporary women presupposes that these elements are as a result of the feminine gender. The Samaritan woman was not a Jew, Oduyoye is neither a Jew nor a Samaritan; Oduyoye was born in the age of enlightenment, science and technology that the Johannine women lacked, and yet they portrayed similarities in their relationship with Jesus, and in their theological reflection about his identity.

From the findings, Jesus was instrumental to transform their lives. Jesus for the women in John's Gospel and for Mercy Amba Oduyoye is the one who considers women as equally created in the image of God (Gen 1:26) and does not treat them as 'second class disciples.'

The study thus informs readers that women are capable of holding key roles in the Christian community. They are relevant for the development of theological reflection as they present a Christology that is unique on two levels, that is, in content and methodological approach. Women Christology does not accept to be closed in the academic environment, but it is dialogical and experiential. It wants to fill the gap between academia and pastoral work and does not accept discrimination and exclusion, but it is communal.

To sum up, the thesis tells a story of a 'gender' born into a patrilineal context and patriarchal dominance faced with the challenges of being treated as a lesser human being. A gender that encounters Jesus and as a result challenged the status quo and the cultural constraints and carved a path of liberation and transformation of the self and

the other. This gender is ‘female’, it is ‘woman.’ She is worth emphasizing because in the midst of all the challenges, she still survives.

5.4 Recommendations

Recommendations offered in this section are organized into two sections: academic and pastoral.

5.4.1 Academic

The presence of an on-going debate testifies that there is the need for further studies on the subject matter. Evidence of contrasting positions in the New Testament concerning whether or not women are to hold leadership roles in the church calls for an attention to Jesus’ position and its relevance for Ghanaian contextual theology. The following areas of research are, therefore, suggested:

1. The presentation of women in other New Testament books;
2. A comparative study of ‘women’ and ‘men’ Christological reflections on Jesus’ identity in the New Testament;
3. A study of Women Christology in Ghana and Africa;
4. The appropriation of women theologies in the church and in the daily lives of Christians.

5.4.2 Pastoral

The study challenges the contemporary churches to look beyond the limitations of culture embedded in the apostolic community, and in the contemporary church, to focus on Jesus and learn from his attitudes towards women.

The churches are called to:

1. Encourage women to study theology and provide scholarships for them;
2. Involve women in decision-making at all levels of the church;
3. Make women issues part of the pastoral plan of the church;
4. Empower teenage girls and young ladies to have a voice in the church.

If this will happen, churches can finally recognize the contribution of women and the great opportunities resulting from their full incorporation in the church's structures at all levels. Churches will learn "to give thanks for all manifestations of the feminine 'genius' which have appeared in the course of history, in the midst of the people and nation; to give thanks for all the charisms which the Holy Spirit distributes to women in the history of the People of God, for all the victories which they owe to their faith, hope and charity: to give thanks for all the fruits of feminine holiness."³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1987), 31.

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