

MARY MAGDALENE GATHERING



February 25, 2024

Presented by the Magdalene Community Houston, Texas



“I HAVE SEEN THE LORD”

Mary Magdalene

OPENING DIALOGUE

SOLO: Peace be with you

UNISON: Acquire my Peace within you

The following transcript is from *In Search Of* podcast, Season 3 Episode 1: Mary Magdalene Revisited and Reimaged with Elizabeth Schrader Polczer and Diana Butler Bass host Amy Frykholm



Elizabeth Schrader Polczer:

“The Gospel of Mary seems to have been circulating just as widely as the Gospel of Thomas was, getting translated in just as many copies. But not a single church father ever mentions the Gospel of Mary.

“Nobody even knew that it existed until it was published in 1955. It was a shock to scholars of early Christianity. Because why would a text that’s circulating that widely not even be mentioned to be banned...Nobody even mentioned the Gospel of Mary. I think that there was something considered very dangerous about this text.”

Diana Butler Bass:

So, there's this worry, I think, on the part of the church that certainly has become heightened in the 21st century about creating an equivalent, salvific kind of figure that would be female over/along with Jesus. **And the other thing that makes me think that the church was worried about this from the very beginning is the fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene together showing up so much in the text.**

“But you could see the imaginative tendency on the part of the early church, or some people around the early Church....I think, was just sort of there in sort of a nuance...., a seedbed form in early Christianity for having some soft of feminine equivalent to what was developing along the lines of what will become what we know as Orthodoxy.”

Diana Butler Bass:

“I do think it’s interesting in the context of medieval history, that possibility that I just laid out there, because it’s pretty clear that the church understood that some level of the feminine and the divine had to be available to Christians. And so what became the orthodox approach was Mary the mother of Jesus, the Virgin Mary. And we have every piece of evidence that we could possibly have for medieval Christianity to come, just extraordinarily close to, in effect, making Mary the mother of Jesus, almost like a fourth character in the Trinity

“But I do think its intriguing that one of the Marys gets lifted up to a point of near divinity, while the other Mary gets pushed down to such a point that she can barely be discussed in decent company because of her disreputable mental state and her sexual history”

Elizabeth Schrader Polczer:

“And the thing that’s really interesting to me is, if the text was changed, maybe that’s what was necessary for this gospel to be included in the canon.

Because Mary Magdalene as we know, was a controversial figure, and if that was just unacceptable, Peter needs to be the Christological confessor, because we’ve got Mary getting the first appearance of the risen Jesus, so she can’t have all that. Peter gets the Christological confession in the synoptics, and then some rando, Martha, gets it in John. That’s the only way that we can handle this gospel.

“If that’s the case, then the gospel has laid down its life for us. That is so Johannine.

“That is so what Jesus is all about. You lay down your life for the sheep, right?”

Diana Butler Bass:

“And so if that is the imaginative possibility within Christianity, it means that there would be a certain kind of pressure on the church authorities to, minimize it... we don't want people to go there, this is outside the sort of bounds of what we think the story is telling us, and so how can we sort of soften Mary Magdalene's authority, presence, whatever, in the scripture, in the text, to remove the temptation from people's thinking about these women and putting them on any kind of equivalent platform.”

Diana Butler Bass:

“...sort of the big take-home point of her research is that MM is the one who gives the confession-the Christological confession in John....here we have the Synoptics with Peter having the Christological confession in all three of those documents.

But then we get to the Gospel of John, a gospel that is canonized, it's in the NT, it's an official doctrine of the church over time, ...nobody has questioned it being there.

“And at the heart of it could be this other story. The story of this; not just a woman, Martha, who we don't know anything about, is kind of a minor character, but Mary Magdalene with the confession”

Elizabeth Schrader Polczer:

“People at that time could not handle it, Actually, we know they couldn’t because the Gospel of Mary was 100 percent suppressed and not even mentioned.

“They couldn’t handle a gospel where a woman had this kind of prominence.

“So the text sort of lowered itself to meet people where they were at, at that time. And that to me, is, again a very community oriented, which is the opposite of ego oriented.

“Of course, if Mary Magdalene really was supposed to be the Christological confessor-in John—that’s what the truth is, But, if it’s not what’s right for everybody, then the gospel softens. And meets people where they’re at. And I think that’s one of the main lessons that Mary Magdalene gives us as well. Even if you’re right, even if you have the truth, you soften and do what is best for the common good.”

Elizabeth Schrader Polczer:

“I’m saying, Mary Magdalene participates in kenosis. The Gospel of John participates in kenosis....For the good of the sheep. For the good of the community. And it’s participating not as one big hero but as what is best for the whole.....I’m talking about the person with more power lowering himself to be of service to the people who have less power.

“And so that is the amazing thing about this work, is it reopens a lot of those questions.. I think, for a lot of us who are suddenly curious about things that we weren’t curious about before.”

Diana Butler Bass:

And so I was listening to Libbie talk about Mary Magdalene and what we don't know and what's fascinating is 2,000 years later we actually do know a whole bunch of stuff.

We know how the tradition has handled Mary Magdalene through the last 2,000 years. And I think one of the most interesting changes in the last 50 years is Mary Magdalene becoming really a hero in feminist and womanist theologies and also in people who are scouring the history of women in Christianity

REFLECTIONS





One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice—though the whole house began to tremble and you felt the old tug at your ankles.

“Mend my life!” each voice cried. But you didn’t stop. You knew what you had to do, though the wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations, though their melancholy was terrible. It was already late enough, and a wild night, and the road full of fallen branches and stones.

But little by little, as you left their voices behind, the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds, and there was a new voice which you slowly recognized as your own, that kept you company as you strode deeper and deeper into the world, determined to do the only thing you could do—*determined to save the only life that you could save.*”

Mary Oliver

Then Mary arose and greeted them all. She said to her brothers (and sisters), “Don’t weep and grieve or let your hearts be divided, because his grace will be with you all and will protect you. Rather we should praise his greatness because he’s prepared us and made us Humans.”

Gospel of Mary

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.””

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he said these things to her.

John 20: 17-18

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRAYERS:



CLOSING DIALOGUE

SOLO: Let us move together in the Light and
the Peace

UNISON: Let us go forth in the power of the
Spirit



Our Next Gathering

Sunday March 31, 2024