

The goddess Kali and the Virgin Mary

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Abstract: *Comparative theology as defined by F. X. Clooney is rich in possibilities and able to lead in surprising directions. This article shows how an appreciation of the ferocious goddess Kali can, unexpectedly, lead to a heightened appreciation of the texts concerning the Virgin Mary. It gives a necessarily brief survey of the varied descriptions of Kali which, intentionally, defy any categorisation. In order to answer the questions put by some of her typical features, it studies, exegetically, a small number of texts concerning Mary, and only a few aspects of those texts, and leads to valuable new perspectives on the Blessed Mother. It does not consider the historicity of the Biblical episodes, but looks only at the evangelists' presentation of the personages and the theology. Lastly, it asks that if Jesus, surprisingly to many in his day, was called 'the Christ', can Mary be called 'the Kali'.*

Key Words: F.X. Clooney; Comparative Theology; Kali; Mary; Holy Spirit; energy;

The methods, 'scriptural reasoning' and 'comparative theology', have both been used in studying various religious traditions. However, as 'scriptural reasoning' is more usually employed in the context of the Abrahamic religions, this article makes use only of 'comparative theology' which Francis X. Clooney defines as follows:

Comparative theology ... marks acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions.¹

In his book *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother*,² Clooney compares three 'respectable' Hindu goddesses, Laksmî, Devî, and Apirâmî, and the Virgin Mary. He studies Hindu and Christian hymns by literary analysis, and devotes the larger part of his text to the goddesses. By contrast, this article briefly presents one goddess, the terrifying Kali in her standard iconographic form; it studies Biblical texts exegetically and in detail so as to avoid the charge of 'eisegesis'; and therefore, by necessity, the article largely concerns Mary. However, the same approach is used, and the same result is achieved: Mary is seen more clearly. This article is aimed principally at a Christian readership.

While, in fact, these aspects of Mary are objectively available in the Biblical text, without the stimulus of Kali's iconography they would in all probability go unnoticed. The figure of Kali, so ardently worshipped by vast multitudes in West Bengal and Orissa, puts questions to Christians concerning Mary. Due the brevity of a journal article, the questions that the figure of Mary might put to Kali's devotees must wait for a later study.

¹ Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology; Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. (Chichester UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10.

² Francis X. Clooney, *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother; Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 2005.

PART I: THE ICONOGRAPHY OF KALI

The figure of Kali has undergone the most diverse interpretations,³ arriving at what is now the typical iconography of Kali where she is shown

1. holding a sword and a demon's head,
2. in frenzy of mind,
3. triumphant as the supreme goddess,
4. granting boons,
5. projecting her tongue protruding so as to suck up blood,
6. standing on her consort, Siva, as a corpse.

These six aspects have textual counterparts. Of paramount importance, the 6th century *Devi-Mahatmya* ('Praises of the Goddess')⁴ provides the first written account of Kali.⁵

the goddess Kali ... is black, wears a garland of human heads and a tiger skin, and wields a skull-topped staff. She is gaunt, with sunken eyes, gaping mouth, and lolling tongue. She roars loudly and leaps into the battle, where she tears demons apart with her hands and crushes them in her jaws. She grasps the two demon generals and in one furious blow decapitates them both with her sword (7.3-22). ... Kali defeats the demon by sucking the blood from his body and throwing the countless duplicate Raktabijas into her gaping mouth (8.49-61).⁶

Other texts add to the gamut of her qualities. In the *Devi Mahatmya* Kali bestows wisdom and prosperity. She is "the true cause of the triumph of good over evil".⁷ She is indeed the essential energy who dwells within this world which ultimately derives from her.⁸ She has a heroic power which is different from that of men. Her power is the "compassionate, righteous, self-controlled power used in service of the good"⁹ such that the gods exclaim "What comparison can there be to your bold acts? Where [else] is there such a lovely form, yet one which strikes such fear among foes?"¹⁰

Bhavabhuti's *Malatimadhava*¹¹ in the 8th century and later the *Siva-purana*¹² develop her association with Siva – an important stage in her recognition as a goddess. This trajectory of the goddess's increasing significance will continue in the Tantric literature of

³ See David Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute. Kali and Krsna, Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 81-149.

⁴ Cynthia Ann Humes, "Is the Devi Mahatmya a Feminist Scripture?" in *Encountering Kali, In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, eds. Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 123-150, at 123.

⁵ Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute*, 90.

⁶ David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses, Vision of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 118.

⁷ Humes, 'Is the Devi Mahatmya a Feminist Scripture?' 127.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹¹ Kinsley, *The Sword and the Flute*, 101.

¹² *Ibid.*, 103.

the mediaeval period where the feminine becomes increasingly dominant and where the masculine becomes increasingly inactive.¹³

Although Kali is known early, her popularity is late. Indeed, the popular celebration of her feast in autumn dates only from the late 18th century.¹⁴ She subsequently takes central stage in Bengal, becomes the dominant deity, and acquires the title 'mother'. Ramakrishna, the great Bengali saint of the 19th century, approaches Mother Kali – 'Ma Kali' – as a child.

The six aspects of her diverse character, developed in the above-mentioned texts which cannot be analysed here in greater detail, will structure what follows.

PART II: EXEGESIS OF MARIAN TEXTS IN THE LIGHT OF KALI THEMES

1. *Kali's sword*

Kali brandishes the sword in the one left hand, and hold the demon's head in the other left hand. She has slaughtered him and freed her devotees.

In what way does Mary bring to an end that which is limited and ineffectual? In what way is she fearsome? How does she liberate humanity?

Mary the Virgin

Matthew 1:17 specifically states that there are three sets of fourteen generations. However, the third set gives only 13 names, from Shealtiel to Jesus,¹⁵ which has caused considerable puzzlement. *The Jerusalem Bible*¹⁶ suggests that Jechoniah should be counted twice. Others suggest a scribal omission or simply an error in counting.¹⁷ Such suggestions, however, pay insufficient attention to the grammatical form.

The fourteen generations are always listed in the same manner – 'N*, the father of (*egennêsen*) N*' – always with the active form *egennêsen*. The text would be expected to continue: 'Joseph, the father of Jesus', but there is a shift to the passive form, *egennêthê*. The word *egennêthê* is poorly translated in the Vulgate as 'natus' which in turn influences the English translation 'born'. It would be better translated as 'was fathered' or 'was begotten' in keeping with the rest of the genealogy.

¹³ Alexis Sanderson, "Saivism and the tantric traditions," in *The world's religions*, eds. S. Sutherland, L. Houlden, P. Clarke and F. Hardy (London: Routledge, 1988), 660—704, at 669.

¹⁴ Hugh B. Urban, "India's Darkest Heart. Kali in the Colonial Imagination," in *Encountering Kali, in the Margins, at the Centre, in the West*, eds. Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Berkeley: University of California Press), 169–97, at 172.

¹⁵ Salathiel, Zerubbabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, Joseph ... Jesus.

¹⁶ *The Jerusalem Bible*, Alexander Jones, ed. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), Footnote 'a' to Matt 1.

¹⁷ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), Vol. 1, 186.

That shift, at notable variance with the remainder of the long genealogy, is a case of the 'divine passive'¹⁸ used often in the Gospel of Matthew in keeping with Jewish reluctance to say the divine name.

Since the legal paternity through Joseph is indicated by the phrase "the husband of Mary" and the divine paternity is indicated by the passive, there is a double paternity: Joseph is father in a legal sense but God is father in a real sense. This makes for a total of fourteen generations.

The legal paternity of Joseph is important, for it establishes the right of Jesus to be called 'Christ' and 'King of the Jews',¹⁹ but why is Joseph unable to father the Christ in the physical sense? After all, he is righteous and merciful, obedient to the divine messenger, energetic in leaving for Egypt and wise in shifting to Nazareth. Similarly, why is the genealogy inadequate? The forty legal ancestors of Jesus are all Jewish and the blood line stretches back through the whole history of the Chosen People. Why are they incompetent to father the Christ?

In answer to this question, Matthew explicitly refers to 3x14 generations, making a total of forty-two. This translates into forty-two months (Rev 13:5) or 1260 days (Rev 12:6) or 'three-and-a-half years' (Rev 12:14.), which, by the *gematria* found frequently in Biblical literature, signifies the period of persecution. In other words, the seeming perfection of the genealogy is one long period of insufficiency. An altogether new approach is needed.

The focus dramatically shifts to Mary and her body. The text reads: 'of whom Jesus was fathered'. The procreative power of Israel has become irrelevant. From her body alone comes the one "will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21).

2. Kali's frenzy

Kali wields her sword in total frenzy. She is essentially *shakti*, energy, power, capacity.

Does Kali's energy free us from an inadequate view of Mary? Does the goddess open our eyes to the vigour and freedom of the Virgin of Nazareth that had been underemphasized? In what way is she 'foolish' with a divine folly?

Mary and the Spirit

While Luke 1:26-38 is replete with allusions to Old Testament texts,²⁰ the primary referent is the annunciation to Zachary.

The angel appears to Zechariah but gives no greeting. By contrast, the angel greets Mary with the words *chaire, kecharitōmenê* ('Rejoice, you who have cause to rejoice'). The word *chaire* can also "refer to the joy that greets a divine saving act, announcement, or

¹⁸ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. 1, 184.

¹⁹ C.H. Gordon, "Paternity on Two Levels," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 101.

²⁰ Especially Gen 16:7-12; 17:1-21; Judg 13:2-21.

promise”.²¹ It is not well translated by *ave* or even *salve* but means *laetare*.²² Thus Mary realises – this article considers the meaning of the story not its historical value – that it relates to the coming of the Messiah.²³ Indeed, she realises that the message of joy once addressed to the Daughter of Sion is now addressed to her.²⁴ Understandably, whereas Zechariah is “disturbed” (*etarachthê*) by the appearance of the angel, Mary is ‘profoundly disturbed’ (*dietarachthê*) by the greeting.²⁵

The angel then declares:

And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

and stops. What is Mary to make of this announcement which is pointedly similar in form to the announcement made to Zechariah? She has been given no other information and, on the model of the announcement to Zachariah, can expect none. She can infer only that she is to bear a son through Joseph, her betrothed, as did the wife of Manoah in the case of Samson,²⁶ a son who will inherit the throne of David in terms that reflect contemporary Jewish hopes.²⁷

Why does the angel stop? Is it a literary device, modelled on other annunciation stories in the Old Testament or is something more significant happening? The message, such as it is, could be understood as the prospect bearing of the Messiah in an earthly manner, comparable to the past. That would indeed be glorious. Could the angel’s message, therefore, be understood as a temptation comparable to the serpent’s promise: ‘You will ...’ (Gen 3.5)? Is the reader being shown that Mary does not succumb to the honour of bearing an earthly Messiah?

Her response (“How can this come about since I do not know a man”) “is a classical difficulty for exegetes, and no one interpretation has yet secured universal acceptance.”²⁸ Many say it is just a literary device to allow the angel to go on to the second part of his message.²⁹ Other scholars see it as a reference to a vow of perpetual virginity since the word ‘know’ can refer to sexual union, but most scholars reject that interpretation.³⁰ Others say it is just a “perfectly reasonable question”³¹ while still others suggest the

²¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), 322-323.

²² Stanislas Lyonnet, “Kaire, kekaritomene,” *Biblica* (1939): 131-141, at 136.

²³ René Laurentin, *Structure et théologie de Luc I-II*. (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie. 1964), 65. See Zech 9.9.

²⁴ Laurentin, *Luc I-II*, 148-161.

²⁵ Lyonnet, “Kaire, kekaritomene,” 135.

²⁶ Judg 13.1 ff.

²⁷ Francis J. Moloney, *Mary, Woman and Mother* (Homebush NSW: St Paul’s Publications, 1988), 20.

²⁸ John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), 173. Max Zerwick, “... quoniam virum non cognosco,” *Verbum Domini* 37 (1959): 212-224, 276-288, gives a survey of views.

²⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 70. See also McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 193.

³⁰ Moloney, *Mary, Woman and Mother*, 21 fn. 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

sentence is an anachronistic comment by later generations to the effect that Mary remained ever virgin.³²

Another approach is possible. The annunciation given in Luke 1.31-33 is an anticlimax. The greeting (*chaire*) held out the hope of Messianic fulfilment but the message is little more than a repeat of the promise made to David.³³ There is discordance between the angel's greeting and his message. Mary has been led to expect something more. Her reply is a simple and polite refusal; she will not accept the angel's message such as it is.

The possibility of refusal as an explanation – in the sense that Mary refuses the angel's message because it implies a sort of infidelity to Joseph – is mentioned by Haugg³⁴ but passed over without comment by Laurentin.³⁵

Dimly or clearly Mary perceives that the conception cannot be in terms of the common beliefs of her day. Her refusal arises from a deeper perception.

This is borne out by contrasting Zechariah's and Mary's responses. They are grammatically similar: 'how ... since ...' but when Zechariah asks "how will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, ...?" he is expressing doubt at the angel's message. Gabriel, affronted, states his authority: "I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent ...". Then, in a manner reminiscent of prophetic oracles, he declares Zechariah's offense and its punishment. "... because you did not believe my words ... you will become mute", and leaves.

Mary also raises an objection "How ... since ..." but the angel's quite different reaction shows that her response is not an act of disbelief; it is not disobedience or recalcitrance. It is not a question but an expostulation. She is rejecting the angel's message because it is inadequate. She will not bear the Messiah in the manner seemingly implied by the angel's message and states her refusal by using the "realistic present".³⁶ She knows there must be another way more in keeping with the new messianic times.

The angel responds positively to the refusal in two couplets "which surpass all Jewish religious and cultural expressions".³⁷ "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God." Of the two couplets, the second largely reaffirms what Gabriel had already said in v.32. The most innovative is the first, and the reference to the Spirit changes everything. Mary agrees.

Mary's agreement is carefully phrased. On the one hand she is "the servant of the Lord"; on the other hand she uses the word *genoito* "let it be done" which recalls the '*fiat*'

³² McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 196.

³³ 2 Sam 7.1 ff.

³⁴ D. Haugg, *Das erste biblische Marienwort. Eine exegetische Studie zu Lukas 1.34* (Stuttgart: Kath. Bibel-Werk, 1938). Zerwick presents Haugg's view in "... quoniam virum non cognosco," 214 ff.

³⁵ Laurentin, *Luc I-II*, 177.

³⁶ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 195.

³⁷ Moloney, *Mary, Woman and Mother*, 22.

of creation when God says “Let there be light” (*genêthêto phôs*). She does not say ‘I accept’, ‘I submit’, but ‘let it be so’. She is both obedient and commanding.

Her agreement counterbalances her earlier refusal. She had refused the message of the angel who seemed to be speaking of a Messiah only in Davidic terms. She requires a new approach which the angel announces only when he speaks of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Her two responses – refusal and agreement – show the transition between old and new which dominates the Lucan infancy narratives.

3. *Kali the goddess*

Siva is *sava* (a corpse) beneath her feet. Kali reigns supreme.

Kali’s exultation asks to what extent is Mary supreme and triumphant? What is the source of her omnipotence and what is the result?

Mary, ‘Mother of my Lord’

At the start of her proclamation (Luke 1:42-45) Elizabeth uses the word ‘blessed’ twice (*eulogêmenê, eulogêmenos*) with reference both to Mary and to her child, but at its conclusion she uses the word *makaria* once with reference to Mary alone. The Vulgate is more accurate, for it distinguishes between *benedict-* and *beat-* but English translation, which has the word ‘blessed’ all three cases, glosses over the significant difference between the Greek words. The term *eulogêmen-* “generally implies a wish in praise of someone”, with a future sense, while *makarios* “does not normally confer a blessing but recognizes an existing state of happiness.”³⁸ Elizabeth’s proclamation starts with the words ‘blessed’ but ends with the word *makaria* which is the climax of the proclamation, and leads to the Magnificat where Mary also uses the form *makariosin* “they will call me *makaria*” (Luke 1:48).

Elizabeth declares that Mary is *makaria* because she “believed that there would be a fulfilment (*teleiôsis*) of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” The phrase “what was spoken to her” is often understood to refer to the message given by the angel,³⁹ but the word *teleiôsis* hardly fits this view. The angel had announced that Mary would “conceive and bear a son”, which process has only just begun: she has only just conceived. Another interpretation seems to be required.

Elizabeth’s final statement, “what was spoken to her” (*tois lelalêmenois*), is echoed in Mary’s final words in the Magnificat: “according to the promise he made to our ancestors (*kathôs elalêsen*), to Abraham and to his descendants for ever” (Luke 1:55). It does not hearken back to the term “word” (*rhêma*) used by the angel to both Zachariah and Mary in the annunciation scenes.

³⁸ Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, John Reumann, *Mary in the New Testament*. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), 136 fn. 302.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

Mary is the Daughter of Sion and therefore the representative of the Chosen People, especially of the Remnant.⁴⁰ Feuillet puts it well: "In these chapters [of the Gospel of St Luke] Mary is presented as the Daughter of Sion, and the miraculous conception of Jesus in her womb is identified with the eschatological dwelling of Yahweh in the womb of the people of God as the prophets has promised".⁴¹

Thus what was said in promise to Abraham and his descendants is said also and especially to Mary. The long wait of Abraham and his Seed has come to an end. God is fulfilling his promise to them through Mary who is the supreme recipient of the promise. She has believed that the promise made to Abraham and his descendants and to her would be brought to completion and the proof of the supremacy of her faith is her conception of the Messiah.

In her acclamation Elizabeth uses the word 'Lord' twice. The first use (v. 43) refers to Jesus; the second refers to God (v. 45). The linking of the two has a Christological significance that is found again in the famous 'My Lord said to my Lord' in the debate about Jesus' nature (Luke 20:41 ff.). Elizabeth acknowledges that the child of Mary deserves the same title given to God.

This word is embedded in Elizabeth's acclaim of Mary as 'Mother of my Lord', the only title given to Mary in the whole Lucan infancy narrative, a title of no small consequence. It does not have any literal Old Testament equivalents but the mother of the king occupied a unique place in the social order. She was in fact "the first lady in the realm, taking precedence over any lady of the royal harem while she lived."⁴² Her role is found most tellingly in I Kgs 2:12-20⁴³ where Bathsheeba is visible proof of the Solomon's legitimacy. She can give him advice and intercede on behalf of his subjects. In this succinct way, Luke is acknowledging the pre-eminence of Mary and her powerful role vis-à-vis her son, the Lord.

In other words, Elizabeth acknowledges Mary as Queen. Even though Elizabeth could have claimed precedence because of her age and priestly connections, and above all because of her God-ordained pregnancy, the old woman is utterly gracious and respectful towards the young woman. The 'Daughter of Sion' is 'Mother of my Lord'.

4. *Kali the beneficent*

At the Temple of Kali in Kolkata, black goats are slaughtered with a blow of the axe, and their flesh is given as food to the hungry. Kali's right hands are beneficent: with the one she commands her devotees 'do not be afraid' and with the other she grants boons.

In what way is Mary beneficent? Is she just a channel, a mere instrument, or does she actually give food? What is that food? Are there limits to the value of that that food?

⁴⁰ Laurentin, *Luc I-II*, 152-153.

⁴¹ André Feuillet, "Les adieux du Christ à sa Mère (Jn 19, 25-27) et la maternité spirituelle de Marie," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 86 (1964): 169-84, 361-80, 557-73, at 487.

⁴² John Gray, *I & II Kings* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970), 106.

⁴³ See also I Kgs 15.3, 2 Kgs 10.13,2 Chr 15.16, Dan 5.10, Jer 13.18, 29.2.

Mary gives the Saviour

Elizabeth gives birth to her child but gives no sign. Zechariah speaks of his son's role, but in terms the angel has already given. There is nothing new. But Mary performs an act which receives great attention: "she laid him in a manger" (*en phatnêi*) (Luke 2:7).

The angel announces to the shepherds the birth of the saviour and then, in the manner typical of the Old Testament, he names the sign which contributes to "the understanding and realization of the message".⁴⁴ "This will be a sign (*sêmeion*) for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

The child is mentioned three times with two different words: *huion* (Luke 2:7) and *brephos* (Luke 2:12, 16); the wrapping in cloths is mentioned twice but the reference to food predominates. The manger is mentioned three times (Luke 2:8, 12, 17) and is further emphasised by the explanatory note that there was no room for them in the inn. Moreover, the Greek word for "laid" has resonances with sitting down to a meal. The manger is emphasized in order to explain the role of the child, which in turn reveals "God's new relationship through this child ... God [is] the sustenance of his people".⁴⁵

Mary gives the sign; the angel announces it.

5. Kali's tongue

Kali's protruding tongue sucks up the blood of demons but also the life-blood of the world since she who is Time (*kala*) brings all things to an end. Kali is the goddess of blood.

What is Mary's connection with blood? To what extent does she seek blood? Whose blood does she wish to drink? How strong is her desire?

Mary and the 'wine'

McHugh notes that if the typically Johannine phrases are removed from John 2:1-11, the account is very similar to a typical Synoptic miracle story.⁴⁶ The same basic point is made by Boismard: the episode at Cana, a miracle story amplified by later re-workings,⁴⁷ becomes a complex and multilayered text.

Mary says, "They have no wine". What does she mean by it? What does Jesus understand by it, for he reacts strongly: "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4).

Clearly Mary is expecting something but, according to Brown, none of the suggestions by commentators is convincing.⁴⁸ Feuillet rejects the idea that Mary is asking

⁴⁴ Charles H. Giblin, "Reflections on the sign of the manger", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (1967): 87-101, at 95.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

⁴⁶ McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 464.

⁴⁷ M.-E. Boismard and A. Lamouille. *Synopse des Quatre Evangiles* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1977), Vol III, 103-107.

⁴⁸ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (New York: Doubleday & Co. 1966), Vol. I, 102.

for the messianic renewal,⁴⁹ but proposes that Jesus is thinking of the wine of the new covenant, and so understands the statement in a deeper sense.⁵⁰

Jesus addresses her as “Woman”. Whereas he addresses other women in the same way,⁵¹ there is no precedent in Hebrew or perhaps even in Greek, for him to address his mother in such a manner.⁵² He does so again at Calvary. The linkage of the two scenes continues, for John 19:25-35 also refers to water, to wine, to blood, to the disciple, to seeing and believing.

Jesus goes on to say “What concern is that to you and to me?” (*ti emoi kai soi*), “a very semitic and profound phrase”.⁵³ It is found a number of times in the Old Testament⁵⁴ with a sense of disengagement whether hostile or not. In the New Testament the demon says “What do you want with us” (*ti êmin kai soi*) (Mark 1:24) and the Gerasene demoniac says ‘What have you to do with me, (*ti emoi kai soi*) (Mark 5:7), for Jesus is threatening them. Paul dissociates himself from the Corinthians in their appeal to the civil court. “For what have I to do (*ti gar moi*) with judging outsiders.” (I Cor 5:12).

Maynard interprets the phrase to mean that Jesus and Mary have nothing in common.⁵⁵ Brown, like many others such as Boismard, Lamouille and Maynard,⁵⁶ considers that Jesus is dissociating himself from Mary: she is speaking in merely human terms whereas Jesus’ only wish is to do his Father’s will. But is it so simple? These interpretations do not make room for Johannine irony and the many levels of meaning. Vanhoye, for his part, finds a double meaning in Jesus’ retort and understands it as a statement: the old relationships have gone; a new relationship is being established.⁵⁷ The old wine of the merely human dimension is to be replaced by the new wine of the kingdom of God.

Jesus baulks at Mary’s statement and goes on to say “my hour has not yet come” which forecasts that the ‘hour’ will eventually come. It will resurface in John 12:22 when some Greeks make the request “We should like to see Jesus”. Jesus responds “Now the hour has come ...”. He has understood his mother’s request and the Greeks’ request at a deeper level. He flinches at Cana and he recoils in the Temple but in both cases he proceeds. At Cana he gives the sign; in the Temple he accepts his destiny.

Thus his mother’s one brief sentence can be understood in two ways. As a request for earthly wine it is rejected. As a request for another wine it is not rejected, but leads to a sign.

⁴⁹ André Feuillet, “L’Heure de Jésus à Cana,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 36 (1960): 5-22, at 20 footnote 35.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁵¹ John 4.21; 8.10.

⁵² Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1, 99.

⁵³ Joseph Bonsirven, “Les aramaïsmes de S. Jean l’Evangeliste?,” *Biblica* 30 (1949): 405-432, at 429.

⁵⁴ Judg 11.12; 2 Chron.35.21; I Kg 17.18; 2 Kg 3.13; Hos 14.8; Mark 1.24, 7;

⁵⁵ Arthur H. Maynard, “TI EMOI KAI SOI,” *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 582-586, at 584

⁵⁶ Boismard and Lamouille, *Synopse des Quatre Evangiles*, 106. Maynard, “TI EMOI KAI SOI,” 585.

⁵⁷ Albert Vanhoye, “Interrogation johannique et exégèse de Cana (Jn 2.4),” *Biblica* 55 (1974): 157-177, at 165.

Does Mary understand her statement in the same double way? Does she use the lack of festal wine as an opportunity for asking, ambiguously, for the wine of the kingdom? Does she sense that the marriage feast of God his people is faltering? Does she sense that Jesus is the one to save that marriage?

There has been a reluctance to allow Mary any significant role in this scene. For example, "... she cannot have any role in his ministry; his signs must reflect his Father's sovereignty, and not any human, or family agency."⁵⁸ This judgment is severe. Why should Mary be forbidden to make a request? Others have a role in Jesus' ministry, consciously or unconsciously. In the presence of two of his disciples, John the Baptist clearly proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:35-36) and initiates the process of discipleship. Mary of Bethany anoints her master with pure nard who tells the entourage that she has acted in anticipation of his burial. "Unconsciously [Mary of Bethany] performed a prophetic action".⁵⁹

Mary's request in fact makes sense only if, consciously or unconsciously, she knows that Jesus can save the day. Otherwise why should she then proceed, without false modesty, to take up the words of Pharaoh,⁶⁰ commanding the servants "do whatever he tells you"?

Although Myles Bourke sees Mary's request as referring to the Eucharist,⁶¹ her words must be seen primarily in terms of the 'hour' of sacrifice, precisely when Jesus hands over the Spirit and when blood and water flow from his side. She is requesting the blood of sacrifice which purifies better than water, the true wine of the marriage between God and his people, the blood which Jesus will urge his hearers to drink (John 6:53ff).

Mary, like John the Baptist, has a perception of higher realities. She asks for the wine of the kingdom because she already knows her son is destined to provide it. She "is intimately linked, by her Son, to his work of inaugurating the new covenant between God and man."⁶² She is not simply ignorant and passive. She is inspired to ask for the "best wine".

6. *Kali standing on Siva as a corpse*

Siva can do nothing of himself but he can do all by means of Kali who is the genetrix of all that is. Kali is his spouse, while he lies inert beneath her. Kali rejoices, full of bliss.

What is Mary's relationship with the Man who hangs in death before her? In what sense is she his spouse? To what does she give birth? Is Mary just the "*Mater dolorosa*" or do supreme joy and sorrow come together as one?

⁵⁸ Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. 1, 109.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 454.

⁶⁰ Gen 41:55.

⁶¹ Myles Bourke. Review of *New Testament Reading Guide* Vol.14, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24 (1962), 211-15, at 213.

⁶² Feuillet, "L'Heure de Jésus à Cana," 19.

Mary the Consort

The two scenes, at Cana and at Calvary, can be understood only in the light of each other, but not in the restricted sense given by Gourgues⁶³ who interprets the scene at Cana on only one level: the mother who is asking for ordinary wine and who needs to be brought to faith. Rather, at Cana she had asked; now at Calvary she is to receive.

The establishment of the Christian Community (John. 19:26)

The mother is there, with the wife of Clopas and with the unmarried Magdalene. Jesus, the Man (*anthrôpos*) (John 19:5), passes over the others and addresses his mother as “Woman” (*gunai*), the woman *par excellence*, in a distant echo of Gen 2:23. He declares “behold your son”. It is a moment of revelation, a “solemn proclamation of hidden messianic realities”.⁶⁴

The mother is the New Eve, ⁶⁵ not like the first Eve who mothered the human race, but the Second Eve who mothers the community of disciples in the image of the Second Adam.⁶⁶

The handing over of the Spirit (John 19:30)

Having fulfilled the task he was sent to do in constituting the community, Jesus now confirms his act. It is the high point of the narrative according to Swetnam who states “the climax of the Passion of the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is not the death of Jesus, but a bestowal of the Spirit.”⁶⁷ In this respect he differs from Feuillet⁶⁸ and from Brown,⁶⁹ for example. Swetnam notes that “The expression [*paradidonai to pneuma*] is unparalleled in the Greek language as a description of death.”⁷⁰ The NRSV translation “gave up his spirit” does not adequately bring out the unusual wording of the Greek.

The word *paradidonai* is used elsewhere in the Gospel of John: Jesus is handed over by Judas (6:64,71; 12:4; 13:2, 11:21; 18:2, 5; 19:11; 21:20) or by Pilate (18:36; 19:16) or by leaders of the Jews (18:30, 35).

In other words, Jesus hands over the Spirit into the power of the nascent Church standing before him, as is noted by Swetnam⁷¹ and Moloney.⁷² Brown agrees, adding the caution that the act is “is evocative and *proleptic*,” for the Spirit is actually given only in

⁶³ Michel Gourgues, “Marie ‘la femme’ et la ‘mère’ en Jean,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 108 (1986): 174-191.

⁶⁴ André Feuillet, “Les adieux du Christ à sa Mère (Jn 19, 25-27) et la maternité spirituelle de Marie,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 86 (1964): 469-489, at 472-473.

⁶⁵ Feuillet, A. ‘L’heure de la femme (Jn 16, 21) et l’heure de la Mère de Jésus (Jn 19, 25-27),’ *Biblica* 47 (1966): 169-84, 361-80, 557-573, at 181. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. II, 926.

⁶⁶ Feuillet, A. ‘L’heure de la femme’ 183.

⁶⁷ James Swetnam, “Bestowal of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblica* 74 (1993): 556-576, at 566.

⁶⁸ Feuillet, “Les adieux du Christ à sa Mère,” 473.

⁶⁹ Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. II, 911.

⁷⁰ Swetnam, “Bestowal of the Spirit,” 564.

⁷¹ Swetnam, “Bestowal of the Spirit,” 565.

⁷² Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 505.

John 20:22.⁷³ Is Brown being over-cautious? The Gospel of John does not categorise things so narrowly. For example, Jesus's being 'lifted up' (John 3:13, 8:28, 12:32) refers not only to his being raised up on the cross but also to his glorification. It is all part of one sweeping movement that goes from crucifixion to ascension. Similarly, the bestowal of the Spirit cannot be limited to John 20:22. It is all part of one movement which begins at the cross.

Although Swetnam is right in pointing out that the Spirit is the "agent of discernment' ... to insure that this love will not be ignored or misunderstood,"⁷⁴ the bestowal of the Spirit in John 19:30 cannot be limited to this role. Jesus is giving the Spirit without qualification, without limit. Likewise, Swetnam is right in seeing the gift of the Spirit in John 20:22 as an "empowerment",⁷⁵ but the Spirit is given not only for mission but for the everlasting life of the Church which will abide even when its mission is accomplished. The death of Jesus and the eternal enlivening of the Church coincide. He completes his task by handing over the Spirit.

PART III: MARY THE KALI

Clooney describes the results of comparative theology:

We see for a greater distance and greater breadth; we learn to let go and then return to the things we'd seen at the beginning; we see ourselves anew in the light of the other, in a vision of self and other stripped of illusions, clutter, confusion. Then we can look more broadly yet again, to see everything afresh and newly alive, and so to write accordingly.⁷⁶

The brief presentation of Kali in Part I showed aspects which seem so alien to customary Marian piety. Yet by the process of comparative theology, they have sensitised us to aspects of the Virgin that may have escaped our attention. The process has, therefore, been fruitful.

Mary puts an end to the pride of lineage and family. In her, the female body ceases to be the object of lust and aggression. While there was nothing evil about the seed of Abraham – on the contrary, since it constitutes the Chosen People – to persist in dependency on it would be demonic. This is true of Mary's time and of every time. She has cut away this whole dimension of human history and made it irrelevant.

She is not overwhelmed by the majesty of the angel, as was Zachary in the temple. She 'stands up' to the angel because she is empowered by a higher wisdom. She is perceptive, but not through educated intelligence. Rather, there is a connaturality between her, the woman, and the Spirit. She is inspired by the Spirit to demand the Spirit. Nothing else will do. It is the 'folly' of the Spirit, not irrational but lucid and free. She is both handmaid and commanding, for she says '*Fiat*', "Let it be done."

⁷³ Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Vol. II, 931.

⁷⁴ Swetnam, "Bestowal of the Spirit," 566-7, footnote 31.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 572.

⁷⁶ Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 93.

As 'Daughter of Sion' she is the recipient of all the promises made to Abraham and his seed. She triumphs by her faith. Doing more than transplant a tree into the sea (Luke 17.6) she has brought heaven to earth. Heaven itself cannot resist, so to speak, but must succumb to her faith. If her son is King "inheriting the throne of his ancestor David" (Luke 1:32), she is Queen, "Mother of my Lord". She is triumphant in every way.

Inspired by sure instinct, she places her new-born child, significantly, in the food box of the animals. Consciously or unconsciously, she knows he is to be food for the People. She provides the food which all have sought, the one food that can satisfy every human need, then and forever.

Much later, at the beginning of the Public Life, Mary perceives that the marriage feast of God and his people is faltering. Something more is vitally needed. Consciously or unconsciously she knows that Jesus is the one who can save the desperate situation. She wishes to have the true wine: the blood of the supreme sacrifice. She is not dissuaded when Jesus balks at her request, but persists, knowing that he will not refuse. She perceives, requests, persists, commands, and achieves her purpose. She is the strong woman, and modest at the same time.

Her wish is fulfilled at Calvary. She stands there not uninvolved, not distant. She is aware of what is happening, and takes part in the sacrifice. She, the woman above all women, is the consort, the New Eve standing before the New Adam. He makes her the mother of the multitude of Christians.

Mary knows both sorrow and joy, at the precise juncture when they reach their apogee. To her in the first instance the fullness of the Spirit is handed over, entrusted, surrendered. It is the Spirit of joy and knowledge and empowerment, unrestricted, unreserved. He dies so as to hand over to her the Spirit without limit. The Man hangs in death; the Woman lives with the fullness of life.

CONCLUSION:

The method of comparative theology has been applied to the seemingly incompatible pair, Kali and Mary, and has, this article argues, been fruitful: "it becomes easier to see Mary."⁷⁷ The figure of Kali has thrown a new light on the Biblical text and shown that Mary is dangerous, perceptive, joyous, free, strong, demanding, commanding and successful. More truly than water, fire and wind – those irresistible elements – Mary is shown to be the icon of the Spirit.

In fine, if Jesus is called "the Christ" and if, as has been argued elsewhere,⁷⁸ Jesus can be called 'the Shiva', can his mother be called 'Mary the Kali'?

⁷⁷ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁸ John Dupuche, "'Jesus is the Christ.' (Acts 9.22) Can Jesus be called Shiva?," *Theology@ McAuley*, E-Journal, Australian Catholic University, 2003.

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