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Rediscovering the Marys

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Two Women Leaders

"Mary and the Other Mary Magdalene"

Ally Kateusz

Introduction

Where today in John 20 we see Mary the Magdalene in the garden with the risen Christ, authors of extracanonical narratives as well as church fathers and other writers in Ancient Syria instead often identified Jesus' mother as the Mary there. This ancient phenomenon is relatively well known. Robert Murray in his 1975 book on the early Syriac tradition gave numerous witnesses, and Thierry Murcia in his 2017 book on this very topic adds dozens more.[1] In this chapter, I argue that a specific variant in the Diatessaron may have been an important early source of the phenomenon.

Four examples will suffice for those less familiar with the phenomenon. The most famous example is the second-century Diatessaron. William L. Petersen calls the Diatessaron "the first Syriac gospel,"[2] and it was the primary gospel for many churches in Ancient Syria into the early fifth century.[3] Our best source for its text is Ephrem the Syrian's early fourth-century commentary on it, in which Ephrem did not mention the "Magdalene" and instead three times identified Jesus' mother as the Mary with the risen Christ.[4] For example, he wrote, "Why, therefore, did he prevent Mary from

[1] Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (1975; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 146–8, 329–35; Thierry Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne: Entre traditions et histoire (Ier-VIIIe siècle)* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2017), 41–52 (Talmudic writers), 71–83, 297–300, 355–56; and Murcia, "Marie de Magdala et la mère de Jésus," *Revue des Études Tardo-Antiques* RET Supp 6 (2018–19): 47–69, esp. 56–66.

[2] William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 25; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 432.

[3] Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 432–3; Bruce Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 30–2; Carmel McCarthy, trans., *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes* (*JSS* Supplement 2; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3–9; and Arthur Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament, Manuscript Studies* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1954), 23–6.

[4] Ephrem, *On the Diatessaron* 2.17, 5.5, 21.27 (McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, 67–8, 96–7, and 330–1).

touching him? Perhaps it was because he had confided her to John in his place, Woman behold your son."[5]

Perhaps the very oldest witness for the phenomenon is Irenaeus, born near Ancient Syria in the early second century. He also may have relied upon the Diatessaron tradition, for he also did not use the term "Magdalene" to distinguish the Mary in the garden from the Mary who was Jesus' mother. Instead, he wrote about "Mary" who gave birth to Jesus, compared "Mary" and Eve, and then described "Mary" as the first witness to the resurrection.[6]

Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 310–403), who lived a day's sail from Ancient Syria, was more explicit in identifying Jesus' mother as a Magdalene. He listed "Mary the Magdalene" first in the list of women at the cross—conflating mother and Magdalene, since the mother is listed first in John 19:25—but then, like Ephrem, he identified Jesus' mother in the garden, saying, "The Lord enjoined it in the Gospel by illustrating it from one woman and telling his mother, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.'"[7]

Finally, the compiler of the third- or fourth-century Syriac *Didascalia apostolorum* apparently believed—like Eusebius of Caesaria, as Kara J. Lyons-Pardue discusses in her chapter—that there were *two* Magdalenes. The Syriac *Didascalia apostolorum* says, "Now in the Gospel of Matthew it is written thus: 'On the evening of the Sabbath as the first day of the week was dawning came Mary *and the other Mary Magdalene* to see the tomb.'"[8]

Murray proposed that confusion was the cause of the phenomenon.[9] A decade or so later, Ann Graham Brock and Jane Schaberg proposed that instead of confusion, perhaps scribes had deliberately substituted Jesus' mother for the Magdalene in order to undermine the Magdalene's female authority.[10] Yet Murray, Murcia, and Brock, as well as Stephen J. Shoemaker, R. H. Connolly, Walter Bauer, Alfred Loisy, and others,

[5] Ephrem, *On the Diatessaron* 21.27 (McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, 330–1).

[6] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.22.2–7, 5.18.1–2, and 5.31.1 (*ANF* 1:455–56, 547, and 560). See Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne*, 77, n. 47; 180, n. 34; 268 n. 40; 339.

[7] Epiphanius, Panarion 78.13.2 and 80.9.4 (Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, 2 vols. [Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 35 and 36; Leiden: Brill, 1994/1997], 2:610, 636); I have omitted Frank's "(sic!)" on 2:636. See also Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne*, 132–5, 173–4, 177–83.

[8] Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* 21.11 (Alistair Stewart-Sykes, trans. *The Didascalia apostolorum: An English Version with Introduction and Annotation* [Studia Traditionis Theologiae, Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology 1; Turnhout: Brepols, 2009], 214), my emphasis; also note that various translators have attempted to harmonize this passage with our Greek gospels, e.g., translating it as "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary," or as here, adding a comma after the second "Mary," which I have corrected. Connolly rearranged the order to match our modern Matt 27:61; R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929), 182. Vööbus points out the consistency of the literal reading with Syrian tradition; Arthur Vööbus, *The Didascalia apostolorum in Syriac (Versio)* (CSCO 402/408; Leuven: Peeters, 1979), 190. Per Brock, Chrysostom had the same reading in his homilies as seen in the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum*; see Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 132.

[9] Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 330.

[10] Ann Graham Brock, "What's in a Name: The Competition for Authority in Early Christian Texts," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 seminar papers* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 106–24; Brock, *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority* (HThS 51; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 123–42; and Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 236–7.

have also suggested that the text of the Diatessaron itself may have been the source of this early tradition.[11] Here, I argue that a specific variant in the Diatessaron may have been the source. In other words, Christians in Ancient Syria were neither confused nor substituting. In identifying the mother in the garden, they were simply following their own gospel.

Magdalene and Mother, Two Women Leaders

In recent decades, feminist scholarship has largely restored the memory of the Magdalene's leadership among the Jesus followers. Comparatively less attention, however, has been dedicated to recovering the memory of Jesus' mother as a leader in the Jesus movement. Yet two, or even more, women named Mary could have been leaders.

Both the author/s of Luke–Acts and the author of John appear to have remembered Jesus' mother in a strong role akin to leadership. Luke–Acts is best known for this. Luke 1:46–55 associates Jesus' mother with prophecy in the *Magnificat*, and Acts 1:14 again associates her with prophecy when the Holy Spirit descended in the upper room at Pentecost, naming only "Mary the mother of Jesus" among all the women there, as Joanne Badley notes in her chapter earlier in this book.

The author of John, more than any other gospel writer, elevated Mary the Magdalene as the first resurrection witness and apostle to the apostles. Yet, this author also elevated Jesus' mother during her son's adult ministry more than any other gospel writer did. Whereas the gospels of Luke, Mark, and Matthew almost entirely ignore Jesus' mother during his ministry[12]—or worse, seem to denigrate her (Mark 3:21, 31–35; Matt 2:46–50)—the Gospel of John depicts her with her son during three different events of his ministry and each time presents her positively. The first time is at the famous wedding at Cana, where she has an active role, instigating her son's miracle of changing water into wine and initiating his ministry (John 2:1–11). The second is directly afterward, in John 2:12, which says that Jesus, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples (in that order) traveled from Cana to Capernaum. The third is on Golgotha at his crucifixion (John 19:25–27), where—unlike in the synoptic Passion narratives—she is clearly identified as the mother of *Jesus*, her most important son and the protagonist of the narrative. The fact that John highlights Jesus' mother during his ministry is even more interesting when we see that John does not identify "Mary the Magdalene" until the very end of

[11] Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 332; Murcia, *Marie appellee la Magdaléenne*, 51; Brock, *Mary Magdalene*, 133; Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 85–6; R. H. Connolly, "Jacob of Serug and the Diatessaron," *JTS* 8 (1906–7): 581–90, esp. 587–88; Walter Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der Neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1909), 448; and Alfred Loisy, *Le Quatrième Évangile* (Paris : Alphonse Picard, 1903), 908, n. 1. For other scholars, see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 332.

[12] Even at the cross and tomb, if Jesus' mother is named, it is not by the name of her most important son, which would seem to diminish her status as the mother of the savior. She is sometimes identified as Mary of James, but according to Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 206, the identification of a woman by the name of her son without also the word "mother"—μήτηρ—is apparently unattested.

the list of women at the cross—a seemingly belated mention that nonetheless does not diminish the Magdalene's subsequent elevation as the first witness in the garden and apostle to the apostles. In John, mother and Magdalene are not seen as competitors. John simply elevates one and then the other.

Additional evidence in John clarifies the author's intent to depict not only the Magdalene but also Jesus' mother as a leader among the disciples. The first person named in a list usually identified the leader. For example, in the lists of twelve disciples (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16), Peter is named first. Likewise, Luke 8:2–3 names "Mary called the Magdalene" first among the women who followed Jesus. Yet in John 19:25, the mother is identified first in the list of women standing at the foot of at the cross. One might argue that she was named first because she was his mother, but the synoptic gospels always name Mary the Magdalene first. Further affirming that the author of John was highlighting Mary the mother's leadership of disciples, male as well as female, in John 2:12, on their trip to Capernaum, Jesus' mother is listed first, before "his brothers" or his "his disciples."

A foundation for the reception of Jesus' mother as a leader of disciples, thus, is in the canonical gospels themselves. Not surprisingly, some later artists and authors portrayed her in the same way. Illustrating this, the painter of a sixth-century painted reliquary box from Jerusalem painted five scenes on it, each of which depicted the same woman with a black *maphorion*. In one scene, she is clearly identified as Jesus' mother, shown resting after she gave birth. In another scene, she is portrayed as the liturgical leader of twelve deferential-looking men—her arms are raised and she stands slightly in front of them.[13] See Figure 7.1.

What is most remarkable here is *not* that that the artist portrayed Jesus' mother as an arms-raised liturgical leader; it is the ease with which the artist identified her in a third scene as the lead Mary of the two witnesses to the resurrection—as if both leadership constructs were consistent. The top left frame on the box depicts a woman dressed in a black *maphorion* carrying a censer and leading a second woman, who is dressed in red, toward the Anastasis rotunda and the shrine that was over the tomb of Christ. The top right frame depicts the same woman in a black *maphorion* as a liturgical leader—she is in the center, twelve men stand behind her, and her arms are raised, a gesture that Alexei Lidov says "is interpreted in iconographic studies as a liturgical one."[14] This scene mirrors passages in the *Gospel (Questions) of Bartholomew* and the Six Books Dormition narrative, both of which describe Jesus' mother raising her arms and then leading the male disciples in prayer.[15] The middle scene shows the same woman at

[13] For more information on this box, see Gary Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications 5, rev. ed.; Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010), 18–20, fig. 6. A color version of this box can be seen online by googling "sancta sanctorum painted reliquary box."

[14] Alexi Lidov, "The Priesthood of the Virgin Mary as an Image–Paradigm of Christian Visual Culture," *IKON* 10 (2017): 9–26, quotation on 10. Filipova points out that in some areas, bishops were depicted with raised arms in art; Alzebeta Filipova, "Santo, Vescovo e Confessore: L'immagine di Apollinare nei mosaici di Classe," in *L'évêque, l'image et la mort: Identité et mémoire au Moyen Âge*, ed. Nicolas Bock, Ivan Folletti, and Michele Tomasi (Rome: Viella, 2014), 431–44, esp. 436.

[15] *Gospel (Questions) of Bartholomew* 2.6–13 (Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume One: Gospels and Related Writings*, trans. R. McL. Wilson, rev. ed. [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990], 1:540–53, esp. 545–6); and Agnes Smith Lewis, ed. and trans.,

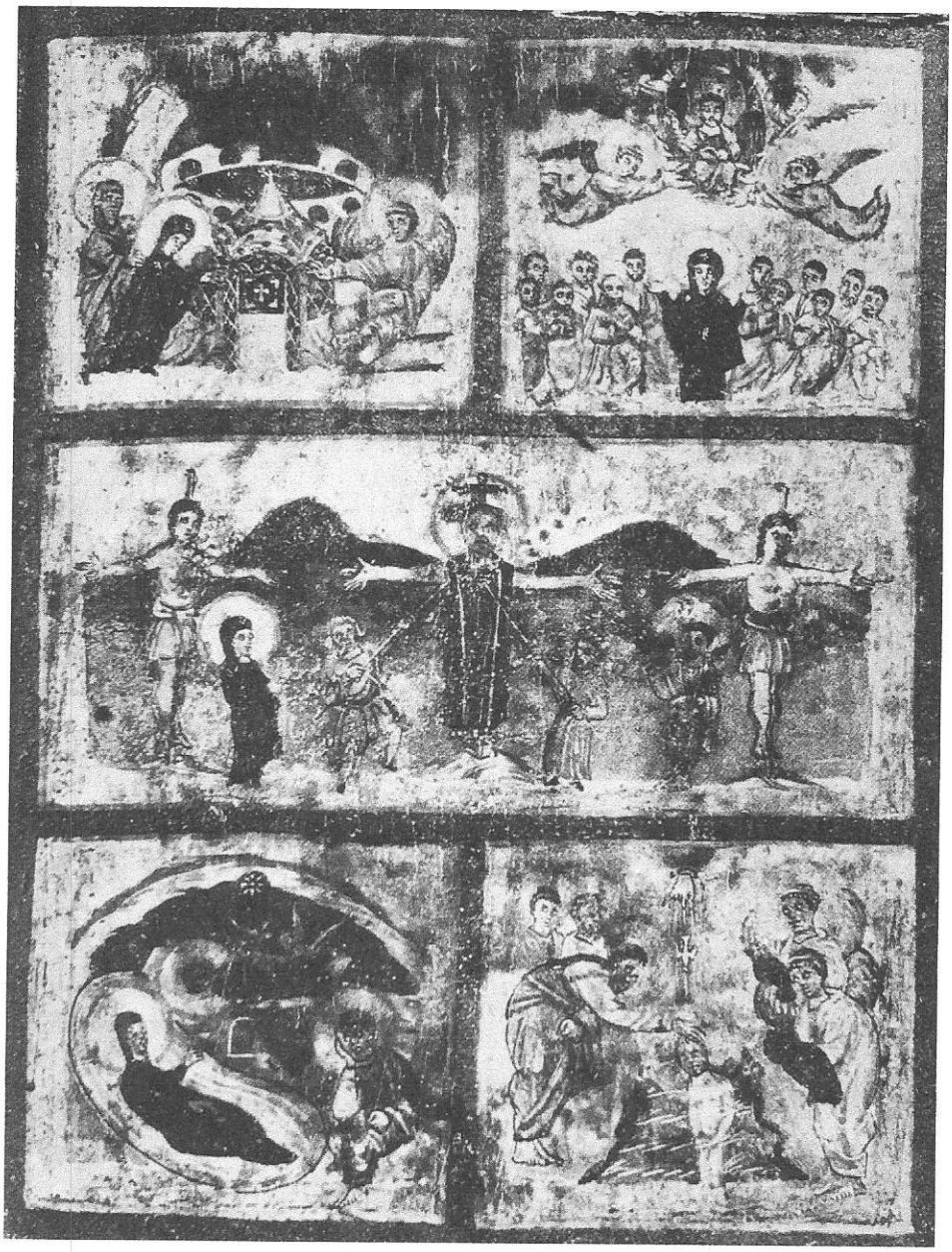

Figure 7.1 Five scenes on an early sixth-century reliquary box painted in or near Jerusalem. Source: Hartmann Grisar, *Die römische Kapelle Sancta Santorum und ihr Schatz: Meine Entdeckungen und Studien in der Palastkapelle der mittelalterlichen Päpste* (Rome: Laterano, 1908), plate 59.

the foot of the cross where Jesus' mother usually stands, and the bottom right scene shows her behind John the Baptist, with one of the two angels apparently holding out her black *maphorion*, as if to dry off Jesus or, perhaps, her.[16] The bottom left frame, however, unmistakably identifies the woman in black as Jesus' mother. It depicts her in an early example of the Nativity, resting after having given birth, an ox and a donkey peering at her infant son swaddled in the manger.[17]

The Mother's Markers of Liturgical Leadership

Authors of various extracanonical texts, such as the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Dialogue of the Savior*, which Judith Hartenstein and Anna Cwikla address in this volume, portrayed a Mary as a leader but do not clearly specify *which Mary* she was. An important text that specifically identifies Jesus' mother Mary as a leader, however, is the Dormition narrative, a text that is without question about Jesus' mother because it is explicitly about her later life and death. Research into Dormition narratives has expanded dramatically in the last fifteen years. Some scholars may privilege one branch or another of the Dormition text as the very oldest, but as my next chapter in this volume argues, all three main branches likely had a common source. Most scholars date the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Protevangelium of James*, a narrative about Mary's birth and early life, to the second century, and a variety of scholars now suggest that the Dormition narrative may have been as early.[18]

"Transitus Mariae," in *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae* (StSin 11; London: C. J. Clay, 1902), 12–69 (English), 32. For more on this scene, see Ally Kateusz, "Ascension of Christ or Ascension of Mary?: Reconsidering a Popular Early Iconography," *JECS* 23 (2015): 273–303, esp. 273–92.

[16] For more on two ancient witnesses that placed Mary at her son's baptism, see Ally Kateusz, *Mary and Early Christian Women: Hidden Leadership* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 140–4.

[17] For an example of the Nativity scene, see Savvas Agouridis, "The Virgin Mary in the Texts of the Gospels," in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira editore, 2000), 58–65, plates 25 and 29. A color version of this box with better detail can be seen online by googling "sancta sanctorum painted reliquary box."

[18] Donato Baldi and Anacleto Mosconi, "L'Assunzione di Maria SS. negli apocrifi" in *Atti del congresso nazionale mariano dei Fratei Minori d'Italia* (Studia Mariana 1; Rome: Commissionis Marialis Franciscanae, 1948), 75–125, esp. 121–5; Bellarmino Bagatti, "La verginità di Maria negli apocrifi del II–III secolo," *Marianum* 33 (1971): 281–92; Frédéric Manns, "La mort de Marie dans le texte de la Dormition de Marie," *Aug* 19 (1979): 507–15; Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 358–60; Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 238–45; Édouard Cothenet, "Traditions bibliques et apocalyptiques dans les récits anciens de la Dormition," in *Marie dans les récits apocryphes chrétiens*, ed. Édouard Cothenet (Paris: Médiaspaul, 2004), 155–75; Enrico Norelli, "La letteratura apocrifa sul transito di Maria e il problema delle sue origini," in *Il dogma dell'assunzione di Maria: problemi attuali e tentativi di ricomprensione*, ed. Ermanno M. Toniolo (Rome: Edizioni Marianum, 2010), 121–65; Shoemaker, "Jesus' Gnostic Mom: Mary of Nazareth and the Gnostic Mary Traditions" in *Mariam, the Magdalen, and the Mother*, ed. Deirdre Good (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 153–82, esp. 162; Hans Förster, *Transitus Mariae: Beiträge zur koptischen Überlieferung mit einer Edition von P. Vindob. K 7589, Cambridge Add 1876 8 und Paris BN Copte 12917 ff. 28 und 29* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 225–9; Shoemaker, "New Syriac Dormition Fragments from Palimpsests in the Schøyen Collection and the British Library," *Le Muséon* 124 (2011): 259–78, esp. 266; and Ally Kateusz, "Collyridian Déjà Vu: The Trajectory of Redaction of the Markers of Mary's Liturgical Leadership," *JFSR* 29 (2013): 75–92, esp. 77–78, 92.

The very oldest nearly complete Dormition manuscript is fifth century, the under script of an Old Syriac palimpsest.[19] Its narrative is sometimes called the Six Books Dormition narrative because it says the apostles wrote six books about Mary's passing,[20] although it is also sometimes called the "Bethlehem and incensing" tradition because it depicts Mary and other women going to Bethlehem and using censers and incense.[21] In a scene where Jesus descends on his chariot of fire to take his dying mother up to heaven, the palimpsest text appears to preserve the cultural memory of his mother as the Mary who had been with him in the garden. It reads:

> And our Lord Jesus the Christ called to His mother and said to her, "Mary!" And she said to Him, "Here I am, Rabbuli," which is, being interpreted, Teacher.[22]

These are almost the same words that the Magdalene and Jesus exchange in the garden in John 20:16–17, yet here the author wrote them between Jesus and his mother, and did so without any polemic or explanation, as if everyone knew Jesus' mother had been in the garden with her resurrected son.[23]

The text of the fifth-century palimpsest is most striking, however, in the way that it portrays Jesus' mother with many markers of leadership—more than found in the text of any other published Dormition manuscript. It would hardly make sense for a scribe interested in subverting female authority to substitute one woman leader with another woman leader, and the palimpsest's text, which is explicitly about Jesus' mother, describes her raising her arms and leading the male apostles in prayer, "serving in essence as their liturgical leader"[24]—just as she was painted in the top right frame of Figure 7.1. The palimpsest text also portrays Jesus' mother preaching the gospel,[25] setting out the censer of incense to God,[26] healing with her hands,[27] sprinkling, sealing, and exorcising,[28] and teaching.[29] Perhaps the most remarkable scene of her leadership in the palimpsest text, however, describes women coming to Jerusalem to learn from

[19] For its discovery, editing, and fifth-century dating, see Agnes Smith Lewis, ed. and trans., *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae with Texts from the Septuagint, the Corân, the Peshitta, and from a Syriac Hymn in a Syro-Arabic Palimpsest of the Fifth and Other Centuries, with an Appendix of Palestinian Syriac Texts from the Taylor-Schechter Collection* (StSin 11; London: C. J. Clay, 1902), ix–x; and for its fifth-century dating today, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 33; and Shoemaker, "New Syriac Dormition Fragments," 264. Only much smaller Old Syriac Dormition fragments composed of a few folios are as early or perhaps a little earlier.

[20] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae," 12–69 (English), esp. 17.

[21] Michel-Jean van Esbroeck, "Les textes littéraires sur l'Assomption avant le Xe siècle," in *Les actes apocryphes des apôtres*, ed. François Bovon (Publications de la faculté de théologie de l'Université de Genève 4; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 265–85, 273; see also Kateusz, *Mary and Early Christian Women*, 29–42.

[22] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae, 55.

[23] See Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne*, 355, who makes the same observation.

[24] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae," 32. Quote is from Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Mary the Apostle: A New Dormition Fragment in Coptic and Its Place in the History of Marian Literature," in *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö*, ed. Dmitrij F. Bumazhnov et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 217, regarding a similar scene in the *Gospel (Questions) of Bartholomew*.

[25] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae," 47–8.

[26] Ibid., 47.

[27] Ibid., 34, 35, and 48.

[28] Ibid., 34.

[29] Ibid., 24, 34, 47–8.

her, after which she gave these women writings[30] to take to their home cities around the Mediterranean so that others might believe[31]—essentially a portrait of Jesus' mother teaching and sending out women evangelists.

Later scribes redacted many of these markers of Mary's liturgical authority.[32] The trajectory of this redaction can be seen by comparing the fifth-century palimpsest text against that of two later manuscripts in the Six Books manuscript tradition. One comparison text is the second-oldest nearly complete Dormition manuscript that has been published, a late sixth-century Old Syriac Dormition manuscript translated by William Wright.[33] The other is an Ethiopic translation in a late medieval manuscript, which Shoemaker translated and considers an early recension.[34] Figure 7.2 illustrates how the two later scribes excised a passage that described Mary exorcising demons from a woman.

As can be seen in Figure 7.2, the two later scribes excised different parts of the older, longer passage. On the one hand, the scribe of the sixth-century Syriac manuscript removed most of the description of Mary exorcising demons—but preserved most of Malchū's name and family lineage.[35] On the other hand, the scribe behind the Ethiopic translation preserved most of the exorcism but anonymized Malchū. This scribe anonymized *all* the women whom Mary healed in the text, apparently following a trend of anonymizing women also seen in Sozomen and Theodoret's fifth-century church histories.[36] This redaction analysis demonstrates that the long text of the fifth-century palimpsest is not only from the oldest manuscript, but it is also the most original. The two later scribes simply made different decisions about what to cut.

Older Is Longer versus *Lectio Brevior Lectio Potior*

The idea that the longest recension of a text is the most original reading contradicts the old NT rule of thumb, *lectio brevior lectio potior*, that is, the shortest reading is the most probable reading. Figure 7.2, thus, demonstrates the validity of well-known caveats with respect to that old rule of thumb. Expert text critics are aware of its limitations. For example, Larry Hurtado says, "At least in the NT papyri from the second and third centuries, contrary to the assumptions of some previous scholars, omission is notably more frequent than addition (calling into question the sometimes rigid use of the 'prefer the shorter reading' canon in assessing

[30] The Syriac word used here can mean writings, small books, or letters.
[31] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae," 34.
[32] Kateusz, "Collyridian Déjà vu," 79–86.
[33] William Wright, "The Departure of My Lady Mary from This World," *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* 7 (1865): 129–60. For dating, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 47.
[34] Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 375–96.
[35] William Wright, trans., "The Departure of My Lady Mary from This World," *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record* 7 (1865): 129–60, esp. 141–2.
[36] Ethiopic Six Books, 35–6 (Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 384–5. For more on the anonymization of women, see Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women*, trans. O. C. Dean Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1996), 6–8.

5th-c. Syr. palimpsest	6th-c. Syr. ms	Medieval Ethiop. ms
Malchū came also to her,	Came to her Malchū,	Came another woman,
the daughter of Sabinus, the Procurator,	the daughter of Sabinus,	omitted
in whom were two demons;	who had two devils,	who was beset by many demons
one that tormented her by night; and the other that came upon her by day, and buffeted her;	one that tormented her by night; and another that came upon her by day;	omitted
and she entreated the Lady Mary;	omitted	and she cried out to Mary with a great voice, saying, 'Have mercy on me, my master.'
and immediately when she had prayed over her, and had placed her hand upon her, and had spoken thus:	and she prayed over her,	She extended her hand and prayed, saying,
"I adjure thee, in the name of my Master Who is in heaven, at this time concerning this soul, that she may be healed."	omitted	"I adjure you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, come out of this soul, and do not afflict her again."
And straight away these demons came out of her, and they wailed, and cried out, saying,	and she was healed.	And at that moment, the demons went forth from that woman, crying out and saying,
"What is there between us and thee, O Mother of God?"…	omitted	"What do you have agains us Mary, the one who bore Christ?"…
Then the Lady Mary		Then Mary
rebuked them in the name of our Lord Jesus the Christ.		omitted
And straightaway they departed towards the sea.		plunged them into the depths of the sea.

Figure 7.2 Redaction analysis: Mary exorcizes demons. Chart comparison of three manuscripts. © Ally Kateusz.

textual variants)."[37] Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee say *lectio brevior lectio potior* must "be used *with great caution* because scribes sometimes made omissions in the text either for smoothness or to remove what might be objectionable."[38] Bruce Metzger similarly says that the *longest* reading can be the best reading in a variety of scenarios, including when what was omitted was considered "offensive to pious ears."[39]

The scholarly trend away from the old NT rule of thumb is even stronger with respect to texts *outside* the canon, because later scribes even more commonly excised passages from those texts. In a study of Christian and Jewish apocalypses, including the apocalypse at the end of the Six Books Dormition narrative, Richard Bauckham says, "The textual tradition tended to abbreviation rather than expansion."[40] François Bovon, who worked with the various manuscripts of the *Acts of Philip*, a text that included the female evangelist Mariamne, explains, "Apocryphal texts were sometimes perceived by their readers to be overly redundant or even heretical in places. Consequently these texts were often abbreviated."[41] Shoemaker has also advocated that a long Dormition narrative is more likely to be older than a short one.[42]

The old NT rule of thumb, thus, should never be considered a rigid rule. It especially should not be considered the most appropriate rule of thumb for narratives about a woman portrayed with leadership authority. That is because, as seen in Figure 7.2, if a later scribe or their master considered the description of a woman leader "objectionable," or "offensive to pious ears," or "even heretical," they might (and often did) excise that description.

Here, I restrict my conclusions about this rule of thumb to *narratives* about women in the early Jesus movement who were depicted with leadership authority, that is, a story about a woman leader *doing* something that portrayed her with authority—especially when she was depicted with authority that later became restricted to men. A narrative format where a woman is portrayed as an active leader is different from a homily or other tract where an author simply lauds the woman with florid descriptions of her purity or submissiveness, such as is often seen in later homilies about Jesus' mother. As seen in Figure 7.2, as well as in the two charts (Figures 14.3 and 14.4), which I provide in my next chapter regarding passages about Mary and the women who were with her using censers and incense, later scribes excised passages that described women with

[37] Larry W. Hurtado, "*The Pericope Adulterae: Where from Here?*" in *The Pericope of the Adulteress in Contemporary Research*, ed. David Alan Black and Jacob N. Cerone (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 147–58, quotation on 152.

[38] Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 14. My emphasis.

[39] Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 120. Emphasis mine.

[40] Bauckham, *Fate of the Dead*, 347.

[41] François Bovon, "An Introduction to the *Acts of Philip*," in *The Acts of Philip: A New Translation*, ed. Bovon and Christopher R. Matthews (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 1–30, quotation on 7–8. Also see Bovon's student, Richard N. Slater, "An Inquiry into the Relationship between Community and Text: The Apocryphal *Acts of Philip* 1 and the Encratites of Asia Minor," in *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, ed. François Bovon, Ann Graham Brock, and Christopher R. Matthews (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 281–306, quotation on 286.

[42] Shoemaker, "Mary the Apostle," 203–29, esp. 212–13.

such authority. Thus, for narratives about women leaders, another rule of thumb—*lectio difficilior potior*—the most difficult *or unusual* reading is probably the original text—is more likely to be correct. That is because as later generations of scribes excised such markers, over time passages with those markers indeed became rarer and more unusual.[43]

The substitution of Peter for Jesus' mother

A later Coptic scribe substituted Peter for Mariamne in the manuscript tradition of the *Acts of Philip*.[44] This is particularly significant because the original *Acts of Philip* calls Mariamne an "apostle"[45] and describes her evangelizing,[46] breaking the communion bread,[47] exorcizing,[48] and baptizing.[49] Brock was correct when she said, "The replacement of Mary by Peter as Philip's companion in the Coptic version of the Acts of Philip eliminates the authoritative position she held in the original Greek text."[50] Brock in particular has influentially argued that Mariamne in the *Acts of Philip* was the Magdalene, while others, including Mary Ann Beavis and myself, have observed that arguments can be made that readers alternatively could have understood Mariamne as Mary of Bethany, because Martha was also present,[51] or as Jesus' mother, because the oldest *Protevangelium* manuscript similarly names her *Mariamne*.[52] What is of key importance here is not which Mary but that a later Coptic scribe replaced Mariamne with Peter—yet this phenomenon of replacement is by no means unique to a Mary identified as the Magdalene. Sometimes later scribes of the Dormition narrative replaced Jesus' *mother* with Peter. One important Dormition passage where some scribes substituted Peter for Mary the mother was the scene that portrayed her leading the male apostles in prayer as their liturgical leader.[53] This scene was popular in early Christian art, and it comprises the top right frame of the early sixth-century reliquary box seen in Figure 7.1, here seen as Figure 7.3.

[43] For more discussion see Kateusz, *Mary and Early Christian Women*, 19–65.
[44] Brock, *Mary Magdalen*, 124–8.
[45] *Acts Phil.* 8.21 and 9.1 (François Bovon and Christopher R. Matthews, trans., *The Acts of Philip: A New Translation* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012], 74). These specifically reference Mariamne as the apostle, plus the author elsewhere presented her as one of the "apostles."
[46] *Acts Phil.* 8.2–3, 15.3 and 15.9 (Bovon, *Acts of Philip*, 74, 95).
[47] *Acts Phil.* 8.2–3 (Bovon, *Acts of Philip*, 74).
[48] *Acts Phil.* 9.3–4 (Bovon, *Acts of Philip*, 81).
[49] *Acts Phil.* 14.9 (Bovon, *Acts of Philip*, 91).
[50] Brock, *Mary Magdalen*, 128.
[51] Mary Ann Beavis, "Mary of Bethany and the Hermeneutics of Remembrance," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 739–55, esp. 750–52; Allie M. Ernst, *Martha from the Margins: The Authority of Martha in the Early Christian Tradition*, VC Supplements 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 2, 6, 7–8, 116, 130.
[52] Kateusz, "Collyridian Déjà vu," 91; François Bovon, "Mary Magdalene in the *Acts of Philip*," in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*, ed. F. Stanley Jones (SBLSS 19; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 75–89, esp. 78–9; and Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne*, 115–24.
[53] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae," 32. A similar scene is found in the third-century *Gospel (Questions) of Bartholomew*; *Gospel (Questions) of Bartholomew* 2.6–13 (Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:540–53, esp. 545–6, with dating on 540).

Figure 7.3 Liturgical scene with Mary, Jesus' mother. Excerpt of one frame of five on early sixth-century reliquary box painted in Jerusalem. Vatican Museum, Rome. Photo courtesy of Ally Kateusz.

Art historians used to suppose that this iconography was a strange rendering of the Ascension of Jesus, because both Mary and Paul are in the scene, which does not comport with the canonical account. (Here Paul, balding, is portrayed left of Mary.) Recently, however, the origin of this iconography was identified as a scene in the early Dormition narrative, a scene that says Jesus returned to earth to take his dying mother up to Heaven.[54] According to the text of the fifth-century Dormition palimpsest, the male apostles, *including specifically Paul*, came from their missions around the Mediterranean to see Mary before she died. They arrived all at once, and each informed her what he had been doing.[55] Then Mary lifted her hands, praised God, and spoke the prayer.

> And when my Lady Mary heard these things from the Apostles she stretched out her hands to heaven and prayed, saying, "I worship and praise and sing and

[54] See Kateusz, "Ascension of Christ or Ascension of Mary?" 273–92.
[55] Smith Lewis, "Transitus Mariae," 27–32.

> laud that I am not a mockery to the nations of the Gentiles … and I will praise His gracious name for ever and ever. And I cannot glorify His grace sufficiently; that He hath sent His holy disciples to me." And after Mary had prayed, the Apostles set forth the censer of incense, and knelt with their faces down and prayed.[56]

The scribes of the two later Dormition manuscripts diminished the impression of Mary's authority over the men, again with different edits. The sixth-century scribe excised that the apostles prostrated after Mary prayed.[57] The scribe behind the Ethiopic translation preserved the men's prostration but excised that Mary raised her hands.[58] Other later recensions likewise omit that Mary lifted her hands to pray, which explains why the iconography of this scene was misunderstood for so long.[59] Perhaps scribes omitted Mary raising her hands to pray in order to bring the text into compliance with 1 Tim 2:8, which instructs *men* to lift their hands to pray.

Another Dormition scribe diminished the liturgical authority of Jesus' mother in this scene by substituting Peter for her as the prayer leader. Perhaps this redaction also was to bring the text into compliance with 1 Timothy, because 2:11–12 instructs that women should be silent and *not* have authority over men. This substitution is found primarily in a wide number of medieval manuscripts of one branch of the Dormition narrative, which is called the Palm Dormition narrative because it typically says Jesus gave Mary a palm branch. This homily is found in medieval manuscripts of the popular homily attributed to John of Thessalonica, a seventh-century bishop.[60] According to this homily, when the men arrived at Mary's house, instead of Mary raising her arms and leading their prayer, Peter raised *his* arms and led the prayer.[61] The text then repetitively describes Peter preaching for hours upon hours until it finally ends with the following: "After Peter had said these things and exhorted the crowd until dawn, the sun rose. And Mary got up and went outside, and raised her hands and prayed to the Lord."[62] For this scribe, Peter was the proper prayer leader, not a woman—and although Mary still could raise her hands to pray, she only could do so when she was alone, outside, away from the men.

Two Gaelic Dormition manuscripts demonstrate a similar substitution. Again Jesus' mother is silenced when she is replaced by Peter. In the original text, both she and Peter ask Jesus questions. In the later recension, Peter asks both his questions

[56] Ibid., 32. Shoemaker says that the title "my Lady Mary" is better translated as "my master Mary," in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 370, n. 3. The final sentence, that the men knelt with their faces down to pray, is especially curious in light of the *Apostolic Church Order*, which quotes "Kephas" alternatively saying, "Women should not pray upright but seated on the ground," in *Apostolic Church Order* 27 (Alistair Stewart-Sykes, trans., *The Apostolic Church Order: The Greek Text with Introduction, Translation, and Annotation* [Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul's, 2006], 113).

[57] Wright, "Departure of My Lady Mary," 140.

[58] Ethiopic Six Books 33 (Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 383).

[59] For details, see Kateusz, "Ascension of Christ," 293–4. See also most of the homilies in Brian E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Popular Patristics Series 18; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1998).

[60] John of Thessalonica, *On the Dormition* 3 (Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 49).

[61] John of Thessalonica, *On the Dormition* 7 (Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 55–6).

[62] John of Thessalonica, *On the Dormition* 12 (Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 62).

and Mary's questions.[63] The scribal practice of using the figure of Peter to remove the authority of a woman leader named Mary thus included scribes who used Peter to replace Jesus' mother Mary.

A Possible Variant

Prior to Constantine, Christianity was strongest in the Eastern Mediterranean, with Ancient Syria probably the most influential area of all. Authors from Justin Martyr to Jerome were either born in Ancient Syria or visited there. Jerusalem, as well as all the major pilgrimage sites associated with Jesus' life, were in Ancient Syria, and the traditions of this land traveled with pilgrims around the Mediterranean.[64]

In the second century, the Diatessaron was compiled in Ancient Syria, in either Old Syriac or Greek, and, subsequently, very early, it was translated into Latin, as well as into other ancient languages. Arthur Vöörbus says vestiges of the Diatessaron are found "from Armenia to Abyssinia, and from Persia to the British Isles."[65] A Greek fragment found at Dura-Europos, which was abandoned by 257 CE, appears to provide a very early witness to its popularity.[66] In the third century, the Diatessaron was the primary gospel in Ancient Syria and it remained in good standing there until the early fifth century, when all copies were rounded up and replaced by the four canonical gospels.[67] A variant in the text of the Diatessaron thus potentially could have been influential very early, not only in Ancient Syria, but also around the Mediterranean.

I propose that the reason writers in Ancient Syria described the mother in the garden was not because they were confused, nor because they were trying to subvert women's authority by replacing the Magdalene with the mother, but because of a textual variant. I propose that writers such as Ephrem in his commentary on the Diatessaron placed the mother in the garden with the resurrected Christ because the Diatessaron—and quite likely also the fourth-century Old Syriac Gospel of John—had a critical variant that facilitated reading the text that way. John 19:25 is the *only* place in all four canonical gospels where Jesus' mother and the Magdalene are clearly identified in the same room at the same time: "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and the sister of his mother Mary of Clopas, *and Mary the Magdalene*." I propose that the Diatessaron variant was that "and Mary the Magdalene" was *not* at the end of the list of women at the foot of the cross. This variant could explain the identification of Jesus' mother as the Magdalene, because if a reader never clearly saw mother and Magdalene

[63] Charles Donahue, *The Testament of Mary: The Gaelic Version of the Dormitio Mariae together with an Irish Latin Version* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1942), 10.

[64] This tradition continued into the medieval era in both East and West; for a discussion of its retention in the West, see Katharine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 59–62.

[65] Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, 22–3.

[66] I follow Jan Joosten, "The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron," *VC* 57 (2003): 157–75.

[67] McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, 3–9; Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 432; and Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, 23–6.

in the same place at the same time, the reader logically could assume that one very important woman named Mary had two roles, two titles—both *mother* and *Magdalene*.

Unfortunately, no copy of the Diatessaron has survived, because in the early fifth century, bishops such as Theodoret of Cyrus collected all the copies of the Diatessaron in their jurisdictions and destroyed them.[68] Making the case even more difficult to prove, both Old Syriac gospel manuscripts have lacunae at John 19:25.[69] Given these lacunae, however, I go next to the Old Latin gospels, because the Old Latin not only had readings that "preserved a large number of readings which are from the Diatessaron," it also went "hand in hand with the Old Syriac."[70] Therefore, the Old Latin might preserve this variant at John 19:25 if either the Diatessaron or the Old Syriac (or both) had it.

The very oldest Old Latin gospel manuscript—which is also the very oldest European gospel manuscript—the fourth-century Codex Vercellensis, also known as *Old Latin* a, preserves the variant.[71] In Codex Vercellensis, "and Mary the Magdalene" is not at the end of John 19:25. It instead reads: *Stabat autem secus crucem ihū mater eius maria et soror matris eius maria cleophaes*, that is, "Standing also at Jesus's cross was his mother Mary and his mother's sister Mary of Clophas."[72]

So few old manuscripts have survived that just one takes on elevated significance when its variant has the potential to explain a widespread variant reading. John never mentions the Magdalene prior to 19:25, so the omission of "*and Mary the Magdalene*" at the end of this verse would make it quite possible for the reader of Codex Vercellensis to assume that the important Mary at the beginning of the list of women at the foot of the cross was the same important Mary in the garden with the risen Christ, and that mother and Magdalene were simply two important titles for one very important woman.[73]

In Ancient Syria in particular, it would have been easier for a reader to assume that Jesus' mother was the Magdalene than to assume that she was "Mary of James," whom today some exegetes propose could be Jesus' mother. Bauckham says epigraphs in Jewish Palestine identified women by the name of their son, yet none "use this idiom (simply the genitive, without μήτηρ [mother])."[74] Consistent with Bauckham's observation that in this region, "Mary of James" alone would not have identified James's (and Jesus') *mother*; the two Old Syriac gospels specify that Mary of James was "Mary the *daughter* of James." In both manuscripts, in all surviving verses of Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; and Luke 24:10, she is consistently identified as "Mary the *daughter* of

[68] McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, 8; also Theodoret of Cyrus, *Compendium of Heretical Accounts* 1.20 (PG 83, 372A).

[69] Agnes Smith Lewis, trans., *A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest* (C. J. Clay, 1896), 106; and William Cureton, *Remains of a Very Antient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac* (London: John Murray, 1858), 50.

[70] Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, 48.

[71] Dating of codex Vercellensis per Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, 38; and Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 73.

[72] Aidano Gasquet, *Codex Vercellensis* (Collectanea biblica Latina 3; Rome: Pustet, 1914), 232.

[73] Loisy suggests this would make sense in Loisy, *Quatrième Évangile*, 908, n. 1. Two Marys at the foot of the cross at John 19:25 also could have paralleled the mother and beloved disciple in 19:26–27.

[74] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 206.

James."[75] Indicating that this reading was widespread in this region (suggesting it was also in the Diatessaron), the Syriac *Didascalia apostolorum* likewise specifies "Mary the *daughter* of James."[76]

So what did the gospel writers think the name *Magdalene* meant? Almost certainly they did not think it referred to the town today named *Magdala*, because the place name *Magdala* is not in any of the oldest Greek gospel manuscripts. Where today we read *Magdala*, the fourth-century scribes of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus used the place names *Dalmanoutha* at Mark 8:10[77] and *Magadan* at Matt 15:39.[78] *Magdala* appears for the first time in these verses in the fifth century—an appearance that corresponds to when a Palestinian town, which for the previous four centuries had been called "Tarichaea," was renamed "Magdala."[79] Joan E. Taylor suggests that "the *magdalene*" may have been a nickname for a woman named Mary, like *petros*, "the rock," was for Simon Peter.[80] Perhaps second-century Christians thought *magdalene* referred to *migdal*, for tower, because in the Old Syriac gospels, Mary the Magdalene was consistently called "Mariam the Tower-ess."[81] Potentially they might have thought that *migdal* referred to the Temple mount that towered over Jerusalem, where, according to the *Protevangelium*, Mary the mother had resided.[82] Alternatively, the Hebrew for "she magnifies" (*magdeelah*[83]) suggests that some might have supposed *magdalene* referred to Mary magnifying others, such as in Luke 1:46–55, the *Magnificat*, where she says, "My soul magnifies the Lord," or in the *Protevangelium*, where, when Mary was born, her mother said, "My soul is magnified today."[84] Some Christians may have supposed that it referred to the magnification or exaltation implicit in the encounter with the risen Christ; certainly the Syriac *Didascalia apostolorum* would bear out this understanding because its scribe assumed *both* Marys were Magdalenes: "Now in the Gospel of Matthew it is written thus: 'On the evening of the Sabbath as the first day of the week was dawning came Mary *and the other* Mary Magdalene to see the tomb.' "[85]

[75] See Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40, 47, and 16:1, and Luke 24:10 in Lewis, *Translation of the Four Gospels*, 30, 48–9, 84; and Luke 24:10 in Cureton, *Remains of a Very Antient Recension*, 85 (all other places have lacunae).

[76] Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* 21.14 (Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia apostolorum*, 215).

[77] Reuben Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 121.

[78] Reuben Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 152.

[79] See Joan E. Taylor, "Missing Magdala and the Name of Mary 'Magdalene,'" *PEQ* 146 (2014): 205–23, esp. 212–22.

[80] Ibid., 206–7.

[81] Ibid., 207–12, esp. 208.

[82] *Protevangelium* 7.2–9.2 (Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:426–37).

[83] Hayim Baltsan, *Webster's New World Hebrew Dictionary* (Cleveland, OH: Wiley, 1992), 233.

[84] *Protevangelium* 5.2 (Émile de Strycker, trans., *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques: Recherches sur le papyrus Bodmer 5* [Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961], 88).

[85] Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* 21 (Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia apostolorum*, 214), emphasis mine. Note that various translators have attempted to harmonize this passage with our Greek gospels, e.g., here adding a comma after the second "Mary," which I have corrected; e.g., Connolly rearranged the order to match our modern Matthew 27:61; see Connolly, *Didascalia apostolorum*, 182. Yet Vööbus points out the consistency of the literal reading with Syrian tradition; Vööbus, *Didascalia apostolorum*, 190.

The Diatessaron was the primary gospel in Ancient Syria until the fifth century, but mother and Magdalene likewise are never clearly identified in the same room at the same time in the three synoptic gospels. Communities that read Matthew, for example, could have assumed that one Mary had both roles. Matthew never mentions "the Magdalene" until the Passion scenes. With Jesus' mother having such an auspicious role in Jesus' birth in Matthew, a reader easily might assume that she was the same Mary who had an auspicious role at his death. In any case, given a normal narrative arc, a reader could reasonably expect that.

We cannot know for certain why writers in Ancient Syria so often identified Jesus' mother as the Mary with the resurrected Christ in the garden, but an early reading that did not have "and Mary the Magdalene" at the end of the list of women at the cross provides an economical explanation. Given Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, wherein he nowhere mentioned "the Magdalene" and identified Jesus' mother in the garden, it seems possible that the Syriac Diatessaron had this reading. The sole surviving manuscript witness to this reading is Codex Vercellensis, the oldest manuscript in the Old Latin textual tradition, which was closely related to the Diatessaron as well as to the Old Syriac gospels. Given this reading, Syriac Christians who identified the mother in the garden with her resurrected son were not confused, nor were they trying to subvert women's authority. They were simply reading their own gospel text.

When and where this reading originated is difficult to say, but it seems likely no later than the second century and as early as the first, depending upon the source behind the Diatessaron. Indicating the earlier date, both ancient and modern exegetes have suggested that the Hebrew Gospel may have been behind the Diatessaron[86]—for example, Epiphanius of Salamis said that some people called the Diatessaron "the Gospel According to the Hebrews."[87] The Hebrew Gospel was both early and influential; six second-century writers mentioned it, which is more mentions than any other gospel.[88]

In conclusion, it seems quite likely that, just as seen in the oldest Latin manuscript of John, the equivalent of John 19:25 in the Diatessaron did not end with "and Mary the Magdalene." Is it possible that the author or compiler of the Diatessaron excised "and Mary the Magdalene" from the end of the list of women at the foot of the cross in order to diminish the Magdalene's authority as first witness? On the one hand, yes, it is possible, especially considering the way later scribes often excised passages in order to diminish the authority of a woman leader. On the other hand, however, this conjecture does not at all explain why scribes would have replaced one woman leader with another woman leader. If, however, some Christians identified the Magdalene as Mary of Bethany, as Mary Ann Beavis and Mark Goodacre suggest, this identification itself could explain why some later scribes blotted out the memory

[86] For examples, see Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, 29–33, 39–41, 277–80, and esp. 440–1; Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, 19–21; and Pier Franco Beatrice, "The 'Gospel According to the Hebrews' in the Apostolic Fathers," *NovT* 48 (2006): 147–95, esp. 188.

[87] Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 46.1.9.

[88] For detail on second-century and later witnesses to the Hebrew Gospel, see James R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 2–41.

of an influential but seemingly sinful woman—perhaps even a woman accused of adultery, perhaps even a woman in a line of prophets' beloved wives thusly accused, from Hosea's to Muhammad's—because no matter how redemptive her story, a seemingly sinful woman as one of the movement's two foremost women leaders could have been a heavy burden for evangelists in the Roman Empire. Or perhaps, as Murcia suggests, John 19:25 is read incorrectly today, instead of as a chiasm within a larger chiasm where Jesus' mother was identified as the historical Magdalene.[89] Finally, however, and again potentially explaining the phenomenon, some Christians apparently believed there were *two* Marys called Magdalene—*Mary and the other Mary Magdalene.*[90]

[89] Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne*, 229–46.

[90] While Murcia's book drives to the conclusion that the mother was the historical Mary, in his eighth excursus, he nonetheless agrees that two Mary Magdalenes is a possibility; Murcia, *Marie appelée la Magdaléenne*, 331–3.