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JAMES D. TABOR

MARY (PERSON) [Gk *Maria*; *Mariam*]. The name of six or seven women mentioned in the NT. The name derives from Heb *miryām*.

1. The mother of Jesus. See **MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS**.

2. Mary Magdalene. One of the most prominent of the Galilean women to have followed Jesus. Although none of the canonical gospels tells the story of the initial encounter between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, she appears in all four accounts, most significantly as a witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

a. **The NT.** The city from which Mary came is located at the S end of the Plain of Gennesaret, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee to the N of Tiberias. The Talmud situates a city known as "the Fish Tower" (Aram *Migdal nūnayyā*) at a distance of 2000 cubits from Tiberias (b. *Pesah.* 46a). The city is not mentioned by its proper name in the Bible, although a derived adjectival form *Magdalēnē* occurs in the NT (Matt 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1, 9; Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1, 18), exclusively as a description of Mary. See **MAGDALA (PLACE)**. Given its etymology, the city is probably to be identified with the *Tariqchaeae*, known to Josephus (*JW* 2.21.3–4). The presence of a hippodrome in the city is an indication that its population of approximately 40,000 was predominantly gentile. Among the Jews the city enjoyed a poor reputation; later rabbis attributed the fall of the city to its licentiousness (*Midr. Lam.* 2:2).

(1) **Luke.** According to Luke, a Mary called Magdalene (*Maria hē kaloumenē Magdalēnē*, only in Luke 8:2) was one of a large group of women who provided for Jesus and the Twelve out of their means (Luke 8:2). The group included some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. One of these was Mary "from whom seven demons had gone out" (Luke 8:2; cf. Mark 16:9), an indication that because of her serious condition, an exorcism had been performed on her, most probably by Jesus himself. Mary was with the band of Galilean women who

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accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem, witnessed his crucifixion from a distance, observed the tomb with his body in position, went to the tomb with the burial spices which they had prepared, found the tomb empty, and experienced the startling appearance of two men in dazzling apparel (Luke 23:49, 55–56; 24:1–9). In the Lukan account, Mary is specifically identified as one of those who told the apostles about the Easter day events, only to have the report fall on deaf ears (Luke 24:10–11; cf. Mark 16:9–11).

(2) **Mark.** In the earlier, Markan narrative, the presence of Mary Magdalene at the crucifixion (Mark 15:40), the tomb (Mark 15:47), and the empty tomb (Mark 16:1) provides a link of continual witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. In this role Mary is accompanied by Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome (whose presence at the tomb is not specifically cited in Mark 15:47), but the role of Mary is preeminent since she is always cited in the first instance. These three women are clearly identified as disciples of Jesus ("they followed him," Mark 15:41) who ministered to him. Their purpose in going to the tomb on the day after the Sabbath was to anoint Jesus' body. At the site, they discovered the open tomb and heard the paschal proclamation. Overcome with astonishment, they were afraid to tell anyone about the occurrence.

The so-called shorter ending of Mark, found in a few of the ancient versions, and some of the Greek manuscripts (but none earlier than the 7th century) corrects this image with a description of the women narrating the events to Peter and his companions.

(3) **Matthew.** Matthew's gospel closely follows the Markan account in identifying Mary Magdalene as one who observed the crucifixion (Matt 27:56), the burial (Matt 27:61), and the (empty) tomb which she had come out to see (Matt 28:1). Matthew, however, departs from the Markan story in citing the names and purpose of the women who accompanied Mary Magdalene. Matthew also significantly varies from Mark insofar as Matthew states that the women joyfully, albeit fearfully, ran from the empty tomb in order to tell the disciples the good news. Subsequently they encountered the risen Jesus who likewise entrusted to them the task of announcing the paschal proclamation (Matt 28:9–10). This pair of verses, which describe the women taking hold of Jesus' feet and worshipping him, is a literary doublet of the account of the appearance of the angel of the Lord.

(4) **John.** Mary is abruptly introduced into the Johannine narrative—similar, in many respects, to the Matthean—at John 19:25, where she is portrayed as being at the cross in the company of the mother of Jesus and Mary, the wife of Clopas. The Fourth Gospel does not portray her as an observer of the burial, but it does include a significant narrative account of Mary's presence at the empty tomb. In John 20:1–2, an unaccompanied Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb, which she finds empty, and thereupon runs to tell Peter that "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb."

Mary's solitary presence at the tomb is an example of Johannine dramatization, but the evangelist further exploits the tradition about her in an eight-verse narrative, where a scene is set at the tomb itself (John 20:11–18).

The narrative, without parallel in the Synoptic Gospels, contains the only two NT passages in which Mary Magdalene is simply called "Mary" (John 20:11, 16). Although an apologetic motif is present in the narrative insofar as Mary, representing the disciples (John 20:2, 13; cf. v 15), expresses the view that Jesus' body had been taken away by someone else, the dominant theme of the narrative is the development of Mary's faith.

Initially she had seen the empty tomb and had reacted in merely human fashion with tearful distress. Subsequently she saw Jesus, but did not understand who he was. The call of his voice allows her to recognize him but she believes him to be as he previously was, a teacher who could be physically embraced. Jesus then reveals that his resurrection implies his return to the Father. Commissioned to announce the meaning of the resurrection to the disciples, Mary makes the paschal proclamation: "I have seen the Lord." Thus Mary Magdalene typifies adequate faith in the resurrection of Jesus.

b. Other Traditions. From about the 6th century in the Western Church, but not in the Eastern, traditions developed which tended to identify Mary Magdalene with the sinful woman of Luke 7:36–50 and/or Mary of Bethany (John 11:1–12:8; Luke 10:38–42), but there is no historical evidence on which to base such identifications. Indeed, the weight of evidence of the canonical gospels would seem to militate against such identifications.

Undoubtedly the unsavory reputation of the city of Magdala contributed to the identification of Mary Magdalene and the woman of Luke 7:36–50. However, Mary Magdalene is formally introduced into the Lukan narrative at 8:2 (just two verses after 7:50), with no suggestion that she is a figure already known to the gospel's readership. Counterposed to the identification of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany is the fact that Bethany is a Judean site while Magdala is a city of Galilee and Mary Magdalene is clearly portrayed as a Galilean woman in the Synoptic accounts.

Despite the unanimous witness of the fourfold gospel to Mary Magdalene's function in the resurrection narratives, she is not cited in the list of authoritative witnesses to the resurrection given by Paul in 1 Cor 15:5–6. Nonetheless, her role as an Easter figure and as the first resurrection witness is amply attested in later literature, most of it of gnostic origin.

One designedly anti-gnostic text which tells about Mary Magdalene is the 2d-century *Epistula Apostolorum*. The Ethiopic version (the role is played by Martha in the Coptic version) tells the story of Mary Magdalene, at Jesus' command, telling the disciples about the resurrection. According to the account, the disciples refused to accept both her testimony and that of a second woman. They did not come to believe until Jesus himself appeared to them.

c. Gnostic Literature. The 2d-century *Gospel of Peter*, of less than fully orthodox, but not yet fully gnostic, tendencies, specifically identifies Mary Magdalene as a "woman disciple of the Lord" who, for fear of the Jews, did not weep (as was customary) at the burial of Jesus. Determined nonetheless to weep at the sepulcher, she went to the tomb accompanied by other women. Having discovered the empty tomb and heard the paschal proclamation from a

young man in shining robes, they fled the site in fear (*Gos. Pet.* 12–13).

The Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* (ca. 200 A.D.), attests to a competition between Mary Magdalene and Peter and the special relationship that bound Mary to Jesus. In the final logion (*Gos. Thom.* 114), Peter says to Jesus: "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life." Jesus responds: "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male (a kind of androgynous reality), so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males." In another logion, Mary (*Mariham*) is presented as asking Jesus, "Whom are your disciples like?" (*Gos. Thom.* 21).

The figure of Mary Magdalene appears in two other apocryphal gospels, preserved in fragmentary form, the 2d-century *Secret Gospel of Mark*, cited by Clement of Alexandria, and the *Gospel of Mary* (Magdalene). In the *Secret Gospel of Mark* an unnamed woman, identified as the sister of the one loved by Jesus and raised by him at Bethany, is rebuked by the disciples and, along with his mother and Salome, not received by Jesus. In the first part of the *Gospel of Mary*, Mark (*Gk. Mariamme*) greets and consoles the sorrowing disciples. In the second fragment, Mary plays a dominant role. Her communication of the secret revelation made to her by the Lord, apparently in a vision (*Gk. horama*) of the risen Lord, is met with unbelief by Andrew and with ridicule by Peter. She is, however, defended by a certain Levi who describes her as one made worthy by the Lord, known by him and one loved by him even more than the disciples.

The role of Mary (Coptic *Mariham*) as a questioner of Jesus is fully exploited in the early-3d-century *Pistis Sophia*. Thirty-nine of the sixty-four questions addressed to Jesus in that long text are attributed to Mary, who admits her persistence in questioning: "I will not tire of asking thee. Be not angry with me for questioning everything." Jesus replies: "Question what thou dost wish" (*Pistis Sophia* 139).

In the *Pistis Sophia* Mary is described as blessed, she whose heart is more directed to the kingdom of heaven than all her brothers, excellent, blessed beyond all women, beautiful in speech, the pleroma of all pleromas, the completion of all completions, superior to all the disciples (along with John the Virgin), and related hyperbole (*Pistis Sophia* 17, 19, 24, 34, 97, etc.). The *Pistis Sophia* also attests to Mary's role in the resurrection story (*Pistis Sophia* 138) and to the competition between Mary and Peter (*Pistis Sophia* 36).

In the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, Mary twice appears as a questioner of Jesus, once with regard to the source of superhuman knowledge and once with regard to the disciples (NHC III, 4). These are the only passages in the document where a woman is mentioned by name (*Mariamme* in Coptic), although the document makes reference to seven women.

In *The Dialogue of the Savior*, another Nag Hammadi text, Mary (Coptic *Mariam*) is portrayed as one of three disciples chosen to receive special teaching but she is more significant than the others, Matthew and Thomas, because "she spoke as a woman who knew the All" (NHC III, 139).

In the late-3d-century *Gospel of Philip*, Mary is called the companion of the Lord and described as one who always walked with him (*Gos. Phil.* 59, 63). She is portrayed as one whom Christ loved more than the other disciples and as

one who was frequently kissed by Christ. The other disciples took umbrage at this and merited a rebuke from the Lord in the form of a parable (Gos. Phil. 63–64). In the 4th-century *Acts of Philip*, a woman named Mariamne appears as the sister of Philip. Her role is similar to that of Mary Magdalene in the gnostic tradition. She consoles Philip, is at the risen Christ's side when he divides the world into missionary sectors, and then accompanies Philip on his mission.

As a heroine in gnostic literature, Mary Magdalene appears as the first witness of the risen Jesus, as one particularly loved and praised by him, and as the recipient of secret revelations (many of the texts have the literary form of a dialogue with Jesus). This gnostic portrayal of Mary was apparently known to some of the Fathers, notably Hippolytus (*haer.* 5.7.1), Origen (*Cels.* 5.62.11), and Epiphanius (*Haer.* 1.2.26.41).

The developments of the portrait of Mary Magdalene depicted in gnostic literature are rooted in the tradition, attested in the canonical gospels, that the risen Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene and other women from Galilee. Many proponents of a revisionist version of early Christian history suggest that the role of Mary Magdalene was diminished in canonical literature because of the patriarchalism of early Church structures (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 50–51; 321–23; 332–33). The prominence accorded to Mary Magdalene in gnostic literature preserves and develops the earlier memory (Meyer 1985; Pagels 1979). The competition between Mary and Peter reflects the tension between heterodox Christianity and apostolic orthodoxy.

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3. Mary of Bethany. Mary appears as the sister of Martha of Bethany in the gospels of Luke (Luke 10:38–42) and John (John 11:1–12:11). Luke does not identify her as having a brother named Lazarus nor as coming from Bethany, a town near Jerusalem (John 11:1, 18). The extant gospel accounts are colored by the language and theologies of the respective evangelists; nonetheless, given the remarkably similar character portrayal of Mary in both

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accounts, there is little reason to doubt that a single historical person lies behind both the Lukan and the Johannine narratives.

a. Luke. According to the Lukan account, "Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching" (Luke 10:39). Her demeanor, that is, her posture—indicated by a technical expression "to sit at the feet of" meaning "to be a disciple of"—and her listening clearly indicates that Luke considers her to be a disciple of Jesus. In the eyes of her sister, Mary is neglectful of the household responsibilities. Martha's criticism of Mary merits a mild rebuke from Jesus, who extols Mary's discipleship (Luke 10:42). In Luke's gospel Mary serves as a role model for female disciples.

b. John. In the Johannine narrative, although Mary is characteristically introduced as the one "who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair" and Lazarus is identified specifically as her brother (John 11:2; cf. v 32), Mary's role in the dialogue with Jesus prior to the resurrection of Lazarus is less significant than that of Martha (John 11:1–40). Mary quickly ran to Jesus (v 29) and fell at his feet (v 32), but she says only, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v 32), a gentle reproach to Jesus, who had delayed his arrival (v 6). Mary's principal narrative role seems to have been to introduce the Jews, apparent sympathizers with her grief (vv 31, 33) who will later capitalize on the Lazarus incident in their plot against Jesus (John 11:45–53).

The Johannine technique of dramatization typically focuses upon one feature of the persons introduced into his narrative. In Mary's case, it is her anointing of Jesus, summarized in 11:2 and described at length in 12:1–12. Her gesture is characterized by its utter radicalness: (1) in the Jewish world it was scandalous for a woman to let down her hair in the presence of a man who was not her husband; (2) the anointing of feet was the task of slaves; and (3) the cost of the perfume (not mere oil) was extravagant (costing approximately 300 days' pay for the ordinary laborer).

Despite Judas' rejoinder, Mary's act was praised by Jesus and interpreted by him as a symbolic gesture. Since the anointing of feet was a typical funeral rite, Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet was a dramatic foreshadowing of his future burial. The evangelist does not, however, suggest that Mary had been aware of the symbolic nature of the dramatic expression of her devotion to Jesus.

The role accorded to Mary of Bethany in the gospels of John and Luke serves as a reminder of the role of female disciples in the communities of the respective evangelists. Jesus' praise of Mary makes her the only woman to be twice praised in the gospels for her devotion to Jesus (Luke 10:42; John 12:7). The mention of Jesus' love for her (John 11:5) singles her out as one of only two women (Martha is the other) cited in the canonical gospels as having been loved by Jesus.

c. Tradition. Scholars continue to study the relationship between the Johannine narrative of Jesus' anointing by Mary of Bethany and the Synoptic stories of the anointing of Jesus' head by an unnamed woman forgiven by Jesus (Luke 14:3–9) and of the sinful woman forgiven by Jesus (Luke 7:36–50). The latter story was often later used as a link in the confusion between Mary Magdalene and Mary of Beth-