

Attachment 4C, Attachment 1

'ANOINTER,' MARY MAGDALENE, and 'BELOVED DISCIPLE' IDENTITY PUZZLES

[Other related quotations are supplied in Detail A to this attachment; italics are supplied.]

I. The 'Anointer'

Each of the four gospels contains one account of a woman 'anointing' Jesus. The four accounts are a mix of similarities and variations:

Matthew and *Mark* place the event in the house of Simon at Bethany two days before the passover preceding Jesus' crucifixion.

John appears to place the event at Bethany six days before the passover.

Luke also reports only one anointing, but textwise it appears much earlier in time, and does not specify where.

Matthew and *Mark* have the woman pouring ointment over Jesus' head.

Luke and *John* say the woman greased Jesus' feet.¹

Matthew, *Mark* and *John* all recite criticism by one or more of the others present about the extravagant use of costly ointment ("nard") *vis-a-vis* conditions of the poor.

Matthew, *Mark* and *Luke* do not name the anointing woman.

John gives the anointing woman's name simply as "Mary."

'Young' Mary, sister of Martha, has been taken as the anointer because of an interpolated remark at *John* 11:1-2 that identifies young Mary as the anointer; however, the statement appears textwise before the event occurred (Detail A, I, C).

A possibility (1):

The *John* interpolation is correct despite its text placement, and young Mary was the pre-passover anointer, whether the *Luke* account is not of the same event, or is, but out of sequence also. However, if the *Luke* verses were an out-of-sequence account of the Bethany anointing, young Mary would be described as someone considered a "sinner."

A possibility (2):

The clarification in *John* was a subsequent assumptive edition.

II. Mary Magdalene

This Mary, one of the group of Marys associated with Jesus, is mentioned directly some 14 times in the 'Gospels' (as the first four *New Testament* books of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* frequently are called). This Mary may have been referred to as "the Magdalene" after her native town or village of "Magadan" or "Magdala," suggested as having been some 15 miles northeast of Nazareth in the region of Tiberius and the sea of Galilee.² No data of her age or family background are given; but she appears as having been a person with resources, in that she is included with other women acknowledged to be using personal resources to support Jesus and his associates. Relatively recently, certain non-canonic tracts (Detail A, sub-part II, E) have tended to offer corroboration of canonic hints that Mary Magdalene bore a unique

¹ Oiling the head was a sign of hospitality and/or favor; oiling or greasing exposed parts of the body was a common healant and protection.

² See quotations in Detail A to this attachment, sub-part II, A. (The *Hebrew* letter "n" often replaced *Aramaic* "l.")

personality and position in the group surrounding Jesus.

The figure of Mary Magdalene long bore ill repute, believed variously to have been a prostitute, saved by Jesus from being stoned to death, a reformed sinner who wept at Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair, or all three. The record, however, contains no warranting evidence.³ One cause for misapprehension of Mary Magdalene's character may have been through a mistaken association spanning the end and beginning, respectively, of *Luke* chapters 7 and 8.

Mary Magdalene's name in *Luke* 8 is its only appearance in the gospels before the time of the crucifixion [Detail A, II, A (1)]. It simply is included at the start of the chapter with names of other women journeying with Jesus, which verses immediately follow chapter seven's report of an anointing by an unnamed woman "known" to be a sinner. The association appears compounded by two additional factors: (a) *Luke* 8:2's remark that among those journeying women, were "some... who were having been cured from spirits wicked and sicknesses, *Mary the (one) being called Magdalene, from whom demons seven had gone out;*"⁴ and (b) possibly false association of *Luke* 7 and 8 verses with *John* verses 7:53 to 8:11 (disputed by some⁵), in that the respective *Luke* and *John* verses sequentially occur at the same place in the books' formats.

III. 'Beloved Disciple'

One or more unnamed persons present at three reported key events is/are unnamed and identified only by the following: "the *disciple* he [Jesus] was loving," "the *other disciple* whom was having affection for the Jesus," and "the *disciple* whom was loving the Jesus...who also fell upward in the supper upon the breast of him." Over time, those descriptions have merged into one persona, referred to as the 'beloved disciple.' Initially it seemed that one of only two *New Testament* figures viably could have been the 'beloved disciple'--prominent apostle John, son of Zebedee, or possibly Joseph of Ramah-zophaim/Arimathea, referred to once as a "secret" disciple.⁶

Major consensus long has posited that apostle John was the 'beloved' disciple based on a round-robin elimination process, beginning with the premises (a) only an *apostle* could have been as near, personally, to Jesus as his relationship with the 'beloved' disciple suggested; (b) only an *apostle* would have been present in the circumstances of involved events; and (c) the presence of Joseph of Arimathea, who was not an *apostle*, compared to John's presence at times specified, seemed far less likely, while reference to him as a "secret" disciple would be in keeping with the extant political situation. Those initial premises led to a

³ Clearing Mary Magdalene's name appears not yet to be complete, comparing "...Mary *Magdalene, erroneously supposed to be the woman mentioned in St. Luke vii. 36-50*" (*New Webster 1971*) with "...*Magdalene '(Mary of) Magdala'...commonly identified probably wrongly with the sinner of Luke 8:37*" (*New Oxford American Dictionary, 2001*).

⁴ The seven-demon remark is repeated only in the also-disputed "long conclusion" to *Mark*. (Among the myriad of human sufferings anciently ascribed to demon or wicked spirit possession were muteness, blindness, epilepsy, convulsions in general, and lunacy. *Matthew* 9:32, 12:22 and 17:15; *Luke* 8:29, 9:42 and 11:14. In scriptural tradition, the number "7" denotes completeness.)

⁵ An account of frustrated Pharisees flinging before Jesus an unidentified woman they charged with adultery, wherein Jesus made the well-known statement, "The (one) sinless of you, first upon her let him throw stone." Those *John* verses, like the long conclusion to *Mark*, are both present and absent in early codices.

⁶ Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Temple governing body and apparently a private sympathizer, obtained Jesus' removal from the cross and provided a place of rest for the body. *App4C.Att1*

fourth and fifth: (d) that an *apostle* of such stature would have had to be one of the three prime apostles--Peter, James, or John; and (e) that, because Peter and James were identified by name, at times when the unnamed beloved disciple also was acknowledged as present, John was implicit in the related verses.

Further support advanced for identification of apostle John as the beloved disciple stems from perceived similarities between *John* and the *Book of Revelation*. Likenesses of style and unorthodoxy formed a basis for equating the self-referenced writer, "John," of *Revelation*⁷ with the writer of *John*, and equating both with apostle John. That collected writer's nature, then, was seen as correspondent with that of the 'beloved disciple,' which determination in turn was seen corroborated by the closing remark in *John*: "This is the disciple the [one] witnessing about these [things] and the [one] having written these things...." 21:24.

An incubating view⁸ has been that Mary Magdalene was the beloved disciple, on the basis that subjective and circumstantial data relative to her is equal to apostle John's. This view appears stymied, however, on grammatical and translation grounds:

- (a) (1) For the beloved disciple to have been female would require, textwise, that punctuation and pronouns relative to "disciple" have been rendered incorrectly in the translation of the two accounts of *John*--Detail A, III, A and C.

(2) For the beloved disciple to have been female additionally would require symbolic use by Jesus of the term "son," in his apparent reference to the beloved disciple when he committed his mother to that person's care, just prior to his expiration--Detail A, III, B.

The "Gospels" do reflect Jesus considerate and respectful of female intelligence⁹ along with the theory of genderless heirship in an eternal life after mortal death (III, D of Detail A).¹⁰ Non-canonically Mary Magdalene is depicted as independent in character (Detail A, II, E).

It more mildly has been conjectured that Mary Magdalene scribed (but did not compose, necessarily) the fourth gospel, when it is taken that *John's* distinguishedly different cast is describable as 'feminine,' compared to its fellow synoptics.

One tradition has held that Mary Magdalene accompanied Mary [A], John, Phillip and Andrew in an initial retreat to Ephesus; *Revelation's* "John" states that that book was being written from the isle of Patmos, but ultimate area(s) of residence are unknown. Proponents of Mary Magdalene's involvement with the fourth gospel suggest that she, demonstrably an active disciple, plausibly remained in John's company and continued to work; but whether she performed scribe duties fully remains conjecturable. *John* 21:24.¹¹

⁷"*John* to the seven ecclesias in the Asia...." *Revelation* 1:4; italics supplied.

⁸Noted in Worldwide Web "Mary Magdalene" sites.

⁹As one example, the "Martha and Mary" account, of two women of different disposition--the first automatically accepting woman's expected role toward things domestic; the other, not. When Martha complained that Mary, sitting at Jesus' feet and absorbed in listening, was not helping with serving, Jesus admonished, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and bothered by many (things) although few are necessary, or only one. Mary has chosen the good part which cannot be taken from her.'" *Luke* 10:41-42 (paraphrased).

¹⁰Echoed in *Galatians* 3:26-28: "All for sons of God you are.... ...not there is male and female; all for you one you are."

¹¹However, the question has been raised, why did the producer(s) of the fourth gospel need to

emphasize the writing's reliability? ("This is the disciple the [one] witnessing about these [things] and the [one] having written these [things], and we have known that true of him the witness is." *John* 21:24.) In posing the question Asimov speculated that the fourth gospel indeed may have been scribed by a "secretary" from spoken words or writings of apostle John, corroborated by the "secretary's" own experiences, concluding, "...if the gospel actually were written by a secretary, from words or writings of the apostle, it may have been that the secretary...used the reminiscences of the Beloved Disciple as...source material." *Asimov*, vol. 2, page 294.