



April 2024

## Mary Magdalene on Film in Twenty-first Century: A Feminist Theological Critique

Mary Ann Beavis

St. Thomas More College, mbeavis@stmcollege.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

### Recommended Citation

Beavis, Mary Ann (2024) "Mary Magdalene on Film in Twenty-first Century: A Feminist Theological Critique," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 28: Iss. 1, Article 61.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.28.01.61>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol28/iss1/61>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Religion & Film by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

---

# Mary Magdalene on Film in Twenty-first Century: A Feminist Theological Critique

## Abstract

Since the turn of the millennium, several films (and one popular TV series) featuring Mary Magdalene as a significant character, or even as the central character, have been produced. A few, specifically *Son of God* (2104), *The Chosen* (2017-), and *Mary Magdalene* (2019), gained a wide audience through some combination of theatrical release, television, and streaming services. Unlike earlier productions that unflinchingly portrayed her conventionally as a penitent prostitute, these and other, less well-known films of recent decades have departed from this traditional Magdalene. This is no doubt due, among other things, to the influence of feminist theology and biblical studies, which since the 1980s, have definitively shown that there is no scriptural evidence that Mary Magdalene was either a prostitute, or in special need of repentance. Unfortunately, however, these productions tend to find another way to situate the Magdalene as abject relative to Jesus, and inevitably downplay the role of other women disciples in the Jesus movement. In addition, although most eschew the “penitent whore” stereotype, they tend to reiterate the “martyr/love story” narrative associated with prostitution in film.

## Keywords

Mary Magdalene, Film, Biblical Women, Feminist Theology, Biblical Studies

## Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

## Author Notes

Mary Ann Beavis is Professor Emerita of Religion and Culture, St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan. Her recent research interests include slavery in early Christianity, parable studies, and feminist biblical studies.

## Introduction

In recent years, Mary Magdalene has overshadowed other biblical women in the popular imagination, mainly due to Dan Brown's best-selling *The Da Vinci Code* (2003). Brown's "revelation" that the Magdalene was not, as popularly believed, a repentant prostitute, but Jesus' wife and the ancestor of a royal lineage resonated culturally; it introduced the motif of her discipleship, and it was perceived by some as elevating (heterosexual) marriage as a life choice, especially for women.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, productions featuring the Magdalene (*Son of God*, dir. Christopher Spencer, 2014; *The Chosen*, dir. Dallas Jenkins, 2017-), especially the feature film *Mary Magdalene* (dir. Garth Davis, 2019), have bucked tradition and represented her as a companion and disciple of Jesus. The 2019 movie, particularly, was, shaped by decades of feminist theology and biblical scholarship, not, as in the case of *Da Vinci*, by sensationalist speculation and conspiracy theories.<sup>2</sup>

Although *The Da Vinci Code* drew enhanced attention to the figure of Mary Magdalene in popular culture, she was a highly regarded saint prior to Brown's novel. Arguably, the Magdalene has been the most popular female saint after the Virgin Mary, at least since the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> However, western cultural portrayals of her have not been biblical but "built upon the myths, legends and hagiography of the medieval era that were promulgated much in part by the Catholic Church."<sup>4</sup> These traditions have shaped the way that she has been portrayed onscreen, mostly as a character in Jesus movies, cast as the stereotypical repentant prostitute even into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, e.g., in *The Passion of the Christ* (dir. Mel Gibson 2004).

Those familiar with feminist theology and biblical scholarship will see a problem with this framing of Mary Magdalene. Although the myth of the penitent Magdalene has been irrefutably critiqued as an unhistorical fiction since as early as 1975,<sup>5</sup> it persists in popular culture—including

in productions that use biblical scholars as consultants.<sup>6</sup> However, there has been a shift toward filmic representations of the Magdalene as disciple, apostle, and enlightened companion of Jesus that have clearly been influenced by feminist scholarship, directly or indirectly. Nonetheless, the myth of the abject Magdalene lives on; as I will show, the cinematic Mary is usually represented as a former demoniac healed by Jesus, and conforms to the filmic convention of the martyred whore, “suffering and degraded in life, but spiritually transcendent,”<sup>7</sup> rescued by the love of a good man.

Below, I will survey productions featuring Mary Magdalene as a prominent character that have appeared in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a focus on *Son of God*, *The Chosen*, and *Mary Magdalene*.<sup>8</sup> Two of these are movies, but also included is the TV series *The Chosen*, a crowd-funded, faith-based and well-received production, the first episode of which focusses on Mary Magdalene. This mixing of media types (feature films, TV series, made-for-TV movies) is motivated by the recognition that reception history involves not only how biblical texts have been interpreted over time, but also *Wirkungsgechichte*: the effect that these processes have had throughout history. All three have gained a wide, international audience, and all three present a discernibly feminist-influenced take on the figure of the Magdalene, although they remain susceptible to feminist critique.

### ***Son of God*: “Who is that woman?”**

The generic flexibility of contemporary media is illustrated by *Son of God*, a cinematic adaption of the 10-hour miniseries *The Bible* (dir. Roma Downey and Mark Burnett 2013). The movie *Mary Magdalene* (2019) was briefly theatrically released, but its availability on several streaming platforms (e.g., Amazon Prime, Google Play) has greatly enhanced its reach.

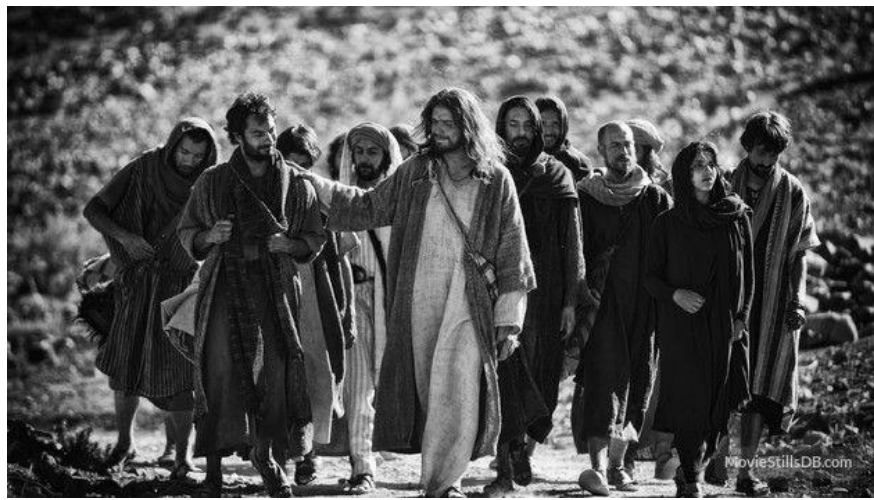
It is unequivocally a Jesus movie, aimed at a faith-based audience. Overall, it is a rather bland, safe, pageant-like production. Jesus is emphatically the main character, with the disciples very much in the background, mostly seen but not heard. However, the disciples are not, as usual, confined to the twelve; Mary Magdalene is part of the group throughout.

A personal anecdote illustrates how the Magdalene is presented in the film. The series out of which the movie is extracted was being shown on television when I was visiting a family member. She had been watching it, with appreciation, from the beginning, and it was on in the background as we were sitting in her living room. One of the Jesus episodes was playing at the time, and my relative asked me who that woman was among the disciples. It was Mary Magdalene, but her identity was not apparent to a casual viewer.

Perhaps the identity of the female disciple was unclear because the stereotypical filmic scenes of Mary's degradation, repentance, and gratitude are absent. Mary simply appears with the other disciples in most scenes that include them. She is occasionally addressed by name, and she speaks about as often as the male disciples.<sup>9</sup> As Meg Ramey notes, the New Testament episodes on which the film is based give a rare nod in the direction of the inclusion of "different ethnicities, social groups and genders" by highlighting the presence of Mary Magdalene "and by showing more of the multicultural composition of the early church in the final episode."<sup>10</sup>

Despite her presence among the disciples (Figure 1), the movie does not include Mary Magdalene at the Last Supper;<sup>11</sup> following Luke's account, she meets the risen Jesus and is disbelieved by the male disciples (Luke 24:11). Other women—Martha and Mary, Jesus' mother, the women at the tomb, Pilate's wife—are part of the story, but do not appear among the disciples, despite several clear Gospel references to named, female disciples from Galilee—and "many" unnamed women—who followed Jesus and supported him and the other disciples, likely

financially and materially (Mark 15:40-41; Matt 27:55-56; Luke 8:2-3). Thus, the film upholds the Magdalene as the pre-eminent woman disciple to the detriment of other women who might have been included among the disciples (Joanna, Susanna, Salome, Mary the mother of James and Joses—“and many others”). Simply from the standpoint of cultural propriety, it would make more sense for a group of women disciples to travel together with the men than for a single woman to tag along.



*Figure 1: Mary Magdalene (Amber Rose Revah) as Disciple, Son of God*

According to the credits, an impressive group of biblical scholars was consulted in the making of the series, including feminist scholars Helen Bond, Paula Gooder, and Candida Moss.<sup>12</sup>

Co-producer Roma Downey wrote that she and her husband, Mark Burnett,

were particularly struck by the strong women who make up so much of the story of the New Testament. The most misunderstood of them, I think, is Mary Magdalene. For some reason, a few centuries after her death, several stories were conflated, turning her into a fallen woman. Yet the Gospels actually say that she was an injured woman, whom Jesus healed of seven demons.

Mary Magdalene was there when Jesus was crucified, and she was the first person the risen Lord showed himself to. Think of what that must have meant in an era when women had very few rights. God’s love was bigger than that world, bigger than man’s law. This is the Mary Magdalene we show in A.D.—a woman of extraordinary strength, faith and courage.<sup>13</sup>

Downey's remarks, in a nutshell, echo the Mary Magdalene of feminist scholarship: the Magdalene as pre-eminent woman disciple, her conflation with other Gospel women (Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11; John 12:1-8), her status as post-resurrection witness. Downey is aware of the tradition that Mary had been exorcized, but it is not highlighted in the film. Although, as Bond observes, filmmakers don't always follow the advice of academic advisors,<sup>14</sup> certainly the unconventional, if limited, depiction of Mary Magdalene in *Son of God*—and in the series that spawned it—is due to the influence of feminist scholarship.

Unfortunately, apart from her inclusion among the disciples, this Magdalene does not have a background or a call narrative: she is simply there. Perhaps this is due to the filmmakers' intent to avoid the stereotypical scenes of her as repentant sinner, but, as the anecdote above illustrates, it makes her presence among the disciples puzzling. As we shall see below, other recent productions have tried to find a substitute for the backstory of Mary as the penitent prostitute, but by debatable means.

### ***The Chosen: Mary the Hairdresser***

The crowd-funded, faith-based series *The Chosen* has unquestionably been impactful; the first two seasons are reported to have reached over 108 million people globally;<sup>15</sup> there have been theatrical releases of seasons 2-4. In contrast with *Son of God*, which was appreciated by Christian audiences but panned by secular critics, *The Chosen* has garnered consistently positive reviews.<sup>16</sup> Rather than taking the usual "life of Jesus" approach, it focusses on the disciples. Mary Magdalene is the character highlighted in the first episode, and she subsequently joins the growing band of Jesus' followers.

In *The Chosen*, Mary is not explicitly portrayed as a prostitute, but as a young woman severely afflicted by demonic possession (Luke 8:2; cf. Mark 16:9). She is known by the people of the rough neighborhood of Capernaum where she lives (the “Red Quarter”) as Lilith, the spirit that possesses her—in rabbinic lore, the first wife of Adam, who rebels against her passive role in sex, departs from Eden, and becomes a child-destroying demon.<sup>17</sup> The Pharisee Nicodemus tries to exorcize her with no success; only when Jesus appears at the door of her hovel does she find relief. After Jesus releases her from the demons, she reverts to her true name of Mary, and finds employment in a nearby hairdresser’s shop, whimsically featuring reproductions of Ptolemaic mummy portraits of women with elaborate hairdos pinned up on the wall. This depiction echoes Talmudic references to a “Miriam, the plaiter of women’s hair” (*Hagigah* 4b; cf. *Shabbat* 104b), which in its original context may be a slighting reference to Jesus’ mother or to the Magdalene.

Although the makers of *The Chosen* claim that they did not intend to represent Mary Magdalene as a prostitute,<sup>18</sup> one blogger observes that although the bible does not depict her as such, “By noting how Mary is in the ‘Red Quarter’, *The Chosen* is implying that she is a prostitute.”<sup>19</sup> The unfortunate ambiguity of *The Chosen*’s depiction of the Magdalene is illustrated by another blog:

The Gospels inform us that St. Mary Magdalene had 7 demons expelled from her. Interestingly, they don’t explicitly say anything about her being a prostitute.... Whatever the case, it seems to me that it’s not unreasonable to suggest that she may have been a prostitute ... it may be asked how not just one, but seven demons came to afflict her. It seems to me that they may have been invited by her actions.... So, if demons attach to sinful activity and persons who engage in it, it’s possible that Mary Magdalene was possessed sevenfold because of her being a prostitute.<sup>20</sup>

Mary’s pre-redemption character is not only demonized but sexualized: she sleeps with a strange man in her squalid room, and there is a brief flashback of her being raped by a Roman soldier. The producers explain that this is because a mentally ill woman would be vulnerable to



“predatory relationships, exploitation, and other forms of sexual brokenness.”<sup>21</sup> Fair enough, but emphasizing women’s roles as followers and supporters of the Jesus movement rather than fixating on a single, and rather obscure, reference in Luke (8:2-3) and expanding it into a lurid narrative of madness, exploitation, and promiscuity would have obviated the need to reinscribe the tired tradition of the Magdalene as an abject.<sup>22</sup> As Edmondo Lupieri notes: “Luke is the only evangelist to stress this detail, which will be reproduced in the Longer Ending of Mark (Mark 16:9). This fact may be interpreted as the result of Luke’s desire to downplay the figure and the role of the Magdalene.”<sup>23</sup> That is, the notion that Mary and other women followers had been exorcized by Jesus (or someone else) is a minor detail, introduced into the Gospel in order to discount the significance of the Galilean women who followed Jesus.<sup>24</sup> As Lupieri puts it, it’s a detail that’s “not exactly a compliment.”<sup>25</sup> In *The Chosen*, Mary’s alleged possession is the “starting point” for her character development.<sup>26</sup> For modern audiences, the negativity of this reference to possession is greatly magnified by centuries of Christian demonology and pop culture sensationalism.

In the series, Jesus has other women disciples, but they do not travel with the men;<sup>27</sup> as in *Son of God*, Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a “thirteenth apostle” (Figure 2). Other significant female characters (at least in season 1) are not identified with women disciples actually named in the Gospels,<sup>28</sup> although the Samaritan woman at the well is given her traditional name of Photina.



*Figure 2: Elizabeth Tabish as Mary Magdalene, The Chosen*

Blogger Melissa Fain remarks that the three members of the series' team of consultants—a Catholic priest, a messianic Jew, and the Dean of Theology at an evangelical university—are all white, Christian males.<sup>29</sup> She reflects that the heavy-handed portrayal of Mary Magdalene would have been improved by the involvement of a “female theologian” like Carol Newsom. She is correct; although Carol Newsom is a scholar of the Hebrew Bible, Mary Magdalene has been the subject of myriad academic studies by feminist New Testament scholars since the 1980s.<sup>30</sup> Rather than depicting her as one of a number of women disciples who followed and supported Jesus and the male disciples, *The Chosen* deliberately portrays her as a deeply troubled woman, substituting demonic possession for prostitution as the primary reason for the Magdalene's need for redemption by Jesus,<sup>31</sup> rather than simply depicting her with other women as a supporter of the movement. This negative view of Mary is amplified in season 2, episode 6 (“Unlawful”), when she reverts to her life of drinking and gambling with men, only to be rescued by Peter and Matthew, and, inevitably, forgiven by Jesus. And, as noted above, although she is not explicitly identified as a sex worker,<sup>32</sup> her portrayal is ambiguous enough to reinforce some viewers' preconceptions. Thus, through a slick feat of narrative gaslighting, Mary is coyly portrayed as doubly abject—demon-possessed and fallen woman—and in need of salvation by the powerful and compassionate man, Jesus, when in fact Jesus and the male disciples, as represented in the Gospels, were materially supported by Mary Magdalene and “many other” Galilean women.

In a recent article, Rhonda Bletsch-Burnette argues that the Mary Magdalene of *The Chosen* shows the same story arc as *Redeeming Love* (dir. D.J. Caruso 2022), an evangelical production that tells the story of a prostitute (Angel) whose life is turned around by the love of a pious (and surprisingly well-off) dirt farmer (Michael Hosea), who can somehow afford to buy out the most profitable woman in the brothel.<sup>33</sup> The movie is based on the allegory of the prophet

Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer, who serially commits adultery against him, only to be restored when she realizes that her husband is the true source of her wellbeing (Hos 1-3). The biblical story clearly symbolizes the fraught relationship between God and Israel:

The Lord said to me again, “Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine. And I said to her, “You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not prostitute yourself; you shall not have intercourse with a man, nor I with you.” For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. (Hos 3:1-4, NRSVUE)

Burnette-Bletsch notes that both *The Chosen* and *Redeeming Love* utilize what film scholar Russell Campbell calls the martyr character type (the suffering prostitute) and the love story narrative structure (Michael and Angel, Jesus and Mary Magdalene) often used in filmic depictions of sex work, thus reinscribing the patriarchal (and quintessentially Christian<sup>34</sup>) framework of the erring woman saved and rehabilitated by a worthy man willing to risk his own reputation. Of course, this kind of narrative, which includes movies like *Klute* (1971, dir. Alan J. Pakula), *Risky Business* (1983, dir. Paul Brickman), and *Pretty Woman* (1990, dir. Garry Marshall),<sup>35</sup> often cites the character of Mary Magdalene.<sup>36</sup> In turn, Mary Magdalene films often reiterate the martyr/love story trope, or another of the stereotypical depictions of prostitutes in film, for, as Campbell observes:

The representation of female prostitution in the movies thus takes place in a complex, dynamic field in which the forces of male fantasy and patriarchal ideology (in two distinct guises) merge or collide, occasionally buffeted by free-market capitalist ideology, the interests of female spectatorship, and two opposed varieties of feminist discourse.<sup>37</sup>

The discussion in the next section will note some of these guises in recent cinematic depictions of Mary Magdalene—even those that don’t portray her in traditional terms as a sex worker.

### ***Mary Magdalene: The One Who Understood***

*Mary Magdalene* (2019) is not the first full-length movie featuring the Magdalene as the central character to appear in the twenty-first century, although it is by far the best known. For purposes of comparison, I will discuss three lesser-known 21<sup>st</sup> century Mary Magdalene films that portray her in three distinct ways, which I would characterize as legendary, evangelical, and Gnostic.

*Mary Magdalene: Close to Jesus* (dir. Raffaele Mertes and Elisabetta Marchetti 2000) is an Italian, made-for-TV production where Jesus makes only brief appearances. Embroidering on medieval legend,<sup>38</sup> Mary is a beautiful and impetuous young woman with healing powers, rejected by her husband—and deprived of her family estate of Magdala—due to her childlessness. She reacts by having affairs with two Roman officers—one of whom is no less than Vitellius, the general who briefly served as Emperor (April 19–December 20, 69 CE). After a gang-rape by soldiers, she tries to drown herself, and is picked up by Jesus and the disciples in a fishing boat, where he heals her of her inner demons. Subsequently, she becomes tutor to Herodias' daughter Salome. Despite her unconventional life choices, Mary is sympathetic to John the Baptist, and eventually returns to Magdala, under Roman attack. There, she sees Jesus raise a child from the dead, after which she joins the disciples.

Clearly, entertaining though it is, the film bears little relation to the bible, much less feminist interpretation. Throughout her career this Mary Magdalene is a rebel, a gold digger, a siren, and a martyr who is finally saved by the example of the superior healer, Jesus.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps because the film is a prequel to the Magdalene's discipleship, the love story narrative is absent in her fleeting encounters with Jesus.

The faith-based *Magdalena: Released from Shame* (dir. Charlie Jordan Brookins 2007) is the product of the evangelical Jesus Project, specifically meant for women viewers.<sup>40</sup> Mary

Magdalene is the main character, released from demonic possession by Jesus, but there is no implication of particular sinfulness, sexual or otherwise.<sup>41</sup> She mentions Joanna, Susanna, and other women as among Jesus' supporters. However, she and the other women are not shown as following Jesus with the men. Rather, she teaches a group of women and children about the wonders Jesus has done for herself and many other women, particularly the Samaritan woman at the well and the woman taken in adultery, who, like the Magdalene, are released from the "shame" they experienced in their communities. Underlying the narrative is a sort of "Jesus was a feminist" theology,<sup>42</sup> in which Jesus' mission is to save women from the misogyny of the surrounding society with its honor-shame dichotomy,<sup>43</sup> and especially of Judaism—an iteration of the naïve anti-Judaism all too common among Christians.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, *Magdalena* has the virtue of not simply tacking the Magdalene on as a thirteenth disciple, nor does it portray her as a prostitute—or even hint at it. From a feminist theological standpoint, it does highlight other named Gospel women more than any of the other productions surveyed here, although it submerges their role as literal followers and supporters of Jesus in his itinerant ministry. Moreover, by stressing her history of demon possession, not to mention her feminine "shame," the film replicates the "love story" narrative, "redeeming the heroine so she is a fit partner for the hero that cherishes her."<sup>45</sup>

The third of the lesser-known Magdalene films worth noting here is *Mary: This is My Blood* (dir. Abel Ferrara 2005). Unlike *Close to Jesus* and *Magdalena*, it is clearly influenced by feminist research, especially its focus on the Gnostic Mary. It is a film within a film, with the title character played by Juliette Binoche, an actress named Marie who plays Mary Magdalene in a Jesus movie ("This Is My Blood"). The storyline is aptly summarized by Erica-Lyn Saccucci:

The movie itself is about the making of a movie. In the exterior film *Mary*, Marie is cast as the part of Mary Magdalene in the interior film, "This is My Blood." The interior film takes a different stance on the person of Mary Magdalene. It draws on the gnostic literature in which Mary Magdalene is portrayed as the most devoted

disciple of Christ, her teacher. She is neither his consort, nor is she a prostitute. There are flashes throughout *Mary* to “This is My Blood” in which the life of Mary amongst the apostles, including her difficulty with Peter, is shown. The three main characters in the contemporary setting, Marie, Ted, and Tony are all transformed by the purported persona of Mary Magdalene. Marie is the first transformation. Having portrayed Mary Magdalene on screen, she had an intimate look at her life, beliefs, and devotion. As a result, she left everything to live in Jerusalem taking up where Mary Magdalene was last seen while Ted is on a journey to find himself. He has a constant need to talk to Marie because he is fascinated by her change, a change that he wants. Through Marie’s Magdalene devotion, he is also transformed. Tony, who resists transformation the most, portrays Jesus in “This is My Blood” in addition to being the writer and director. It is not until the end that he allows the words of Marie, playing Mary Magdalene on screen, to transform him.<sup>46</sup>

The film cites Gnostic writings, and features the distinguished scholar Elaine Pagels “explaining the different ages in history and how Mary Magdalene has been viewed by society in each of those eras. She states that the medieval legends claim Mary Magdalene as a prostitute because of a conflation of the different Mary characters as well as the strong patriarchy in the Church. The modern age, she says, equates Mary Magdalene as a lover/spouse of Jesus. The earliest writings on Mary Magdalene, however, describe her as the devoted disciple.”<sup>47</sup> The portrayal of the Magdalene as Gnostic revealer whose teachings transform even the Jesus figure may explain its limited appeal: “It may be easier to seek redemption as the prostitute than to lead as the disciple within the current western cultural setting.”<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, the film, although critically well received, only had a limited theatrical release in North America, and is difficult to access outside of Europe.

The main subject of this section, *Mary Magdalene* (2019), also takes a distinctly Gnostic approach, but in contrast to the Magdalene movies surveyed above, it was widely released in cinemas and is readily available on streaming services, as well as on DVD. Mary is a young woman living in the Galilean fishing village of Magdala; in the initial scene, she is called to a difficult childbed, where she helps the struggling young mother to deliver the baby and save her own life.

The spiritually inclined Mary resists the marriage her father arranges for her; the men in her family interpret this in terms of demonic possession, and try to drown the demon out of her. When this doesn't work, her brother calls "the healer," Jesus, to try to deliver her. Jesus assures her that she has no demon, releasing her from her depression. Subsequently, she heeds the call to follow Jesus.

As in several other Mary Magdalene productions, Mary is represented as a thirteenth disciple (Figure 3), although in this case, she is the only one who truly understands his mission. Peter hopes for a rebellion against Roman occupation; Judas yearns for a reunion with his family, massacred by the Romans, in the resurrection. Mary is the only disciple with Jesus in his times of greatest uncertainty and suffering, as she was "with" women suffering difficult deliveries. A final scene contrasts Peter's empire-building vision ("Every man in this room is his rock, his church upon which he will build his glorious new world with one purpose and one message") with Mary's spiritual understanding; the kingdom is not external or future, but comes from within: "It is like a seed. A single grain of mustard seed, which a woman took and sowed in her garden. And it grew, and it grew. And the birds of the air made nests in its branches."<sup>49</sup> As in the *Gospel of Mary*, the Magdalene's understanding of Jesus' message is superior to the men's, but is contested by the patriarchal vision.

Other women appear, although momentarily. In one striking scene, Jesus, accompanied by Mary, preaches to a crowd of women, one of whom challenges him with the example of a wife punished for adultery, raped and drowned by her male relatives. Jesus visibly struggles to formulate an answer while Mary looks on, but insists that she must forgive: "you are strong, sister." Despite this simplistic answer to a fraught question, the women are baptized.



*Figure 3: Rooney Mara as Mary Magdalene*

*Mary Magdalene* is reminiscent of the “Mary” figure of several Gnostic writings,<sup>50</sup> especially the *Gospel of Mary* in which post-resurrection, Peter is sceptical of Mary’s teachings (cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 114; *Pistis Sophia* 36). The mustard seed parable quoted at the end of the film is found in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 4:30-32; Matt 13:31-42), but the particular form quoted is closest to that of the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* (Saying 20). The feminist scholar Joan E. Taylor was one of the advisors for the film, and she has expressed her appreciation of the outcome, as has her colleague Helen Bond.<sup>51</sup> However, most reviewers found the movie to be lackluster.<sup>52</sup> Several critics complain of the film’s “feminist” approach (it is “a defense of Mary Magdalene”; she is cast as “a feminist pioneer who played a vital role in Christ’s final days”; Jesus “tells the women they are equal to their husbands”),<sup>53</sup> but as Richard Roeper astutely observes: “Mary Magdalene lives in Jesus’ shadow, even in her own movie.”<sup>54</sup> Moreover, although she is not portrayed as the traditional penitent, her story follows the “martyr/love story” pattern, with a touch of the “rebel” against the strictures of her (Jewish) social setting.<sup>55</sup>



### **In Conclusion: Mary Stands Alone**

Most of the productions discussed above make a valiant attempt to portray the Magdalene as other than a repentant sexual sinner. This is no doubt due to the decades of feminist scholarship dedicated to “setting the record straight” about the complete lack of biblical evidence for the “penitent whore” tradition. However, most of these films substitute demon possession (real or metaphorical) for prostitution, which, I would argue, is not much of an improvement. Admittedly, it is more “biblical” in that it disproportionately magnifies the detail hinted at by Luke 8:2-3 and in Mark’s secondary ending (Mark 16:9). However, it is telling that Jesus movies prior to the turn of the millennium seldom depicted the Magdalene this way; rather, she was portrayed in accordance with the western Christian tradition of the repentant prostitute. Both the demoniac and penitent roles cast Mary in the martyr/love story mode, long associated with filmic Magdalenes, as an abject, a vulnerable, shamed woman, stripped of human dignity, literally or figuratively grovelling at Jesus’ feet—as she is all too often portrayed in western art. From the filmmakers’ perspective, this representation both approximates viewers’ entrenched expectations of a degraded Magdalene in need of salvation by a heroic Jesus, and provides a dramatic—even sensational—equivalent to the “penitent prostitute” stereotype. The cinematic Mary remains youthful and attractive, rather than, as is much more historically feasible, a well-off middle-aged (or older) patron of the Jesus movement: perhaps a widow. In the three main productions surveyed above—*Son of God*, *The Chosen*, and *Mary Magdalene*—Mary tags along as a thirteenth disciple, rather than as one of “many” women who, according to the Gospels (Mark 15:41; Matt 17:55; Luke 8:3) travelled with the group and bankrolled them.

The Gnostic Mary is particularly helpful for illustrating the contesting constructions of the Magdalene in film, and how they are responded to by the church and in popular culture. Even in

the *Gospel of Mary*, Mary is disbelieved by Peter and Andrew after hearing her revelation. And even though several Gnostic scriptures, like the films, challenge popular representations of Mary, within the works themselves, her agency and power are undermined by patriarchal presuppositions.<sup>56</sup> Although all these works have positive aspects, and most can be said to have been influenced to some extent by feminist scholarship, nonetheless Mary Magdalene, abject though she may be, eclipses the other women, and Jesus eclipses Mary.

---

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Beavis, "The Deification of Mary Magdalene," *Feminist Theology* 21, no. 2 (2012): 145-54.

<sup>2</sup> See discussion in Mary Ann Beavis, "The Cathar Mary Magdalene and the Sacred Feminine: Pop Culture Legend vs. Medieval Doctrine," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 24, no. 3 (2012): 419-31; *ibid.*, "From Holy Grail to Lost Gospel: Margaret Starbird and Mary Magdalene Scholarship," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 27, no. 3 (2015): 236-49.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Marjorie Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth: The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphoses* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1993); Katherine L. Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalene: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Erica-Lynn Saccucci, "From Disciple to Deviant: the Magdalene in Contemporary Popular Film," in *Mary Magdalene from the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond*, ed. Edmondo Lupieri (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 318-36. For further essays on Mary Magdalene in film, see the recent Special Issue of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus: Mary Magdalene in Film* 20 (2022).

<sup>5</sup> Elisabeth, Schüssler Fiorenza, "Mary Magdalene: Apostle to the Apostles," *Union Theological Seminary Journal* (April 1975): 22-24.

<sup>6</sup> On the fraught relationship between Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* and scholarship, see <https://jcpa.org/article/mel-gibsons-the-passion-of-the-christ-legitimizing-anti-semitism/>, accessed September 18, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> I am indebted to Rhonda Bletsch-Burnette ("'Tis Pity She's (Still) a Whore: Mary Magdalene in *The Chosen*," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 20 [2022]: 1-10) for this insight. See Russell Campbell, *Marked Women: Prostitutes and Prostitution in the Cinema* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 126.

<sup>8</sup> For other examples, see the discussion of *Mary Magdalene* (2019) below.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie\\_script.php?movie=son-of-god](https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=son-of-god), accessed September 17, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Meg Ramey, "The History Channel's *The Bible: An Epic*?", in *The Bible on Television*, ed. Helen K. Bond and Edward Adams (London: T. & T. Clark, 2020), 245.

<sup>11</sup> In Mark 14:12, “disciples” go ahead to prepare the Passover meal, and they are joined by the twelve (14:17), leaving open the possibility that some of them were women, especially in view of women’s role in food preparation.

<sup>12</sup> Ramey, “History Channel,” 224 n. 3.

<sup>13</sup> <https://guideposts.org/positive-living/entertainment/movies-and-tv/roma-downey-the-most-dangerous-prayer/>, accessed September 21, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Helen K. Bond, “The Nativity on TV,” in *The Bible on Television*, ed. Helen K. Bond and Edward Adams (London: T. & T. Clark, 2020), 137-59; see also Taylor, “Mary Magdalene in Film,” 207 n. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ruth Graham, “Jesus Christ, Streaming Star,” *New York Times* (November 25, 2022).

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/the\\_chosen/s01/reviews](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/the_chosen/s01/reviews), accessed September 21, 2023

<sup>17</sup> Wojciech Kosior, “A Tale of Two Sisters: The Image of Eve in Early Rabbinic Literature and Its Influence on the Portrayal of Lilith in the Alphabet of Ben Sira,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 32 (2018): 112–30.

<sup>18</sup> <https://academic.logos.com/tag/the-chosen/>, accessed December 27, 2022; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRN3PtFebyo>, accessed October 12, 2023. See also <https://www.thebibleartist.com/post/mary-magdalene-in-the-chosen-adapting-biblical-characters>, accessed September 18, 2023; Taylor, “Mary Magdalene in Film,” 206.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin Keating, <https://www.thebibleartist.com/post/mary-magdalene-lilith-the-redeemer-exploring-the-chosen-with-youth>, accessed December 27, 2022: “In *The Chosen*, it is not entirely clear whether Mary Magdalene was engaging in prostitution before the events of Season 1, Episode 1. She is clearly sleeping with a man out of wedlock when the episode begins and they are sleeping together in ‘the Red Quarter’ - a sleazy part of town.” See also <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/filmchat/2020/05/the-chosen-season-one-episode-one.html>, accessed September 19, 2023; <https://emojicut.com/wiki/what-is-the-red-quarter-in-the-chosen>, accessed September 23, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.chariotfire.com/2020/07/st-mary-magdalene-in-the-1st-episodes-of-the-chosen/>, accessed September 21, 2023. Keating is so convinced that Mary is portrayed as a prostitute that he rejects the official Twitter for the series’ explicit avowal that she is not (<https://www.thebibleartist.com/post/mary-magdalene-in-the-chosen-adapting-biblical-characters>, accessed September 21, 2023). Even the distinguished biblical scholar Joan Taylor assumes that the Magdalene of *The Chosen* is a prostitute, although admittedly, the presentation in question was specifically on Jesus movies, and her remark that Mary was depicted as a prostitute in the series was in answer to a question from the audience, i.e., Taylor had not specifically researched the producers’ intent (see <https://futurechurch.org/women-in-church-leadership/mary-of-magdala/portraying-mary-magdalene-today-the-movie-versions-with-joan-taylor-ph-d/>, accessed September 23, 2023). However, see also Taylor, “Mary Magdalene in Film,” 206: “In *The Chosen*, a posted commentary affirms there is no basis to any association between Mary Magdalene and the penitent sinner of Luke 7.”

<sup>21</sup> <https://academic.logos.com/tag/the-chosen/>, accessed December 27, 2022. This interview, posted by Tavis Bohlinger on August 19, 2020, is unfortunately no longer available in full online. However, its content is confirmed by the YouTube “Deep Dive” on Season 1, Episode 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRN3PtFebyo>, accessed October 13, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> See Ian McCormick, ed. *Sexual Outcasts, 1750-1850, Volume III: Prostitution* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Edmondo Lupieri, “The Earliest Magdalene: Varied Portrayals in Early Gospel Narratives,” in *Mary Magdalene from the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond*, ed. Edmondo Lupieri (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 14 n. 3.

<sup>24</sup> See Jane D. Schaberg, “Luke,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 286-88.

---

<sup>25</sup> Lupieri, “Earliest Magdalene,” 14.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRN3PtFebyo>, accessed October 13, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Bletsch-Burnette (“‘Tis Pity,” 207, n. 6) notes that “When Jenkins’s consultants argued a single Jewish woman would not travel with a group of unrelated males, he added a travel montage suggesting that Mary slept with a separate host family to preserve her modesty and reputation.” See “Deep Dive”, Episode 8, Season 1: <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch/deepDive/95295b6b-f217-4899-92e4-ce168fca4f30?ap=true>.”

<sup>28</sup> These are Susanna, Joanna (Luke 8:3), Salome, Mary the mother of James and Joses (Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1), and the “other Mary” (Matt 27:61; 28:1). To this number, Mary and Martha of Bethany should be added (Luke 10:38-42; John 11-12).

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.figtreechristian.org/meditations/review-the-chosen-the-good-and-bad>, accessed September 19, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., Haskins, *Mary Magdalene*; Esther De Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Holly Hearon, *The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004); Ann Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*, HTS 31 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); F. Stanley Jones, ed., *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*, SBLSymS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).; Lupieri, ed., *Mary Magdalene*; Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz, ed., *Rediscovering the Marys: Maria, Mariamne, Miriam* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> In Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9, the passive construction leaves open the possibility that her release happened before she met Jesus.

<sup>32</sup> On the need for sensitivity to the history of Mary Magdalene in relation to sex workers, see Mary Setterholm, Mary Setterholm, “Why the Church Needs a Prostitutes’ Saint,” in *Mary Magdalene from the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond*, ed. Edmondo Lupieri (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 417-48.

<sup>33</sup> Bletsch-Burnette, “‘Tis Pity.”

<sup>34</sup> See Campbell, *Marked Women*, 93, 126, 135, 136, 179, 210, 319, 362, 402.

<sup>35</sup> For further examples, see *ibid.*, 319-340.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2006, 132, 143, 146, 163, 179, 180, 381.

<sup>37</sup> The two discourses are anti-prostitution and prostitutes’ rights (*ibid.*, 2006, 39).

<sup>38</sup> The most influential medieval legend associated with Mary Magdalene is found in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* (1275), translated by William Caxton in 1463. See <https://www.christianiconography.info/goldenLegend/magdalene.htm>, accessed March 14, 2024.

<sup>39</sup> See *Ibid.*, 21-39, 61-81, 147-165.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.jesusfilm.org/partners/resources/strategies/women/watch-and-share/>, accessed September 10, 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Although to the modern viewer, demonic possession may imply sinfulness, in antiquity, it was regarded more like an infection by a malign external influence (see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Devil, Demonology, and Witchcraft: The Development of Christian Beliefs in Evil Spirits* [New York: Doubleday, 1968]).

<sup>42</sup> See Leonard Swidler’s influential, and widely available, 1970 article “Jesus was a Feminist,” <https://godswordtowomen.org/feminist.htm>, accessed October 3, 2023.

- 
- <sup>43</sup> Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 135-155.
- <sup>44</sup> Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2009), 131-43.
- <sup>45</sup> Campbell, *Marked Women*, 319.
- <sup>46</sup> Saccucci, "The Magdalene", 330.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* In contrast, another recent French film, *Magdala* (dir. Damien Manivel 2022) that relies on her depiction in the *Golden Legend*, represents Mary Magdalene as a recluse living alone in the forest, longing for her lost love, Jesus. For an appreciative review, see <https://www.screendaily.com/reviews/magdala-cannes-review/5171262.article>. As the reviewer observes, "this sort of slow cinema is not attempting to court mainstream audiences." I agree with Taylor that the film is yet another iteration of the "love story" trope (Joan E. Taylor, "Mary Magdalene in Film: Response JSHJ," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 20 [2022]: 208).
- <sup>49</sup> <https://www.stockq.org/moviescript/M/mary-magdalene.php>, accessed December 27, 2022. The parable is found in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 4:30-32; Matt 13:31-32), as well as in the *Gospel of Thomas* (Saying 20).
- <sup>50</sup> Mary Ann Beavis, "Which Mary, and Why it Matters," In *Rediscovering the Marys: Maria, Mariamne, Miriam*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 238.
- <sup>51</sup> <https://www.christianorigins.div.ed.ac.uk/2018/03/07/joan-taylor-and-helen-bond-talk-mary-magdalene/>, accessed September 28, 2023. It should be noted that the film deviates from Taylor's finding that the "Magdala" identified as Mary's hometown did not exist by that name in the first century; see Taylor, "Missing Magdala and the Name of Mary 'Magdalene,'" *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 146, no. 3 (2014): 205-223.
- <sup>52</sup> [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/mary\\_magdalene\\_2019](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/mary_magdalene_2019), accessed September 28, 2023.
- <sup>53</sup> E.g., [https://www.pajiba.com/film\\_reviews/review-easter-and-passover-weekend-was-the-right-time-for-mary-magdalene.php](https://www.pajiba.com/film_reviews/review-easter-and-passover-weekend-was-the-right-time-for-mary-magdalene.php); <https://www.nme.com/reviews/mary-magdalene-rooney-mara-joaquin-phoenix-2261054>; <https://wtop.com/entertainment/2019/04/movie-review-vague-mary-magdalene-quietly-hopes-to-redefine-a-biblical-icon/>, accessed September 28, 2023. For a more positive assessment, see <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/mary-magdalene-2019>, accessed October 1, 2023.
- <sup>54</sup> <https://chicago.suntimes.com/entertainment/mary-magdalene-movie-review-rooney-mara-joaquin-phoenix-jesus/>, September 28, 2023.
- <sup>55</sup> On the anti-Jewish features of this portrayal, see Taylor, "Mary Magdalene in Film," 207.
- <sup>56</sup> I am indebted to one of the anonymous peer reviews for this insight.

## References

- Beavis, Mary Ann. "The Cathar Mary Magdalene and the Sacred Feminine: Pop Culture Legend vs. Medieval Doctrine." *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 24, no. 3 (2012): 419-31.
- Beavis, Mary Ann. "The Deification of Mary Magdalene." *Feminist Theology* 21, no. 2 (2012): 145-54.
- Beavis, Mary Ann. "From Holy Grail to Lost Gospel: Margaret Starbird and Mary Magdalene Scholarship." *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 27, no. 3 (2015): 236-49.
- Beavis, Mary Ann. "Which Mary, and Why it Matters." Pages 25-38 in *Rediscovering the Marys: Maria, Mariamne, Miriam*. Edited by Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.

- Bletsch-Burnette, Rhonda. "'Tis Pity She's (Still) a Whore: Mary Magdalene in *The Chosen*." *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 20 (2022): 1-10.
- Bond, Helen K. "The Nativity on TV." Pp. 137-59 in *The Bible on Television*. Edited by Helen K. Bond and Edward Adams. London: T. & T. Clark, 2020.
- Brock, Ann Graham Brock *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*. HTS 31. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Brown, Dan. *The Da Vinci Code*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Campbell, Russell. *Marked Women: Prostitutes and Prostitution in the Cinema*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
- De Boer, Esther. *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997.
- Graham, Ruth. "Jesus Christ, Streaming Star." *New York Times* (November 25, 2022).
- Haskins, Susan. *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1993.
- Hearon, Holly. *The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004.
- Jansen, Katherine L. *The Making of the Magdalene: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Jones, F. Stanley, ed. *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*. SBLSymS 19. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Kelly, Henry Ansgar. *The Devil, Demonology, and Witchcraft: The Development of Christian Beliefs in Evil Spirits*. New York: Doubleday, 1968.
- Kosior, Wojciech. "A Tale of Two Sisters: The Image of Eve in Early Rabbinic Literature and Its Influence on the Portrayal of Lilith in the Alphabet of Ben Sira." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 32 (2018): 112-30.
- Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Misunderstood Jew*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2009.
- Lupieri, Edmondo. "The Earliest Magdalene: Varied Portrayals in Early Gospel Narratives." Pp. 11-25 in *Mary Magdalene from the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond*. Edited by Edmondo Lupieri. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Malvern, Marjorie. *Venus in Sackcloth: The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphoses*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975.
- McCormick, Ian, ed. *Sexual Outcasts, 1750-1850, Volume III: Prostitution*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Ramey, Meg. "The History Channel's *The Bible*: An Epic?." Pages 223-46. In *The Bible on Television*. Edited by Helen K. Bond and Edward Adams. London: T. & T. Clark, 2020.
- Saccucci, Erica-Lynn. "From Disciple to Deviant: the Magdalene in Contemporary Popular Film." Pages 318-36 in *Mary Magdalene from the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond*. Edited by Edmondo Lupieri. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Schaberg, Jane D. "Luke." Pages 275-92 in *Women's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992.

---

Schaberg, Jane D. *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament*. New York: Continuum, 2002.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. "Mary Magdalene: Apostle to the Apostles." *Union Theological Seminary Journal* (April 1975): 22-24.

Setterholm, Mary. "Why the Church Needs a Prostitutes' Saint." Pp. 417-48. *Mary Magdalene from the New Testament to the New Age and Beyond*. Edited by Edmondo Lupieri. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Taylor, Joan E. "Mary Magdalene in Film: Response JSHJ." *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 20 (2022): 202-208.

Taylor, Joan E. "Missing Magdala and the Name of Mary 'Magdalene'." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 146, no. 3 (2014): 205-223.

Torjesen, Karen Jo. *When Women Were Priests*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

### Filmography

Brickman, Paul, dir. *Risky Business*. Geffen Film Company, 1983.

Brookins, Charlie Jordan, dir. *Magdalena: Released from Shame*. Inspirational Films, 2007.

Caruso, D.J. dir. *Redeeming Love*. Nthibah Pictures, 2022.

Davis, Garth, dir. *Mary Magdalene*. See-Saw Films, 2019.

Downey, Roma and Mark Burnett, dir. *The Bible*. Lightworkers Media, 2013.

Ferrara, Abel, dir. *Mary: This is My Blood*. Wild Bunch, 2005.

Gibson, Mel, dir. *The Passion of the Christ*. Icon Productions, 2004.

Jenkins, Dallas, dir. *The Chosen*. Out of Order Studios, 2017- .

Manivel, Damien, dir. *Magdala*. MLD Films, 2022.

Marshall, Garry, dir. *Pretty Woman*. Touchstone Pictures, 1990.

Mertes, Raffaele and Elisabetta Marchetti, dir. *Mary Magdalene: Close to Jesus*. Epsilon TV Productions, 2000.

Pakula, Alan J., dir. *Klute*. Gus Productions, 1971.

Spencer, Christopher, dir. *Son of God* dir. Hearst Entertainment, 2014.