Gloriosa Praedicatrix: the origins, development and influence of the medieval legends about Saint Mary Magdalen as preacher and apostle

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GLORIOSA PRAEDICATRIX:

The origin, development and influence of the medieval legends about Saint Mary Magdalen as preacher and apostle.

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King's College London

Thesis submitted to the University of London for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Thesis abstract

This thesis is a reappraisal of the medieval legends about Mary Magdalen. Scholars have formerly assumed that the Magdalen's most significant influence in the Middle Ages was as a penitent sinner. This study of the legendary tradition from the eleventh to the fifteenth century will show, however, the real significance of its depiction of the saint as preacher and evangelist in Provence, following her resurrection commission to be apostola apostolorum. It demonstrates the widespread acceptance and popularity of this hagiographical elaboration, which presented a woman being active and effective in public ministry. The earlier scholarly assumptions are thus challenged.

The first chapter looks at patristic and early medieval typology used of the Magdalen, and shows that the striking new hagiography promoted at Vézelay from the mid-eleventh century drew on this for authorisation. Next, the various forms of the legends are discussed, their diffusion and subsequent elaboration, as the Magdalen's preaching career was disseminated from legendaries, into sermons, iconography, liturgy and popular devotion. Chapter Three surveys the medieval prohibitions on women as preachers and teachers based on Pauline injunction, and demonstrates that the Magdalen was often excepted and the historical conditions which allowed this privilege to a woman were not thought unique.

The crux of the argument comes in Chapter Four where previously unrecognised manuscript evidence is presented to show how the Magdalen's qualities as a preacher were emphasised in the face of traditional assumptions about women's capability. This chapter also explores further enhancements of the Magdalen's apostolic role. The final chapter looks at the impact that such legends and images had for men and women in the Middle Ages. It shows that the Magdalen was used directly as a model for male preachers, and the significance of the preaching legend influenced both those women who are known to have preached and exercised public ministry and also those who actively encouraged male preachers.
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INTRODUCTION

Istam peccatricem feminam nulli dubium est Mariam fuisse Magdalenam, quae prius quidem exstitit famosa peccatrix, sed postea facta est gloriosa praedicatrix.

'This woman sinner was certainly none other than Mary Magdalen, who had before been a famous sinner, but afterwards was made a glorious preacher.'

Thus, in 1105, Geoffrey of Vendôme preached to the monks of his abbey on July 22nd, the saint's feast day. It is striking that he puts equal weight on the two apparently contrasting strands of the Magdalen's career. She had once been famosa peccatrix but she had been made gloriosa praedicatrix.

Until recently, studies of the significance of Mary Magdalen in medieval devotion have largely concentrated on the portrayal of her as a model of penitence. This equates with the first part of Geoffrey of Vendôme's description, based on the perception that she had been a sinner and prostitute, which derives from the identification of the Magdalen with St Luke's 'woman in the city who was a sinner' (Lk. 7:37-50). Even several feminist writers including Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Carla Ricci and Susan Haskins, have tended to accepte this emphasis, albeit in the context of protest at the medieval church's representation of the Magdalen. Susan Haskins even argues that there was some kind of 'political decision, whose precise form may never be

known, to reduce the role of women, and Mary Magdalen as their representative, by the deliberate imputation of sexual delinquency to her. Such an argument fails to take account of the fact that the legends of the Magdalen as preacher would surely have been ignored or suppressed if such a political decision had been enforced.

The purpose of this study rather is to explore the latter part of Geoffrey's description of Mary Magdalen, that she was a 'glorious preacher'. This is not to deny that patristic and medieval writers presumed that the woman 'who was a sinner' was by definition a prostitute and that this woman was none other than Mary Magdalen. But any argument that this demonstrated the unrelieved mysogyny of the medieval church is rendered void by the attribution to the Magdalen of an apostolic preaching ministry. Indeed, this study argues to the contrary that the positive impact of the figure of the Magdalen is enhanced by the assumption that the commission to preach the resurrection was given not to a respectable matron but to a former prostitute. The gospel evidence was incontrovertible, that a woman had been the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Yet a genuine attempt to limit the implications of this fact would surely have prevented or at least played down the development of the legendary

3 Haskins, Mary Magdalen, 55. Carla Ricci, Mary Magdalene, esp. 30-32, speaks more moderately of exegetical distortion.

4 David Brown has recently endorsed the positive impact of the traditional image: 'a fresh, sympathetic look at the composite figure, so far from undermining the dignity of women, can actually add significantly to it'; Discipleship and Imagination: Christian tradition and truth (Oxford, 2000), 36. This important study, which appeared just as this thesis was on the point of submission, asserts the value of 'the imaginative construct' over historical fact. In Chapter 1, Brown argues that the tradition presents Mary Magdalen as the model disciple: 'though what emerged was less than loyal to history, it embodied the more important truth, one which has very effectively engaged the imagination of believers over the centuries in establishing and deepening their relation with Christ and one which we will now lose at our peril: what is involved in the dialectics of discipleship, in the growth of the disciple from sin and misunderstanding through forgiveness to intimacy and empowerment'; ibid., 32.
tradition that the Magdalen had gone on to become a 'glorious preacher'.

The tension between the gospel evidence, that Mary Magdalen was commissioned by Jesus to 'Go ... and tell' (John 20:17), and Pauline teaching, that women must keep silent and may not teach or have authority over men (I Tim. 2:12; cf. I Cor. 14:34-5), was apparent to the earliest exegetes. It is clear, however, from the first interpretations of the role of the Magdalen in the drama of the resurrection that the gospel witness was paramount. Hence, from the first, the Magdalen is ascribed a part in the economy of salvation of the greatest significance, which parallels that of the Virgin Mary. Like the Blessed Virgin's obedience, the Magdalen's commission not only restores the effects of Eve's fault for women, but brings life and salvation for all people. Her announcing the good news to the disciples is described in terms of an apostolate, and by the time of Jerome she is literally described as preaching.

The way that medieval legend built on and embellished earlier patristic interpretation also demonstrates the significance that Jesus' resurrection commission to the Magdalen had for her hagiographers. It was clearly thought appropriate to assume that having once been sent by the risen Christ to 'Go ... and tell', the Magdalen would not have stopped after telling just the disciples. Hence the legend evolved by the mid-eleventh century that, after the ascension, Mary Magdalen sailed to Provence and pursued an active evangelistic career as an apostle, preaching and converting. Once in circulation, the legend won immediate popularity despite the fact that prior to this there had been a tradition that the Magdalen had lived out her life in contemplation in the wilderness. Although the legend of the Magdalen as preacher became amalgamated with the older tradition of her as contemplative, what is remarkable is that the examples of it being challenged by medieval writers are extremely rare compared with the number of instances in which it is retold without question. Indeed, it comes to gain such acceptance that even up to the nineteenth century serious scholarly
attempts were made to argue that the Magadalen's apostolate in Provence was a matter of historical fact.\textsuperscript{5}

The legend that Mary Magdalen came to Provence and preached was first developed at the Cluniac monastery of Vézelay in Burgundy. The motivation for this new hagiographic venture might seem less than honourable: the monastery was claiming to possess the Magdalen's relics in order to attract revenue from pilgrimage and needed to account for how and why she had come to France. Nevertheless, the 'novelty' of the legend and its undoubted 'entertainment value' were clearly intended to enhance the popularity of the Magdalen in personal devotion. The assertion that she had been a preacher, therefore, would have been reckoned to be congenial to the contemporary devotee, and the details of her life played into the current interest in the \textit{vita apostolica}.

Yet it has usually been assumed that the tradition of the medieval church with regard to the role of women was limited by the proscriptions of Pauline teaching, suiting as it did the received classical Aristotelian notion of women's inferiority to men. So the authority given to the patristic exegesis which allowed a positive and dynamic role for the Magdalen after the resurrection was of critical significance. This authority would be particularly tested by the systematisation of canon law that resulted in the \textit{Decretum} of Gratian in about 1140, which codified the exclusion of women from preaching and priestly ministry. It may seem curiously paradoxical that the Magdalen legend was evolved and promoted at exactly the same time as the church was formalising this exclusion of women. Yet it is not unknown for a hardening of ecclesiastical attitude against women's participation in the ministry of the church to go hand in hand with popular appropriation of strands in the tradition which would support

such participation. The appeal of the legend, far from being reduced is highlighted by this coincidence. It is not always clear whether the hardening of attitudes provokes the popular movement in support, or *vice versa*. What can be stated with confidence is that the official teaching of the church did not counteract the prevailing hagiographic account in its hold on devotional enthusiasm. The impetus of the legend of Mary Magdalen as preacher and apostle in the face of the reactionary tendency of ecclesiastical legislation and pronouncement demonstrates the irrepressible force of the gospel imperative. Yet a dynamic tension was maintained and this provides the recurrent theme and methodological structure of this thesis.

The first chapter looks in detail at the patristic and early medieval typology used of the Magdalen, and shows that this formed an authoritative background for the new hagiography promoted at Vézelay. Although a note of caution is sounded by a few voices, the majority of exegetes uphold the significance of the gospel record of the Magdalen's witness to the resurrection. She is characterised as the second Eve, as an apostle, and as a figure of the church. In addition, she is said to represent the gentiles converted, her anointing of Christ may be imitated by preaching, and she is seen as a type of both the active and contemplative lives. All of these interpretations, it is argued, prepare the way for the development of the legend of her active preaching.

In Chapter Two, the earliest forms of the preaching legend are discussed, their diffusion and subsequent elaboration from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. It is shown that the Magdalen's apostolic career was disseminated from the monastic office into sermons, iconography, and popular legendaries. Notwithstanding a single early attempt to limit her actual preaching role, the development of the legend shows increasing confidence in the portrayal of her ministry, which is even 'backdated' to describe her preaching in Judea before she set sail for Provence.
After these two chapters have demonstrated the strength of the positive tradition about the *gloriosa praedicatrix*, Chapter Three surveys the medieval prohibitions on women as preachers and teachers based on the Pauline injunctions. It highlights the fact that the issue of lay preaching was a contemporary concern for the church in the later Middle Ages, as various heterodox groups espoused a lifestyle which was assumed to be identical to that of the early apostles and allowed women to preach and teach. Many medieval theologians, however, accept the legend of Mary Magdalen's apostolate. Of these, some seek to explain why she was a singular exception, and some allow that her privilege might in theory extend to other women. Although the cumulative impression of this survey is negative, the exceptions reveal the persistent force of the preaching tradition.

Chapter Four explores further the reasons given by three eminent authorities in the thirteenth century why women were not considered able to preach because of their sex. All three are shown in fact to make various allowances for the Magdalen's preaching. This is in keeping with many of the legendary accounts which describe her meeting some of the criteria thought necessary for male preachers. Significant new evidence is introduced from one late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century version of the Magdalen legend in an unedited manuscript from the British Library. In it Mary Magdalen is specifically attributed with certain qualities which seem to indicate that the author, Bertholdus Heyder, was deliberately challenging the authorities which had asserted women's incapacity to preach. This manuscript also prepares the way for a discussion of further means by which the Magdalen's apostolic role and authority was enhanced. She is attributed the golden aureola of preachers; depicted as *ignifera* in a context which evokes Elijah; paralleled with Moses as mediator of the new covenant; and presented as combining the active with the contemplative life in a way which was becoming significant in the medieval
church.

The final chapter looks at the impact that these legends and images had for medieval men and women. It is demonstrated that the Magdalen was used as a model by male clerics and preachers, and came to be adopted as patron of the Order of Preachers. Although there is less direct evidence for women seeking to imitate Mary Magdalen in preaching, some women who preached were clearly familiar with the Magdalen legend, it is shown that others had a significant influence on the preaching of men who were close to them. This, it is argued, parallels the role of the Magdalen in influencing the disciples when she brought the good news of the resurrection to them as *apostola apostolorum*. With the example of the Magdalen, these women were able to develop a distinctive ministry, involved in preaching but in an indirect way which did not infringe ecclesiastical convention.

In conclusion, this presentation of the medieval evidence demonstrates that the assumption that the Magdalen's significance was pre-eminently as a penitent is mistaken, since even when the church attempted to limit the impact of the preaching legend, it was compelled to make allowance for the positive aspects of it.

Throughout this study, the medieval 'composite' character of the Magdalen has been assumed. Thus Mary Magdalen as named in the gospel (Mt. 27:56, 28:1-11; Mk. 15:40, 47, 16: 1-10; Lk. 8:2, 24:10; Jn. 19:25, 20:1-18) is considered to be also Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44, 12:1-8) and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42), and hence also the woman who anointed Jesus (Mt. 26:6-13, Mk. 14:3-9), as well as 'the woman in the city who was a sinner' (Lk. 7:37-50). Gregory the
Great is considered responsible for finally authorising this conflation, which had been partially promoted by earlier writers in the West. It was never accepted by the Eastern church, and has been the subject of particular speculation since it became a point of contention in the early sixteenth century humanist debate. It should be noted, however, that the earliest patristic exegetes discussed in Chapter One do not assume this composite character, although their depiction of the Magdalen contains the seeds of all that would follow once the composite character was established.

Since there are no published translations of many of the Latin texts cited, all translations are my own except where indicated.

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Until the eleventh century, hagiographical accounts of Mary Magdalen's later life did not attribute to her an active ministry. The standard legend circulating before this time about the life of the Magdalen after Christ's ascension told how she retired into the wilderness and lived for thirty years as a hermit. This *Vita eremitica* was clearly derived from the life of Mary of Egypt which had been brought to the west by monks fleeing the Arab invasions of Byzantium in the eighth century. It became transposed to suit the Magdalen due to the coincidence of the name Mary and her supposed career as a prostitute. In content it also suited an interpretation of the Lukan story of Mary and Martha which saw the Magdalen as a type of contemplation.\(^2\)

Despite the prevalence of the eremitic legend, in the course of the eleventh century new stories were formulated about Mary Magdalen's later life. These originated at the Cluniac monastery of Vézelay in Burgundy and their

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1 For ease of reference, the titles for the various forms of the legend are those coined by Mgr. Victor Saxer, 'La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint-Maximin dans la littérature latine du Moyen-Age', *Provence Historique* 5 (1955): 196-231.

motivation can be ascribed to the reforms under abbot Geoffrey (1037-43) when the monastery seems to have consolidated its claim to possess the relics of the Magdalen. In order to attract pilgrimage revenue the monastery needed to account for that claim, by suggesting how the Magdalen had come to be in France.\(^3\) The new legends which describe the Magdalen's active career as an apostle and preacher, arising in a context of reform, needed to be closely based on patristic authority to establish their orthodoxy. Thus it is argued here that the active legends were developed by a deliberate extension of the patristic typology concerning her. The Vézelay monks, using such an apparently conservative source of inspiration, were able to create an innovative hagiography. In addition, the new apostolic vita also suited the contemporary interest for looking back to apostolic principles.

That hagiography could be inspired so directly by patristic exegesis has not been taken into account by recent studies of the Magdalen, and its implications for the medieval attitude to saintly biography have not been assessed.\(^4\) Mary Magdalen is, admittedly, in the rare category of a gospel character for whom scripture gave the impetus, and then exegesis of scripture itself could feed back into the evolution of a legendary life. It is striking, however, that the natural implications

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\(^4\) But the importance of biblical precedent in medieval hagiography is clear: see Thomas J. Heffernan, Sacred Biography: saints and their biographers in the Middle Ages (New York, 1988); also Samuel B. Fanous, Biblical and hagiographical imitatio in the Book of Margery Kempe (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1997).
of such typology were felt by her first hagiographers to be more compelling than prevailing dictates about the ministry appropriate for women.

Patristic exegesis provided a positive interpretation of the role of the Magdalen and her witness to the resurrection in the economy of salvation, and hagiographers were able to draw upon this in their formulation of her *vita*. Hence she was acclaimed as the second Eve and as an apostle. Other aspects of Mary Magdalen's role in the New Testament were also interpreted positively. She was seen as representing the church which preaches the good news; she was a type of the conversion of the gentiles; and her anointing of Christ was seen as a symbolic action which preachers should imitate by their proclamation of the incarnation. In addition to being considered a model of the contemplative life, her actions made her a suitable model of the active life also. Such readings, it appears, led directly to the Vézelien claim that the Magdalen, though a woman, had come to France and had converted the gentiles by her preaching. These readings also lent to this claim such authority to counteract its novelty that it became immediately established and spread rapidly with the Magdalen's flourishing cult.

This chapter, therefore, will present and examine this patristic and early medieval exegesis, looking specifically at writers from the third to the tenth century, before the new forms of the legend of Mary Magdalen to which it gave rise are explored in the next chapter. The themes discussed interweave and to some extent overlap, but for clarity they are treated separately, considering in turn the different typological parallels that were attributed to the Magdalen which emphasise her apostolic role and active witness to the resurrection.

Before proceeding with this thematic analysis, however, it is necessary to highlight one early text for special consideration. The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* by Hippolytus, bishop of Rome in the early third century, contains the
earliest surviving interpretation of the part played by Mary Magdalen in the drama of the resurrection. For Hippolytus, the Shulamite searching for her beloved anticipates typologically the women who visited the sepulchre on Easter morning (whom he calls Mary and Martha) and met with not only angels but Christ himself.

In interpreting the passage 'At night I sought him whom my soul loves ... I found him and would not let him go...' (Cant. 3:1-5), Hippolytus comments:

'See how this is fulfilled in Martha and Mary; with them the synagogue diligently sought the dead Christ, whom they did not believe was alive. ... And after this the synagogue proclaimed its belief through these women; they show us their good testimony who were apostles (apostoli) to the apostles, sent by Christ ... Indeed so that the (women) apostles (apostoli) did not doubt the angels, Christ himself met them (apostoli), so that women might be the apostles (apostoli) of Christ and compensate for the sin of ancient Eve through their obedience; hence listening with obedience one may appear perfect. O new consolations! Eve has become apostle (apostolus). Behold henceforth the trickery of the serpent is understood and now Eve did not err; because him whom she regarded she henceforth hated and considered him an enemy who seduced her through desire; now the tree of seduction did not seduce her; behold she was made glad through the tree of life and rejoiced in her confession of Jesus from the tree; she is made worthy of good and desired food. Now henceforth she does not hunger nor give corruptible food to humanity; she has received incorruptibility; she was henceforth united (to Adam) and a helper, because (the new) Adam led Eve. O good helper, who took the good news to her husband! Therefore the women announced the good news to the disciples. And because of this they thought that the women were deceived, because they doubted; for this was due to the custom of Eve to announce deceit and not truth. What then, o women, is this new announcement of resurrection? And because of this they thought that the women were deceived. So that they should not appear to be deceivers but

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5 The Commentary only survives in a Georgian translation, from which the original Latin has been reconstructed by Gerard Garitte in Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium vol. 264 (1965): 43-9. There is also German translation from the Georgian in G. Nathanael Bonwetsch, Hippolyts Kommentar zum Hohenlied (Leipzig, 1902), 60.

6 Victor Saxer observes that in the antique period, the gospel account of the resurrection (especially that according to John) was viewed through the 'lens' of the text of the Canticle, whereas later in the medieval period the Canticle was cited to illustrate a commentary on the gospel: 'Un sermon médiévale sur la Madeleine: reprise d'une homélie antique pour Paques attribuable à Optat de Milèvé (+ 392)', Revue Bénédictine 80 (1970): 49 n. 38.

7 Possibly by association with the fact that the sisters had visited Lazarus' tomb with Jesus. Cf. Ambrose De poenitentia 2.7.54 (PL 16:510).
to tell the truth, Christ then was manifest to them (the disciples) and said to them 'Peace be with you', meaning 'It was I who appeared to these women, and wished to send them to you as apostles (apostoli)'. Now from these actions (it appears), my friends, that henceforth behold he pacifies the synagogue, and the church is glorified.\(^8\)

Hippolytus has outlined almost all the major elements of symbolism and typology that later came to be standard reflections on Mary Magdalen's role. This is remarkable in what is probably the earliest elaboration of the Magdalen's commission. His themes are found by the end of the fourth century simultaneously influencing authors as diverse as Ambrose of Milan and Optatus of Milevus in North Africa, and hence they are taken up by Augustine and later Gregory, to gain sway over almost the whole of the Christian west. The significance of Hippolytus' Commentary for the interpretation of the Magdalen's witness and resurrection commission, therefore, is fundamental.\(^9\)

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8 Vide hoc perfectum super Martham et Mariam; cum eis synagoga cum diligentia quaerebat Christum mortuum quem vivum esse non cogitabant... Et post hoc clamans confitetur synagoga per has mulieres; bonum testimonium nobis ostendunt quae apostoli ad apostolos fiebant, missae a Christo... Ut autem non ab angelis apostoli dubitarent, occurrit ipse Christus apostolis, ut mulieres Christi apostoli essent et defectum veteris Evae per oboedientiam implerent; abhinc cum oboedientia audiens ut perfectus apparat. O novae consolationes! Eva apostolus fit. Ecce abhinc serpentis fraudatio (est) intellecta et iam non deerrat (Eva); quia (illum) in quem spectavit abhinc odio habuit et ut inimicum aestimavit illum qui per concupiscentiam eam seduxit; iam non abhinc seducet hanc arbor seductionis; ecce per vitam abhinc (est) laetificata per arborem (et) per confessionem ex arbore gustavit per Christum; digna facta est bono et concupivit cibum. Iam non abhinc esuriet neque praebet hominibus cibum corruptibilem; accepit incorruptibilitatem; est unita abhinc et adiutrix, quia Adam Evam ducit. O bona adiutrix, quae bonum nuntium ad maritum obtulit! Propter hanc mulieres bonum nuntium nuntiaverunt discipulis. Ut non apparerent sicut decepserent, sed veritatem dicentes, in illo tempore Christus (fuit) manifestatus eis et eis dixit: 'Pax vivum'; hoc edocens quoniam: 'Ego qui mulieribus his apparui, et ad vos apostolos mittere volui'. Nunc e factis huius (apparit) quia, dililecti, abhinc ecce pacat synagogam et Ecclesia glorificatur. CSCO vol. 264 (1965): 45.

9 As Saxer notes: 'Un sermon médiévale', 50 n. 51.
The Magdalen as the second Eve

Hippolytus' commentary draws the earliest recorded parallel between Eve and the women who witnessed the resurrection and this leads to his attributing to the resurrection scene the greatest significance in terms of the perception of women and their potential as messengers of the gospel. In compensating for Eve's sin, Mary and Martha transform her into an apostle, and the masculine noun *apostolus* used throughout of the women does not allow any implicit inferiority of *apostola* to *apostolus*. In this passage, rather, it is the women who are apostles, while the men are still only referred to as disciples. Eve's deception is seen as a kind of *felix culpa* as she is hailed as a good helper (cf. 'helpmeet', Gen. 2:18) for taking the 'good news to her husband'. Indeed Eve's fault, such as it was, is attributed to Satan's trickery and she, and womankind, are henceforth implied to be inerrant (*et iam non deerrat*...).

In formulating this interpretation, Hippolytus was clearly influenced by Irenaeus' theory of *recapitulatio* (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις), developed to counter the Gnostic dualist assertion that creation and humanity are irrevocably evil. According to Irenaeus (fl. 180-200), Christ both restores and perfects what had been done by Adam and so redeems the human condition. Thus the divine scheme of salvation involves the restoration of the world to its primitive, prelapsarian state. But for Irenaeus, following the *Dialogue with Trypho* attributed to St Justin (†165), the new Eve was the Virgin Mary, whose obedience brought about the

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10 According to Photius, Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus, though this is doubted by some scholars. See Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality*, tr. Wulstan Hibberd (London, 1960), 30-47.

11 The *Dialogue* sees Mary's obedience as reversing the disobedience of the (virgin) Eve brought about by the serpent: 'Eve was still virgin when she received in her womb the logos which came to her from the serpent and brought forth disobedience and death. Inversely, Mary conceived
incarnation. She is described as an 'advocate' for Eve, wiping out disobedience by her obedience, and thus being a cause of salvation for the whole human race through her association with Christ's work of redemption.12 After Irenaeus, Tertullian (c. 160-225) also draws a parallel between Eve and the Virgin Mary, and presents a scheme of salvation very close to that of recapitulatio, although he describes it instead as an 'inverse operation' (aemula operatio).13 Given such a tradition, Hippolytus' innovative parallel of Eve with the holy women and the resurrection, instead of Mary and the incarnation, appears unprecedented. Irenaeus and Tertullian had earlier played on the fact that Eve was deceived with words by a (fallen) angel and was disobedient to what she had been told whereas the Virgin Mary was obedient to Gabriel's words and received the Word.14 This inversion is adapted by Hippolytus, in his new outline of this

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12 Manifeste itaque in sua propria venientem Dominum, et sua propria eum baiulante conditione, quae baiulatur ab ipsos, et recapitulationem eius quae in ligno fuit inobedientiae, per eam quae in ligno est obedientiam, facientem, et seductionem illam solutam, qua seducta est male illa, quae iam viro destinata erat virgo Eva, per veritatem evangelizata est bene ab angelo iam sub viro Virgo Maria. Quemadmodum enim illa per angeli sermonem seducta est, ut effugaret Deum praevariagta verbum eius, ita et haec per angelicum sermonem evangelizata est, ut portaret Deum obediens eius verbo. Et si ea inobediens Deo; sed haec suasa est obedire Deo, ut virginis Evae virgo Maria fieret advocata. Et quemadmodum adstrictum est morti genus humanum per virginem, salvatur per virginem: aequa lance disposita virginalem inobedientiam ... Irenaeus, Adversus omnes Haereses 5.19.1 (J. P. Migne (ed.), Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca [hereafter PG], 167 voll (Paris, 1857-76), 7:1175-6).

13 Sed et hic ratio defendit, quod Deus imaginem et similitudinem suam a diabolo captam aemula operatione recuperavit. In virginem enim adhuc Evam irresperat verbum aedificatorum mortis; in virginem aequa introducendum erat Dei verbum exstructorium vitae, ut quod per ejusmodi sexum abierat in perditionem per eundem sexum redigeretur in salutem. Crediderat Eva serpenti: credidit Maria Gabrieli. Quod illa credendo deliquit, haec credendo delevit. Tertullian, De Carne Christi 17 (PL 2:782).

14 Irenaeus (n. 12 above): For as she (Eve) was seduced by the angel's speech and fled from God, prevaricating about his word, so she (Mary) was evangelised by the angel's speech and bore God, obedient to his word. Tertullian (n. 13 above): The death-bringing word was heard by Eve when she was still a virgin: the Word of God when he came to restore life must be born of a
aspect of the economy of salvation, when he says that it was the women apostles who spoke and proclaimed the good news as Eve had deceived Adam with words and brought him the 'good news' (although she is given no actual words of deception in Genesis). Later authors bring out this contrast between the words 'spoken' by Eve and by Mary Magdalen even further, and it was to have a significant bearing on the perception of the Magdalen as a preacher.

Hippolytus' influence is first to be found in the interpretation of the resurrection narrative by Hilary of Poitiers († 367), whose commentary on Matthew underlines the fact that Christ appeared to the women so that they might have the authority of fulfilling his command rather than merely that of an angel:

But at once the Lord appeared and greeted the women who had been instructed by the angel, so that in announcing the resurrection to the waiting disciples they might speak with Christ's voice rather than that of an angel. Indeed women first saw the Lord, were greeted by him, embraced his knees and were told to take news to the apostles; the order of first causes reversed so that, because death was introduced by that (female) sex, to it first was the glory and vision and reward and announcement of the resurrection restored.\textsuperscript{15}

Hilary's phrase 'ordo in contrarium causae principalis est redditus' attributes to the women's commission an extraordinary significance, which will scarcely be stated as boldly as this in future. It almost appears that it was neither the incarnation nor the paschal mystery which achieved human salvation, but rather this virgin, so that the same sex which brought in death may now introduce life. Eve believed the word of the serpent, Mary the word of Gabriel.

\textsuperscript{15} Sed confestim Dominus muliercularis per angelum adhortatis occurrit, et consalutat: ut nuntiatuare exspectantibus discipulis resurrectionem, non angeli potius quam Christi ore loquerentur. Quod vero primum muliercularae Dominum vident, salutantur, genibus advolvuntur, nuntiare apostolis iubentur; ordo in contrarium causae principalis est redditus: ut quia a sexu isto copta mors esset, ipsi primum resurrectionis gloria et visus et fructus et nuntius redderetur. Hilary, Comm. in Matt. 33.9 (PL 9:1076). The positive recommendation of the women's role is undermined by the slight conveyed by the diminutive 'muliercularae', but the strength of the expression 'ipsi primum resurrectionis gloria et visus et fructus et nuntius redderetur' still prevails.
commission which restored creation, defaced by original sin, to its primal state.

Ambrose, who knew and used Hippolytus' commentary on the Song of Songs,\textsuperscript{16} does not speak of the resurrection commission in such positive terms as Hilary but he draws out the inherent implications that it was Eve's deception of Adam with words which is redeemed by the words of the second Eve:

As in the beginning a woman was the author of guilt and man compounded the error, now she who had first brought the taste of death to man saw the resurrection first and was a first remedy in the order of guilt. And so that she should not endure the opprobrium of perpetual guilt among men, she who had brought guilt upon a man brought also grace, and compensated for the old fault as an indicator of the achievement of the resurrection. Death had first entered by a woman's mouth, by a woman's mouth life was restored.\textsuperscript{17}

Ambrose here seems to be implicitly alluding to, and adapting, St Paul's phrase, 'As by a human (\textit{per hominem}) came death, by a human came also the resurrection of the dead' (I Cor. 15:21), but the positive note of \textit{per os mulieris vita reparatur} is no less notable.\textsuperscript{18} Ambrose's interpretation of the scene also emphasises its importance with regard to the function of preaching that is entailed. Yet he is immediately at pains to limit the consequences for women's speaking ministry and, using a questionable analogy, argues that as a man had been gullible before, men are not merely more astute henceforward but are said to be more suitable at winning others round as preachers:

But because constancy is necessary for preaching and the lesser sex is

\textsuperscript{16} Jouassard, 'La nouvelle Eve', 43.
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Ambrose, \textit{De Spiritu Sancto} 3.74 (\textit{PL} 16:793-4), where the positive effect of the Magdalen's role is limited to women: Maria Magdalena praenuntia ad apostolos destinatur, solvens haereditarium nexum, et feminei generis immane delictum ... meritoque ad viros femina destinatur; ut quae culpam viro prima nuntiaverat, prima Domini gratiam nuntiaret.
weaker in achieving, the office of evangelising is entrusted to men. For as through Jesus not only was the guilt of women absolved but grace was multiplied that she might persuade many who had before deceived one, so also the man, who had rashly believed before, could receive the loan with interest so that he who had formerly been gullible in believing might become suitable for preaching to others.\(^{19}\)

In going on to compare John’s account of the resurrection with that of Matthew, Ambrose casts Mary Magdalen’s commission in a less positive light and for the first time the Pauline prohibition on women teaching is introduced in this context:

So what does it mean ‘Do not touch me’? Do not lay your hand on your superiors: but go to my brothers, that is those who are more perfect... Because the resurrection cannot be easily understood except by those who are more perfect, the prerogative is kept for those who are more firmly founded in this faith. ‘I do not permit women to teach in the church; let them ask their husbands at home’. So she is sent to those men who are in their homes, and she accepts the prescribed commands.\(^{20}\)

Again, Ambrose is constrained to interpret John’s story to privilege Paul’s proscription over the gospel account. He implies that the Magdalen could not accomplish her dominical commission until the disciples had first explained the resurrection to her. Even commenting on John 20:17 he tries to reassert the 'natural order' of men teaching women: ‘She is sent to those stronger than herself so that they, whose example will teach her to believe, might preach the resurrection to her’.\(^{21}\) Thus, to conform with Pauline teaching, the Magdalen

\(^{19}\) Sed quia constantia ad praedicandum necessaria, inferior sexus ad esse sequendum infirmior, viris evangelizandi mandatur officium. Nam sicut mulierum per Jesum non solum culpa solvitur sed etiam multiplicatur gratia; ut pluribus suadeat quae um ante deceperat: ita et vir, qui temere ante crediderat, feneratum munus recuperare debuit; ut qui sibi ipse fuerat ad credendum lucriscus, fieret alii ad praedicandum idoneus. Ambrose, Exp. Ev. sec. Luc. 10.157 (PL 15: 1843).

\(^{20}\) Quid est igitur: Noli me tangere? Noli manum adhibere maioribus: sed vade ad fratres meos, hoc est, ad perfectiores... Quia resurrectio non facile nisi a perfectioribus capi potest, fundamentoribus huius fidei praerogativa servatur: Mullieribus autem docere in Ecclesia non permitto, domi viros suos interrogent. Ad eos ergo mittitur, qui domestici sunt: et accepit prescripta mandata. Ibid., 10.165 (PL 15:1845).

\(^{21}\) ... et ideo ad fortiores mittitur, quorum credere discat exemplo ut illi resurrectionem praedicent. Ibid., 10.155 (PL 15:1843).
could be presented as the first recipient of resurrection preaching rather than its first witness.

Augustine redresses the balance in comparing the salvific effect of the Magdalen's witness to that of the incarnation:

And so in this act the kindly dispensation of our Lord must be considered. For this is what the Lord Jesus Christ did, so that the feminine sex might first announce that he had risen. Since humanity fell because of the female sex, humanity was restored because of the female sex: since a virgin had given birth to Christ, a woman announced that he had risen from the dead. By a woman came death, by a woman came life.22

Augustine here makes explicit Ambrose's implicit adaptation of St Paul. He also says elsewhere, in direct contradiction of Ambrose and, notably, even Paul, that the women in Matthew's account who told the good news to the disciples spoke in ecclesia:

A woman announced death to her husband in paradise; women also announced salvation to men in the church. The apostles were to announce the resurrection of Christ to the gentiles: women announced this

22 With his theory of ordo in similitudine rather than Hilary's in contrarium, Augustine has great difficulty in accounting for the fact that Luke says the women were not believed; although the disciples had lived with and witnessed all that Christ had done, they did not believe first news of the resurrection: ... resurrexisse Dominum ab angelis audierunt: feminae viris nuntiaverunt. Et quid scriptum est? quid audistis? Visa sunt ista ante oculos eorum quasi deliramenta. Magna infelicitas conditionis humanae! Quando locuta est Eva quod dixerat serpens, audita est cito. Mulieri mentienti creditum est, ut moreremur: non est creditum feminis vera dicentibus, ut viveremus. Si non erat credendum feminis quare Adam credidit Eva? Si feminis credendum, quare sanctis mulieribus non crediderunt discipuli? Et ideo in hoc facto consideranda est benigna dispensatio Domini nostri. Nam hoc est quod egit Dominus Iesus Christus, ut prius illum sexus feminineus resurrexisse nuntiaret. Quia per sexum feminineum cecidit homo, per sexum feminineum reparatus est homo, quia virgo Christum pepererat, femina resurrexisse nuntiabet: per feminam mors, per feminam vita. Sed non crediderunt discipuli ut dixerant feminineae: delirare putaverunt quando tamen vera nuntiabant. Augustine, *Sermones de Tempore* 232.2.2 (PL 38:1108).
As Ambrose had re-emphasised the role of the male apostles, so it was possible for the significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be highlighted in order to redefine Mary Magdalen’s part in the Easter drama. Peter Chrysologus wrote several sermons on Christ’s resurrection and first appearance to the women at the tomb in which he repeatedly stresses the role of the Magdalen as a second Eve. However, since 'Mary Magdalen and the other Mary' (Mt. 28:1) share the name of Jesus’ mother, Chrysologus is able to attribute any positive salvific effect in the women’s witness by implication to the Virgin Mary:

Late in the day woman runs to forgiveness who early had run to guilt. In the evening she seeks Christ who in the morning knew that she had destroyed Adam. ... She who had acquired faithlessness in paradise hurries to acquire faith from the tomb; she strives to seize life from death who had seized death from life. Mary came. This is the name of the mother of Christ, and so she came as (his) mother in name, she came as woman, so that she might become (truly) the mother of all living (Gen 3:20) who had in fact been mother of the dead ...  

By virtue of their common name, Christ’s mother is mystically present at his 'rebirth' on Easter morning:

Mary and Mary, thus the other is like the one and the one like the other. The other and the one Mary (are) Mary the mother of Christ: one name is duplicated in two women as here the church derived from two peoples is represented in one (form) ... Mary came to the tomb, came to the resurrection from the womb, came to the birth of life, so that Christ might be born again by faith from the tomb, as he had been generated in the flesh from the womb, and he whom enclosed virginity had brought forth

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23 Nuntiavit viro suo mortem femina in paradiso; nuntiaverunt et feminae salutem viris in Ecclesia. Resurrectionem Christi apostoli erant gentibus nuntiaturi: apostolis feminae nuntiaturt. Augustine, Sermones de Scripturis 51.2.3 (PL 38:335).

24 Sero mulier currit ad veniam, quae mature cucurrit ad culpam. Vespere quaerit Christum, quae in matutinis Adam se noverat perdidisse. ... Quae de paridiso perfidiam sumpserat, festinat fidem sumere de sepulcro; contendit rapere de morte vitam, quae de vita rapuerat mortem. Venit Maria. Hoc nomen matris est Christi, venit ergo mater in nomine, venit mulier, ut fieret mater viventium, quae facta fuerat morientium mater.... Chrysologus, Serm. 74 (PL 52:409).
Again, in accounting for the singular verb that Matthew uses of the two women who came to the tomb, Chrysologus presents the Magdalen as actually being transformed from Eve (and Adam) into a type of the Virgin Mary at the tomb:

For 'she came' and not 'they came', and since he speaks of another (Mary) he means the same by both in mystic speech, so that he might show that one came before faith and the other would return after faith. She came (as) woman but returned as Mary; she came as her who had brought death but returned as her who bore life; she came as Adam who led (humanity) into hell but returned as her who received Christ from hell.26

Beyond this attribution to the Virgin Mary,27 Chrysologus is at great pains to deny that a woman's role in witnessing and announcing the resurrection has any significance for the 'natural order'. He argues that the disciples should not be accused for their absence from the tomb or for the fact that the 'weakness of women' preceded them to the glory of the resurrection, for in fact 'woman was here following a man, not preceding him, to where man (vir) had risen in Christ', and 'man (vir) was already in Christ when the angel came to the woman, so that by as much as the Lord surpasses the angel, so man surpasses woman in honour.'28 He goes on to say of the fact that the women were sent as

25 Maria et Maria, sic altera, ut ipsa: ipsa ut altera: altera ipsa Maria, Maria mater Christi: unum nomen duas geminatur in feminas ... Venit Maria ad sepulcrum, venit ad resurrectionis uterum, venit ad vitae partum, ut iterum Christus ex sepulcro nascetur fidei, qui carnis fuerat generatus ex ventre; et eum quem clausa virginitas vitam protulerat ad praesentem, clausum sepulcrum ad vitam redderet sempiternam. Chrysologus, Serm. 75 (PL 52:412).
26 Venit enim, non venerunt, et cum dicta alia, in utraque eamdem mystico designat affatu, ut aliam venisse ante fidem, aliam post fidem redituram esse monstraret. Venit mulier, sed redit Maria; venit quae intulit mortem, redit quae genuit vitam; venit Adam quae deduxit ad inferos, redit quae ab inferis Christum recepit. Chrysologus, Serm. 77 (PL 52:418).
27 Or those cases where he argues that the women are types of the Church; see further below, pages 42-3.
28 ... ad resurrectionis gloriam muliebris praecurrat infirmitas... nam mulier hic virum sequitur, non praecedet, ubi vir resurgit in Christo. ... denique iam vir erat in Christo quando ad mulieres angelus venit, ut quantum praecellit Dominus angelum, tantum vir mulierem praecederet in honore. Chrysologus, Serm. 80 (PL 52:425).
messengers to the disciples:

Nor are the apostles set below women here, but woman is absolved from guilt, since she carries life and she carries news of the resurrection, who had carried news of death and ruin.\textsuperscript{29}

In the previous sermon, Chysologus allows no restoration for womankind through their resurrection commission. He describes how women are only 'superior' to men in negative achievements:

Brothers, woman is the cause of evil, the author of sin, the way of death, the reason for the tomb, the door of hell, the whole reason for lamentation: because of this they are born to tears, are entrusted with sorrows, are devoted to sighs, and are as proficient in laments as men are deficient; and are as unready for labours as they are ready for tears.... So it is no wonder that the women here seem more avid than the apostles for tears, for death, for the tomb, for the observances of the Lord's body; there woman runs first to tears, who ran first to fall; she leads the way to the tomb who led the way to death; she is made messenger of the resurrection who was the agent of death; and she who offered to man news of such destruction, herself offers to men the news of great salvation, so that she might compensate by the announcement of faith for what she lost in listening to treachery.\textsuperscript{30}

Meanwhile the (male) apostles are kept for the greater witness of martyrdom:

This is not a preposterous order but a mystic one; the apostles are not set below women but are reserved for greater things: women undertake the (funeral) observances of Christ, the apostles undertake his sufferings; the former bear perfumes, the latter lashes; the former enter the tomb, the latter prison; the former hurry to observance, the latter fly into chains; the former pour on oil, the latter pour out blood: the former are amazed at

\textsuperscript{29} Neque hic mulieribus apostoli postponuntur, sed mulier absolvitur a reatu, dum portat vitae, portat resurrectionis auditum, quae auditum mortis portaverat et ruinae. \textit{Ibid. (PL 52:426)}.

\textsuperscript{30} Fratres, mulier mali causa, peccati author, via mortis, sepulcri titulus, inferni ianua, lamenti necesitas tota: ob hoc nascuntur lacrymis, mancipantur moeroribus, gemitibus addicuntur, et in lamentis tantum fortes sunt, quantum viribus inveniuntur infirmae: et quantum imparatae sunt ad labores, tantum ad lacrymas sunt paratae.... Non est ergo mirum, si ad lacrymas, ad funus, ad sepulcrum, ad obsequium Dominici corporis feminae ardentiores apostolis hic videntur; ubi mulier prima currit ad lacrymas, quae prima cucurrit ad lapsum; praecedet ad sepulcrum, quae praecessit ad mortem; fit resurrectionis nuntia, quae fuit mortis interpres; et quae vivo porruxerat interitus tanti nuntium, viris ipsa porrigit magnae salutis auditum, ut compenseret fidei nuntio quod perfidia ademit audita. Chrysologus, \textit{Serm. 79 (PL 52:423)}.
death, the latter undergo it. . . . 31

Even Chrysologus, however, cannot completely obscure the positive implications of the Magdalen's commission and witness, and his extended defence seems rather to indicate a determination to set a clear limit on its significance and potential.

Pope Gregory I (the Great), on the other hand, in his sermon on John's account of the resurrection, describes Mary Magdalen as the bringer of life to humanity when she witnessed to the disciples. He uses a sacramental image which was to prove important for the Magdalen's later legend:

Behold, the guilt of the human race is thence cut off whence it sprang. For because in paradise a woman had brought death to man, from the tomb a woman announced life to men; and she reported the words of him who brought her life, who had reported the words of the death-bringing serpent. As if the Lord had said to the human race, not in words but in deeds: From her whose hand brought you the drink of death, from her receive the cup of life. 32

Gregory was the first writer fully to conflate the Magdalen with Mary of Bethany and Luke's sinner. Thus Paul's dictum that 'where sin abounded, grace

31 Non est hic praeposterus ordo, sed mysticus; non postponuntur apostoli feminis, sed ad maiora servantur; feminae obsequium Christi suscipiunt, apostoli Christi suscipiunt passiones; illae portant aromata, isti flagella; illae intrant sepulcrum, isti carcerem; illae ad obsequium festinant, isti pervolant ad catenas; infudunt illae oleum, isti sanguinem fudunt: mortem stupent illae, suscipiunt hi mortes. Ibid.

32 Ecce humani generis culpa ibi absciditur unde processit. Quia enim in paradiso mulier viro propinavit mortem, a sepulcro mulier viris annuntiat vitam; et dicta sui vivificatoris narrat, quae mortiferi serpentis verba narraverat. Ac si humano generi non verbis Dominus, sed rebus dicit: De qua manu vobis illatus est potus mortis, de ipsa suscipite poculum vitae. Gregory, Hom. in Ev. 25 (PL 76:1194). This significant comment by Gregory is quoted twice by Rabanus, Hom. in Ev. et Ep. 12 and 21 (PL 110:163 and 184), and is adapted twice by Haymo of Halberstadt, Hom. 70 and 77 (PL 118:454 and 481-2) and also by the Glossa ordinaria; Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria (Strasbourg, 1480/1; facsimile Brepols, 1992), vol. 4, 268. On the striking sacramental image, which goes back to Hippolytus, see my article, 'The Gender of the Church: the female image of Ecclesia in the Middle Ages', Studies in Church History 34 (1998): 93-103.
superabounds' (Romans 5:20), which had been previously interpreted in the light of the Magdalen bringing grace where Eve had brought sin, is now taken to refer also to the Magdalen's own progression from 'sinner' to messenger of grace. This phrase of Paul is of vital importance in reconciling later theologians to the Magdalen's role in salvation despite her supposed past as a prostitute. Bede, in his commentary on the longer ending of Mark, uses this argument as he elaborates on Ambrose. He makes the Magdalen an examplar for all penitents of the greatness of God's pardon for sinners in that she achieved such a pinnacle of faith and love. As proof of this he describes how she was sent to evangelise Christ's evangelists and apostles:

In the beginning woman was the author of guilt for man, and man was the executor of error, so now she who first introduced and tasted death, first saw the resurrection. And lest she should bear the opprobrium of perpetual guilt among men, who had poured out guilt upon men, she poured out also grace. Hence rightly even this woman, who first announced the joy of the Lord's resurrection to the mourning and weeping men, is remembered as having been cured of seven demons, so this signifies that she had been filled with universal vice but was made clean of all these by divine favour, and demonstrates that where sin abounded grace superabounded. For seven is the number which is put mystically to represent the universal. So she who was cured of seven demons, that is, freed from universal wickedness, first saw the Lord rising from the dead, lest any worthy penitent despair of being admitted to pardon, seeing that she who was once subject to so many and so great sins was suddenly promoted to such a peak of faith and love, that she was the first to evangelise Christ's evangelists and apostles themselves about the miracle wrought by the resurrection.33

33 In principio mulier auctrix culpae viro fuit, vir executor erroris, ita nunc quae prior mortem intulerat et gustaverat, resurrectionem prior vidit. Et ne perpetui reatus apud viros opprobrium sustinerat, quae culpam viro transfuderat, transfudit et gratiam. Unde recte et mulier haec quae viris lugentibus ac flentibus laetitiam dominicae resurrectionis prima nuntiavit, a septem daemonibus curata esse memoratur, ut universis vitiiis plena fuisse, sed ab his omnibus divino munere mundata esse signetur, et ubi abundavit peccatum, superabundasse gratia monstretur. Septenarius namque numerus pro universitate solet mystice poni. Quae ergo a septem daemonibus curata, hoc est ab universis erat liberata sceleribus, prima resurgentem a mortuis Dominum vidit, ne quisquam digna poenitens de admittor um venia desperaret, videns eam quae tot ac tantis quondam erat subdita vitiiis in tantum culminis subito merito fidei ac dilectionis esse promotam, ut ipsis evangelistis atque apostolis Christi prima illa miraculum patratae resurrectionis evangelizaret. Bede, In Marc. Ev. Exp. 4.16 (PL 92:297-8). This passage is quoted
In his commentary on the gospel of Matthew, Bede describes the Magdalen as worthy of Jesus' commission using a phrase which was to be echoed in early martyrologies, that she and the other women 'merited' the task of announcing the resurrection.\(^{34}\) This in itself may have been prompted by her association with the prostitute sinner for whom grace abounded, for linguistically the word *meretrix* was derived from the verb *merere* - a prostitute is one who 'merits' being (re)paid.\(^{35}\) Although exegetes understandably never make explicit the connection that having been a prostitute the Magdalen was 'worthy' of her Easter role, the linguistic association throws an interesting light on the developing early medieval perception of her part in the divine plan for salvation.

In the same passage Bede also uses the important vocabulary that the women were 'taught' (*doctae*) by the angel; that they announced the resurrection 'to the world' (*mundo*); and for the first time in a gospel commentary it is said specifically that they 'preached' (*praedicare*).\(^{36}\)

Fortunate the women who, taught by the angel's oracle, merited to announce the triumph of the resurrection to the world, and to preach that the power of death, which Eve had introduced when seduced by the serpent's utterance, was destroyed!\(^{37}\)

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by Rabanus, *Hom. in Ev. et Ep. 16 and 20* (PL 110:171 and 182-3), and by the *Glossa ordinaria*; *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria*, vol. 4, 136.


\(^{35}\) A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (Paris, 1967), 399 under *mereo*. Interestingly, the earliest extant use of the phrase for the Magdalen appears to be in a letter from Chrodebert, bishop of Tours (c. 653-674), to an abbess concerning an adulterous nun: Saxer, 'Les origines du culte', 39-40.

\(^{36}\) But see below, page 34-5, for the earliest use, by Jerome, of *praedicare* in the context of the Magdalen's commission.

Bede then elaborates on Jesus' greeting to the women, *Avete*, and describes it as indicating the reversal of Eve's guilt, as the angel Gabriel's salutation to the Virgin Mary was said to have done. Although it is only for women that Eve's curse is said to be revoked, Bede provides a moral allegory that Jesus thus assists all who are striving for salvation:

*And behold Jesus met them and said, 'Hail'. They merited first hearing the salutation of the risen Lord, so that the curse of Eve upon women would be dissolved. In a moral sense, Jesus meets (all) with a salutation, providing aid for all beginning the journey of virtue, so that they might be able to reach eternal salvation.*

In his commentary on John's gospel, Bede cites this passage from Matthew as a counter to anyone who would use the *Noli me tangere* to try to prove that Jesus shunned women. He states that Jesus' words of greeting and instruction to the women, who embraced his feet, embody a 'sacrament' which no one should doubt even if we are not able to perceive it:

*Who would be so absurd as to say that he wished himself to be touched by certain disciples before he had ascended to the Father, yet did not want to be touched by women except when he had ascended to the Father. But so that someone who would interpret this thus is not allowed to be silly, it is written that even women touched Christ after the resurrection before he had ascended to the Father, among whom was even Mary Magdalen herself, for Matthew narrates that Jesus met them saying, 'Hail...'. So it is that something of a sacrament is hidden in these words which, whether we perceive it or whether we are unable to perceive it, we ought in no way to doubt as being present....*

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39 *Quis autem sit tam absurdus, ut dicat eum a discipulis quidem antequam ad Patrem ascendisset, voluisse se tangi, a mulieribus autem noluisse, nisi cum ascendisset ad Patrem? Sed ne qui sic vellet despere sineretur, leguntur etiam feminae post resurrectionem, antequam ad Patrem ascenderet, tetigisse Christum, in quibus erat etiam ipsa Maria Magdalena, narrante Matthaeo quod occurrit illi Jesus dicens: Avete.... Restat ergo ut aliquod in his verbis lateat sacramentum: quod sive inveniamus, sive invenire minime valeamus, inesse tamen nullo modo dubitare debemus. Bede, In S. Ioannis Ev. Exp. 4.20 (PL 92:920).*
Druthmarus uses the second Eve 'argument' to conclude his list of reasons why it was fitting that Jesus first appeared to women:

... because a woman had announced death to a man and incited him to evil, now a woman proclaims life to men. ... Because it was their great concern to come to the tomb, now they proceed to make their announcement with steps motivated by the Lord; rightly they merit meeting the Lord, and the curse of the woman Eve for women is dissolved.\textsuperscript{40}

In an interesting development on this passage, Rabanus suggests that the women themselves have an active role in spreading the seed of the gospel, although they achieve this 'through' the male apostles.\textsuperscript{41} He then describes how the women encounter Jesus and are greeted by him as they hasten to fulfil their 'evangelistic' task, and their devotion is made a cause of merit:

... they made their way to the apostles so that through them they might sow the seedbed of faith. However as they were running to evangelise the disciples, Jesus met them and greeted them ... They who sought thus and ran thus merited encountering the risen Lord, and first hearing 'Hail', so that the curse of the woman Eve for women is dissolved.\textsuperscript{42}

An important sermon, once attributed to Odo of Cluny,\textsuperscript{43} highlights the merit achieved by the Magdalen in that she was not only absolved of her sins but made a companion to the apostles (\textit{apostolorum consors}):

How good and merciful God is towards converted sinners is proved by

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\textsuperscript{40} ... quia mulier viro mortem annuntiaverat et ad malum incitaverat, nunc mulier viris vitam denuntiat. ... Quia magnam curam habebant veniendi ad monumentum, et nunc iterum concitato gradu de Domino pergunt annuntiare, recte merentur obvium habere Dominum, et maledictum Evae mulieris in mulieribussolveretur. Druthmarus, \textit{Exp. in Matt.} (PL 106:1499).

\textsuperscript{41} See below, Chapter 5, for discussion of how medieval women sought to exercise their own ministry through male preachers.

\textsuperscript{42} ... pergebant ad apostolos ut per illos seminarium fidei spargerent. Currentibus autem evangelizare disciplulis occurrat Jesus eoque salute... Quae sic quaerebant, quae ita currebant, merebantur obvium habere Dominum resurgentem, et primae audire \textit{Avete} ut maledictum Evae mulieris in mulieribus solveretur. Rabanus, \textit{Hom. in Ev. et Ep.} 21 (PL 110:184).

her perfection, who not only merited being washed from her sins, but having been made a companion of the apostles, was given to them as the messenger of the Lord's resurrection.  

At the conclusion of the sermon the parallels with Eve are spelt out fully, and the Magdalen is described as complementing the Virgin Mary in her part in the economy of salvation. After quoting Haymo of Halberstadt's use of Gregory's sacramental image, the sermon continues:

And as through blessed Mary ever-virgin, who is the only hope of the world, the gates of paradise are opened to us and the curse of Eve banished, so through blessed Mary Magdalen the contempt of the feminine sex is erased and the brightness of our resurrection, sprung from the Lord's resurrection, is given to us to drink. Whence Mary is rightly interpreted 'star of the sea'. Although this interpretation is particularly apt for the mother of God, through whose giving birth as a virgin the Sun of justice shines bright in the world, yet it is also apt for blessed Magdalen, who came to the tomb of the Lord with spices and first announced the brightness of the Lord's resurrection to the world.

This sermon, which by the eleventh century had been adopted at Vézelay into the lectionary for the Magdalen's feast day, clearly demonstrates the significance that attached to the Magdalen's role as the second Eve, rivalling that of the Virgin Mary. By announcing the brightness of Jesus' resurrection Mary Magdalen brings light to the world, and this theme is developed in the hagiographic tradition which presents her as a preacher who illuminates others

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44 Quam vero Pius et misericors erga conversos peccatores exstiterit Deus, istius comprobab perfectio, quae non solum criminis promerui ablutionem, sed apostolorum consors effecta, illis donata est Dominicae Resurrectionis nuntia. Sermo in veneratione Sanctae Mariae Magdalenae (PL 133: 714).

45 Et sicut per beatam Mariam semper virginem quae spes est unica mundi, paradisi portae nobis sunt apertae, et maledictio excusa Evae; ita per beatam Mariam Magdalenam opprobrium feminei sexus deletem est, et splendor nostrae resurrectionis in Dominica resurrectione exortus ab ea propinatus est. Unde bene Maria interpretatur stella maris. Quae interpretatatio quamvis Dei generici specialiter congruat, per cuius partum virgineum sol iustitiae mundo resplenduit, tamen et beatae Magdalenae potest congruere, quae cum aromatibus veniens ad seque Domini, prima splendorem Dominicae resurrectionis mundo nuntiavit. Ibid. (PL 133:721).

by her words.47

The Magdalen as apostle

There was also a readiness in patristic exegesis to attribute an apostolic role to the Magdalen. Jerome (342-420) appears to be the earliest writer who, echoing Hippolytus, coins the epithet that would gain such currency by the medieval period for Mary Magdalen, *apostola apostolorum*. As with Hippolytus, the phrase is used in the plural of the several women who were witnesses, but Jerome and those after him give a feminine ending for *apostola* which may indicate that he saw the women, since they are of the 'fragile sex' as subordinate to the male apostles.48 Nevertheless, in the prologue to his commentary on Zephaniah, he explains that he is writing to women as they too, whether believer or gentile, have achieved great things:

> It is quite sufficient for me, for other matters are pressing, to say as a conclusion to this prologue, that the risen Lord first appeared to women, and they were apostles to the apostles, so that men would not be ashamed to seek him whom the weaker sex had already found.49

47 See below, Chapter Four, for the Magdalen as *illuminatrix*.

48 Hippolytus clearly considered *apostolus* to be equivalent to the Greek form, ἀπόστολος, a common noun which could be used of women as of men. Writers of the eastern church continue to use the common form of the women apostles: Gregory of Antioch (+593) may have known Hippolytus' *Commentary* for in his sermon on the myrrophores he imagines Christ saying to the women: 'Be the first teachers to the teachers. Let Peter, who denied me, learn that I can ordain even women apostles' (Ὑμαῖν ἐγίναν καὶ ἔλαβον τοὺς ἀπόστολους τὴν ἐμοῦ φυλάξειν, PG 88:1864). Nicephorus Callistos (+c.1335) wrote a sermon on the 'myrrophore Mary Magdalen, holly and equal to the apostles' (ἐις τὴν ἑγγίαν καὶ ἐθεατήσειν τὸν ἀριστοτέλην Μαρίαν Μαγδαληνήν, PG 147:539-76).

His rationale here for the women's apostolate is surprising: the 'fragilior sexus' had braved the dangers of going to visit the tomb (which are highlighted by several Patristic authors) and were the first to find the risen Messiah, supposedly causing the disciples less embarrassment in learning such faith from women than in seeking Christ for themselves. Later, however, Druthmarus, will completely reverse this argument in his varied list of reasons why women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. For him the constancy of the women despite their sex meant that the male disciples should learn from them (pace St Paul), and the male noun nuntius is used of the women as messengers. He elaborates on the angel's words of commission and borrows the detail from Mark's account that the women should tell Peter particularly, because of the circumstances of his denial of Jesus (Mk. 16:7):

And quickly go and tell his disciples... Because the disciples fled and you always stood your ground and sought him here repeatedly, you will be their messengers (nuntii) so that they, who were men and (yet) more afraid than you, might learn through you who belong to the fragile sex. Tell even Peter. Since because a woman made him deny, a woman makes him confess (his faith), and he who was distanced from the disciples by a woman is gathered up again by a woman ....

Jerome is also the first writer to use the verb praedicare of Mary Magdalen and the other women telling the good news of the resurrection. Commenting on Isaiah 27:11, which is variously translated as 'Women coming and teaching her

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50 Et cito euntes dicite discipulis eius... Quia discipuli fugerunt et vos semper stetistis, et hic eum frequenter requisistes, vos estote nuntii illorum, ut per vos discant, quae fragilis sexus estis, illi qui viri fuerunt et amplius vobis timuerunt. Dicite etiam Petro. Ut quia eum femina fecit negare, femina faciat confitei; et qui per feminam elongatus est de discipulis, iterum per feminam aggregetur.... Druthmarus, Exp. In Matt. (PL 106:1499).

51 Katherine L. Jansen appears not to know of this reference (nor that of Bede, page 29 above) when she asserts that it is Rabanus who uses praedicare for the 'first time... in any way in relation to Mary Magdalen's role as herald of the Resurrection; 'Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola', in Women Preachers and Prophets through two millennia of Christianity, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley/London, 1998), 61. I am indebted to Dr. Jansen for sending me a copy of this article prior to its publication.
(Jerusalem)... 'or, in the Septuagint, 'Women coming from the spectacle, come...'; he sees this as a prophecy about the Magdalen's preaching and teaching role:

About Mary called Magdalen and the other Mary, and the rest of the women who first saw the risen Lord and held his feet, and merited hearing him say: Do not be afraid; Go, tell... The prophet's utterance predicted this about the women long before they were born and called them from the spectacle of the Lord's passion and resurrection that they might preach the Gospel and, in the Hebrew, teach Jerusalem and the land of Israel that this is their Lord and God.52

Jerome, like Augustine, is also prepared to ignore the Pauline injunction that women should keep silent 'in church' when he interprets the words of Psalm 22:23 to refer to the Magdalen:

And they reach this point, that they claim according to scripture to call the Lord our brother, as he instructed Mary Magdalen to announce to his brothers that the Lord had arisen, and it says in the psalm: I will tell your name to my brothers, in the middle of the church I will sing of you.53

Thus we have several indications that Jerome, despite the usual negative interpretation of his views on women, was prepared to envisage Mary Magdalen and the other women as fulfilling a genuine apostolate, preaching and speaking in church although he says they are of the 'fragile sex'. These examples should

52 Mulieres venientes et docentes eam, LXX Mulieres, venientes a spectaculo, venite... De Maria dicitur Magdalena et alia Maria et caeteris mulieribus, quae primum viderunt Dominum resurgentem, et tenuerunt pedes eius, et ab eo audire meruerunt, Nolite timere: Ite, nuntiate... De istis mulieribus multo priusquam naserentur, propheticus sermo praenuntiat, et vocat eas a spectaculo Dominicae Passionis et Resurrectionis, ut Evangelium praedicent, et juxta Hebraicum, doceant Jerusalem sive terram Israel quod iste sit Dominus et Deus. Jerome, Comm. in Isa. 8.27 (PL 24:311-2).

be used to counterbalance one current view which sees Jerome as a 'misogynist'.

It is clear also that at this early period women could be conceived of as apostles ranking alongside men, for Jerome and other writers are quite happy to believe St Paul extolled a woman, Junia, as an apostle. The greeting he sends in Romans 16:7, to a couple 'outstanding among the apostles' is properly read as referring to a man and a woman, Andronicus and Junia. The implications that a woman was thus honoured were not considered embarrassing until the thirteenth or fourteenth century, when the ambiguous accusative Ἰουβίταν was construed as the masculine Junias, a name which is not otherwise attested in the first century. Jerome echoes the interpretations of Origen and Chrysostom, and was in turn echoed by Theophylact and Abelard, who expresses himself rather more cautiously given the role of women in his day: 'It seems from this passage that even a woman can be said to be an apostle' (literally 'apostolic').

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54 See, for example, Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson (ed.), Women and Religion: A feminist sourcebook of Christian Thought (New York/London, 1977), 53-68.
55 So, in Jerome's Vulgate translation: Salutate Andronicum et Iuniam, cognatos et concaptivos meos, qui sunt nobiles in apostolis. (PL 29:744)
56 Bernadette Brooten, Junia ... outstanding among the apostles, in Leonard and Arlene Swidler (ed.), Women priests: a Catholic commentary on the Vatican declaration (New York/Toronto, 1977), 110-14, says it was not until Aegidius of Rome (1245-1316) that the reading Junias was introduced. The New Revised Standard Version and the Revised English Bible have lately reversed the trend of the last seven hundred years.
57 Origen, Comm. in Ep. ad Rom. 10.21 (PG 14:1280).
58 ... quanta mulieris huiusce philosophia, ut etiam apostolorum nomine appellaretur. Chrysostom, Hom. in Ep. ad Rom. 31.2 (PG 60:670).
59 Porro magnum est quod apostoli sint, prae Desertam ctm Iunia sit mulier. Theophylact, Exp. in Ep. ad Rom. 16 (PG 124:551/2). Apostolic activity is also imputed by Theophylact to the Mary whom Paul greeted in the preceding verse: verum etiam, quod maius est, pro nobis apostolorum adimplevit officium.
Other interpretations of Mary Magdalen’s commission describe her role in terms of an apostolate. Rabanus, for example, takes the fact that the lectionary prescribes Acts 8:26-40 as the epistle to match the Gospel according to John 20:11-18 for Easter Thursday, as indicating that Mary’s evangelisation of the disciples was equivalent to the apostle Philip’s conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch:

In this there is a correspondence between these two readings for an angel spoke to Mary and also to Philip; Philip brought the gospel of Jesus to the eunuch and Mary announced Jesus to the apostles.61

Elsewhere Rabanus described the Magdalen’s ministry to the apostles in terms of preaching, but he is not so explicit in this as Jerome and Bede had been, in that he only says she is a type of the Law which preached in prophecy of the resurrection, or of the church which preaches ‘throughout the universe’:

The women who announce the resurrection of the Lord to the apostles are understood as the law and prophecy which like forerunners preached the glory of the resurrection of Christ before it was revealed.... She is justified by his passion and made an intimate of the Lord, so that she anointed with holy oil not only his feet as John tells but even his head as Matthew and Mark say. She is called Magdalen from the place Magdala, for Magdalen is interpreted ‘tower’. Mystically she signifies the faith and piety of the holy church which scatters the scent of the news of Christ throughout the universe by preaching.62

The sermon attributed to Odo of Cluny, having described the Magdalen bringing brightness to the world, parallels her with the apostles in their mission to take the good news to all creation:

61 In hoc istarum duarum fit concordia lectionum quia locutus est angelus Mariae, locutus est et Philippo, evangelizavit Jesum Philippus eunucho, nuntiavit Maria apostolis Jesum. Rabanus, Hom. in Ev. et Ep. 12 (PL 110:163). Although he only uses nuntiare of the Magdalen here, Rabanus elsewhere uses evangelizare of her as he does of Philip.

And if the disciples are also called apostles because they were sent by him to preach the gospel to every creature, in just the same way was blessed Mary Magdalene directed by the Lord himself to the apostles, insofar as she removed doubt and incredulity about the resurrection from their hearts.63

In the version of this sermon printed by Etienne-Michel Faillon (but not sourced), this passage is significantly expanded to make the parallel of the Magdalen's apostolate even clearer:

And if the disciples of the Lord are even called apostles because they are sent by him to preach the gospel to every creature, no less is blessed Mary Magdalene. Although this may seem contrary to her sex, she can aptly be called an apostle. For as the apostles were sent to banish faithlessness and the darkness of ignorance from mortals, so also was blessed Mary Magdalene directed by the Lord himself to the apostles ....64

The Magdalen's role as the apostle of apostles, first hinted at by Hippolytus, is thus elaborated by later writers and the title apostola apostolorum becomes commonplace for her in the Middle Ages. It was clearly no great step for hagiographers to interpret her apostolate 'to the world' or 'to every creature' as a preaching career which encompassed more than just the disciples on Easter Day.

63 Et si discipuli ideo apostoli vocati, quia missi sunt ab ipso ad praedicandum evangelium omni creaturae, nec minus beata Maria Magdalene ab ipso Domino destinata est ad apostolos, quatenus dubietatem et incredulitatem suae resurrectionis ab illorum cordibus removeret. Sermo in veneratione Sanctae Mariae Magdalenae (PL 133:721).

64 Et si discipuli Domini adae apostoli vocati sunt quia mittuntur ab illo ut praedicent evangelium omni creaturae, nec minus beata Maria Magdalena: Quamvis ipsius videatur contrarium sexui, apostola non incongrue potest dici. Quoniam sicut apostoli missi sunt ut infidelitatem et tenebras ignorantiae a mortalibus repellerent, ita et beata Maria Magdalena ab ipso Domino destinata est ad apostolos .... Faillon, Monuments inedit, vol. 2, 571-2. This version is also reproduced by Felice Lifshitz, 'Des femmes missionaires: l'exemple de la Gaule franque', Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique 83 (1988): 20.
The Magdalen as a figure of the church

Hippolytus initially presents Mary and Martha together as a type of the synagogue, while he later says that Jesus, by his actions toward them, has pacified the synagogue and glorified the church. Adapting Hippolytus, Mary Magdalen is frequently presented in patristic exegesis as a type of the church in contrast to the synagogue which does not believe in Christ's resurrection, or alternatively as the ecclesia ex gentibus as opposed to the ecclesia Iudaeorum or ecclesia ex Iudaeis.

Early exegetes followed St Paul and the author of Revelation in using a woman as a type of the church, the bride of Christ. This is demonstrated by the parallel drawn in the Second epistle to the Corinthians attributed to St Clement (Ila Clementis, c. 150) between Ephesians 5:31-2 (Christ as the new Adam) and Genesis 1:27 ('male and female he created them'): 'The man is Christ, the woman is the church'.

In another epistle attributed to Clement, the gentile prostitute Rahab is presented as a figure of redemption for all through faith, and it is important for patristic representation of the Magdalen that prostitution was clearly not considered a bar for such prestigious typology. Rahab received Joshua's spies and her house was saved in the destruction of Jericho due to the protecting sign of the scarlet cord that she was given: 'making it clear that through the blood of the Lord there would be future redemption for all those who believe and hope in God.'

Soon after this, Justin makes Rahab represent specifically those sinners who are redeemed 'out of all nations':

For like the sign of the scarlet thread, which the spies in Jericho gave to Rahab the harlot ..., similarly those who have received remission of sins, who are sinners no more, display the sign of the blood of Christ, by whom those who were at one time adulterers and evil persons out of all nations.

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65 Jouassard, 'La nouvelle Eve', 41.
66 ... manifestum facientes, quod per sanguinem Domini futura esset redemptio universis credentibus et sperantibus in Deum. Clement, Epistola I ad Corinthios 12 (PG 1:233/4).
It is Irenaeus who makes the concept of *Ecclesia ex gentibus* explicit in his treatise *Adversus omnes Haereses*, and sees it prefigured in the prostitutes and gentile wives of the Old Testament. He describes Hosea's wife as a type of the church sanctified by God, as an 'unfaithful wife is sanctified by her husband' (I Cor. 7:14), and Moses' Ethiopian wife as a type of *ea quae ex gentibus est Ecclesia*. To these he adds the example of Rahab, who he says received the Holy Trinity in the shape of Joshua's spies and by her faith manifested Jesus' words to the pharisees that 'publicans and harlots would precede them into the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 21:31). Thus the important idea has been formulated by the end of the second century that prostitutes could represent the church, redeemed by faith or sanctified in relation to Christ. Cyprian presents Rahab as a type of the one, single church, *ecclesia una*, and even says that it is essential for all the faithful to abide in the prostitute's house if they are to be saved: 'It was said to Rahab, who is a type of the church: ... whosoever shall go out of the door of your house, his blood shall be upon his own head' (Joshua 2:18-19).

Hippolytus is apparently the earliest writer to present the women who were witnesses of the resurrection as a type of the church. Following him, exegetes interpret the Magdalen as representing the church in nearly all the scenes in which she appears in the gospel, or which were later thought to refer to her. Thus Ambrose says that only the church could carry such an ointment as Luke's

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67 *Nam et signum funiculi coccinei, quod Jerichunte dederunt meretrici Rahab exploratores ... similiter signum exhibebant sanguinis Christi, per quem omnibus gentibus qui olim moechi et iniqui erant salvantur, remissionem peccatorum adepti, nec iam amplius peccantes. Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 3.111.3-4 (PG 6:733/4).*

68 *Irenaeus, Adversus omnes haereses 4.20.12 (PG 7:1042-3).*

69 *... cum dictum sit ad Rahab, in qua praeformabatur Ecclesia: Patrem tuum et matrem tuam et fratres tuos et totam domum patris tui colliges ad te ipsam in domum tuam, et omnis qui exerit ostium domus tuae foras, reus sibi erit. Cyprian, De unitate Eccl. 8 (PL 4:506).*
sinner carried to anoint Christ's feet, and argues that 'it is fitting for the church to take on the appearance of a sinner (peccatrix) since Christ also took on the form of a sinner (peccator').

70 Paulinus, bishop of Nola (353/4-431), draws on Ambrose's suggestion that only the church, which itself gives off heavenly fragrance in prayers and incense, could compound such an ointment.

71 In presenting Luke's sinner as 'a type of the church, (who) wets Christ's feet with ointment and tears and dries them', he attributes to her an extraordinary sacramental privilege, using the typology to extend the significance of the woman's actions:

... and so hungry for the heavenly word, she ran not to (the Pharisee's) meal but to Christ's feet, and upon them she bathed and fed herself, and she made those feet, so to speak, into a sanctuary and altar for herself. Upon them she made an offering with her tears, an oblation with her ointment, a sacrifice with her passions. For the sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit, and she offering this up to God, merited not only the remission of her faults but also the glory of being preached by name in the gospel. And because she is a type of the church called from the gentiles, she bears in herself all the important mysteries of salvation. She is anointed with the chrism of her own gift; she has the washing (baptism) of her tears of penitence; the sacrifice of the impulse of charity; and she took that living and lifegiving Bread in her hands and mouth, and tasted with her sucking kisses the blood of the chalice before there was a chalice of blood. Blessed was she who tasted Christ in the flesh, and received Christ's own body as the body of Christ.


71 Quae potuit nisi Ecclesia tale conficere (unguentum) quae de variis coelestium gratiarum floribus et succis odorarum multummoda suavitates ex diversis gentibus Deo spirat, orationesque sanctorum, velut aromata peteris incensa flagrantibus, spiritu veritatis exhalat.... Paulinus, Ep. 23 (PL 61:278).

72 ... illa in Ecclesiae typo mulier, Christi vestigia unguento et lacrymis rigans tersit ... et tantum verbi coelestis esuriens, non ad dapes illius, sed ad pedes Christi cucurrit, seque in illis abluit, et cibavit: atque ipsos sibi pedes sacramium, ut ita dixerim, et altare constituit. In quibus libavit fletu, litavit unguento, sacrificavit affectu. Sacrificium enim Deo spiritus contributus quem illa immolans Deo, non solum remissionem delictorum, sed et gloriam praedicandi omn Evangelio nominis meruit. Et quia vocandae ex gentibus Ecclesiae imaginem praeferebat, omnia
Peter Chrysologus, who makes Paulinus' inference about the ointment explicit when he describes Luke's sinner carrying chrism,73 also says that the two Marys who encountered Jesus on Easter morning represent the church which is derived from two peoples, the gentiles and the Jews.74 He goes on to state that the women represent the preaching of the gospel within the church: 'These (women) hold Christ's feet, who hold in the church the type of evangelical preaching'.75 This double use of the verb tenere, 'to hold (office)', despite the female subject, intriguingly suggests that male preachers must see themselves as the women at Jesus' feet. However, Chrysologus also demonstrates the other extreme of interpretation which typological analogy could lead to, that of limitation of the women's role in contrast to Paulinus' enhancement of it. For he argues that the women coming to the tomb, who apparently thus preceded the (male) apostles in ministry and rank, in fact did not come as physical women but as a type of the Jewish and gentile churches:

Women precede the apostles to ministry, who (should) follow men in sex and the disciples in rank: but they do not here make the apostles


73 ... mulier haec id est Ecclesia... Ut cognovit accubuisse Dominum in domo Pharisaei, id est in synagoga omni dolo, tota fraude addictum, passum, crucifixum et sepultum, tamen a fervore fidei tanta ista non retardatur iniuria, sed portat unguentum, portat Christiani christmatis oleum. Chrysologus, Serm. 95 (PL 52:468-9). Cf. Mulierem super caput Domini fudisse oleum, alio evangelista referente cognovimus (Mt. 26).... Orate, fratres, ut et nos in unguine Domini comereamur aliquatenus computari, et ungamur unguento quod pedibus funditur Salvatoris: quia sicut oblatio est, cum offertur unguentum; ita chrisma perfectum est, de Dominicis vestigiis am redundat. Serm. 93 (PL 52:463).

74 ... altera ipsa Maria, Maria mater Christi: unum nomen duas geminatur in feminas, quia hic Ecclesia ex duobus populis veniens, una figuratur ex duobus populis, id est ex gentibus et Iudaes, quia primi novissimi et novissimi primi (Mt. 20). Chrysologus, Serm. 75 (PL 52:412).

75 Istae tenent pedes Christi, quae in Ecclesia typum evangelicae praedicationis tenent.... Chrysologus, Serm. 76 (PL 52:415).
The angel is said to send the women not as women but as the church which is thus dispersed far and wide, as Chrysologus attempts to explain the women's readiness in contrast to the hesitancy of the disciples whom even Jesus 'could scarcely bring back to faith' by his repeated resurrection appearances.\(^{77}\) Again, in commenting on Mark's statement that the women said nothing (16:8), Chrysologus cites first the Pauline prescription that women should be silent. He is forced to admit that the Magdalen finally did speak, but says that she spoke not as a (real) woman, but as the church:

> For it is given to women to listen not to speak; it is given (to them) to learn not to teach, as the apostle said: Let women be silent in church. Finally the same Mary afterward both goes and announces, but now she plays the part not of woman but of the church, so that there a woman is silent but here as the church she pronounces and speaks.\(^{78}\)

However, this limitation of the Magdalen's role because of ecclesiological typology is not found in later authors. The tendency was clearly towards using ecclesiological typology to expand on her role, and this is what was definitely most influential for her medieval hagiographers.

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\(^{76}\) Praecedunt apostolos ad ministerium feminae, quae in sexu viros, quae ordine discipulos sequuntur: sed non hinc faciunt apostolos segniore, quae non foeminarum formas, sed in Ecclesiarum typum deferunt Dominicum ad sepulcrum. Chrysologus, Serm. 75 (PL 52:412).

\(^{77}\) Angelus hic non feminas, sed Ecclesiam duabus in feminis mittit, unam mittit, ut eam mittendo sic longe lateque diffundat. ... In ipsis vero feminis Ecclesiae figuram manere plenam res ipsa ostendit evidenter, quia discipulos suo Christus de resurrectione nutantes arguit, trepidantes firmat, ostensione lateris, clavorum cavernis, sumptione cibi, vix revocat ad fidem. Chrysologus, Serm. 76 (PL 52:415).

\(^{78}\) Quia mulieribus audire, non loqui datum est; discere datum est, non docere, dicente Apostolo: Mulieres in ecclesia taceant. Denique in eadem Maria postea vadit, et nuntiat, sed iam non feminam sed Ecclesiam gestans, ut ibi sicut femina taceat, hic ut Ecclesia enuntiet et loquitur. Chrysologus, Serm. 82 (PL 52:432).
The Magdalen as the gentiles converted

It has been shown that Mary Magdalen was said to represent the church made up of those who had formerly been gentiles, the *ecclesia ex gentibus*. By extension she is sometimes described as 'gentilism' or 'the gentiles' themselves. This is particularly the case in interpretations of the anointing of Jesus described by Luke, where the faith of the woman of the city who was a sinner is contrasted with the unbelief of Simon the Pharisee.\(^{79}\) Gregory goes one step further with important consequences for the later legends about the Magdalen and makes her symbolise not merely the gentile peoples, but the conversion of the gentiles itself:

> I have touched on the literal meaning of these things, dear brothers: now, if I may, I will expand on the allegorical sense of what was said. For what does the Pharisee presuming on false justice represent unless the Jewish people, what the sinful woman, who yet came to the Lord's feet weeping and lamenting, unless gentilism converted?\(^{80}\)

Bede in his commentary on Luke repeats Gregory's interpretation and, concerning Jesus' words that the Pharisee had given him no water for his feet, adds a phrase which hints at the eastern tradition that the Magdalen had suffered a martyr's death:

> Indeed water is external to us, but the liquid of tears internal to us. Because clearly the faithless people never offered to the Lord even those things that were external to them; yet gentilism converted pours out for

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him not only the substance of her possessions but even her blood.  

This extended typology was reiterated in the medieval period, and although the inference is never spelt out, that from representing the conversion of the gentiles, the Magdalen could be presented as active in bringing it about, it seems certain that the possibility would not have escaped the literate and fertile imagination of Vézelay's monks.

The Magdalen's anointing of Jesus imitated by preaching

The first intimation that Mary Magdalen's anointing of Jesus might be seen as a prophetic type of the role of the preacher is given by Hilary of Poitiers. Writing before the time of Gregory's authoritative conflation, he sees the woman who anointed Jesus according to Matthew as prefiguring the gentile people. In a complex argument he claims that 'the poor' whom Judas was concerned to help could mean those who 'lack faith and prophetic instinct'; so he re-words Judas' criticism of the woman as saying that she should have bought what he calls the 'gentile faith' to help the needy of the Jewish people. Thus Jesus' prophecy that the woman's actions would be remembered wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world (itself of particular significance for the later legend of the Magdalen) is read as implying that 'because Israel will cease, the glory of the gospel would be preached by the faith of the gentiles'.

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81 Aqua quippe extra nos est, lacrymarum humor intra nos. Quia videlicet infidelis populus nec ea quae extra se erant unquam pro Domino tribuit; conversa autem gentilitas pro eo non solum rerum substantiam, sed etiam sanguinem fudit. Bede, In Luc. Ev. Exp. 3.7 (PL 92:427).
83 Mulier haec in praefiguratione gentium plebis est, quae in passione Christi gloriam Deo reddidit. ... Sed discipuli favore salvandi Israelis, ut saepe numero, commoventur; vendi hoc in usum pauperum debuisse. Sed neque mulier haec venale unguentum circumferebat. Et pauperes,
By the time of Gregory the Great, the Magdalen's actions of anointing Jesus' feet and head were seen specifically as a type of preaching, reenacted whenever Christ's humanity and divinity, respectively, was preached:

Therefore we kiss the Redeemer's feet when we love the mystery of his incarnation with our whole heart; we anoint his feet with ointment when we preach the power of his humanity with the good opinion of holy eloquence. But the Pharisee saw and envied this, for when the Jewish people beheld the gentiles preaching God, its malice grew. ... But of the Pharisee it is said You did not anoint my head with oil because he neglected to preach with due praise the power of his divinity, in which the Jewish people had pledged that they would believe. She however anointed my feet with ointment, because when the gentiles believed the mystery of his incarnation, they preached with the highest praise.84

Bede repeats this in his commentary on Luke, and also applies the same reading to the anointing of Christ's head described in Matthew's gospel: 'Mystically Mary's devotion represents the faith of holy church, which pours out holy ointment on the Saviour's head when she confesses and preaches the power of his divine virtue with divine reverence.'85 In his commentary on Mark, Bede adds that Mary's action is reenacted daily by the church in all her members spread throughout the world who proclaim 'We are the good fragrance of Christ

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to God' (II Cor. 2:14-15). Haymo of Halberstat echoes Bede and likens Mary's anointing to the church preaching the words of John's gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word', when she preaches Christ's divinity, and 'And the Word was made flesh', when she preaches his humanity. Again, this typological interpretation persists into the medieval period, and again it seems clear that the Magdalen's hagiographers drew their own literal inferences from it.

The Magdalen as a type of the active as well as the contemplative life

The suitability of the Magdalen to have her later career described in eremitic terms borrowed from Mary of Egypt was due to the prevailing perception of her as a type of the contemplative life. While not glossing over the exegesis which presents her in this manner, the consensus of interpretation is by no means unequivocal. Writers who accepted a composite image of the Magdalen could

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scarcely deny that the gospel also portrayed her washing and anointing Jesus' feet, anointing his head, witnessing the raising of Lazarus, standing by the cross, preparing unguents, meeting the risen Christ and ultimately taking the good news of the resurrection to the apostles. Thus an examination of early exegesis of Mary's 'better' or 'best part' (melior/optima pars) and the 'one thing necessary' (unum necessarium) which Jesus specifically praised, will show how these different biblical aspects could be reconciled, and could have influenced her later hagiography.

Ambrose gives an early interpretation of Luke's scene in the house of Mary and Martha, where Mary's listening to Jesus led to her active anointing of him, just as Martha's active ministry was prompted by listening:

So in one the zeal of attention abounded, in the other the ministry of action: but the zeal for both virtues was present in both. Indeed Martha, if she had not listened to the Word, would not have undertaken her ministry and her action is a sign of her attention: and Mary won such grace from the perfection of both virtues that she anointed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair and filled the whole house with the scent of her faith.89

Later he draws on the implications of the 'zeal' (studium) he has attributed to Mary, and applying the other sense of an 'application to learning', so that she represents the acquisition of wisdom:

Let us therefore be zealous/studious to acquire what no one can take away from us... Let the desire for wisdom prompt you like Mary; for this is a greater and more perfect task: do not let care for ministering turn you from recognising the heavenly word, and do not criticise those and judge them lazy whom you see studying wisdom; for even Solomon the peacebringer dwelt together with her.90

90 Studeamus igitur et nos habere quod nemo possit auferre... Agat te sicut Mariam desiderium sapientiae; hoc enim maius, hoc perfectius opus: nec ministerii cura cognitionem verbi coelestis
Hence Ambrose contrasts the two roles as minister and doctor respectively. This interpretation of Mary's listening, inferring the learning necessary to become a teacher, proves critical in medieval justification of the Magdalen as a preacher.

Augustine echoes Ambrose when he describes how Mary represents 'the church in a future age when, ceasing from labour and ministry to those in need, she enjoys wisdom alone'. In this interpretation, contemplation although essentially quiescent is said to supersede activity and ministry. Such a sequence of activity leading to contemplation is important both in later exegesis and in underpinning the structure of the developed Magdalen legend where, having accomplished her active ministry, she then is led on to solitary contemplation.

Cassian, although he interprets contemplation as the 'chief good' (principale bonum), describes Mary as acquiring instruction at Christ's feet which she also anointed:

Mary, intent only on spiritual teaching as she clung to the feet of Jesus which she kissed and anointed with the ointment of a good confession, is preferred by the Lord in that she chose the better part and one which

91 Maria... significat eadem Ecclesiam sed in futuro saeculo ubi cessans ab opere ministerioque indigentiae, sola sapientia perfruetur... . Augustine, Quaest. Ev. 2.20 (PL 35:1341), quoted by Eugyppius, Thesaurus 181 (PL 62:838). Cf. Bede, In Luc. Ev. Exp. 4.11 (PL 92:475): ... at Maria pedibus eius humiliter acclinis, optimam partem philosophiae coelestis elegit.

92 Cf. Augustine, De Trinitate 1.10.20 (PL 42:834): ... contemplationem Dei, ubi est finis omnium bonarum actionum et requies sempiterna et gaudium quod nunquam auferetur a nobis. Huius gaudii similitudinem praesignabat Maria sedens ad pedes Domini, et intenta in verbum eius; quieta scilicet ab omni actione... ipsa requiescebat in verbo Domini... . In illa igitur contemplatione Deus erit omnia in omnibus; quia nihil ab illo aliud requiretur, sed solo ipso illustrari perfruique sufficiet.
would not be taken from her. 93

Gregory gives the classic interpretation of Martha and Mary as representing the sucession of the active and contemplative lives, and their foreshadowing in the figures of Leah and Rachel:

Hence Rachel is beautiful but sterile whereas Leah is clear-eyed but fruitful, for the mind truly sees more but produces fewer children for God when it seeks the stillness of contemplation; though when it directs itself to the labour of preaching, it sees less but bears more. ... For what is expressed through Mary, who sat and heard the words of the Lord, but the contemplative life? What is signified through Martha, occupied in external devotion, but the active life? But the care of Martha is not reprehended, although that of Mary is praised, because the merits of the active life are great but those of the contemplative life are preferable. Hence it is said that the part of Mary will never be taken away because the works of the active life pass away with the body, but the joys of the contemplative life increase and improve after death. 94

The application of the vita activa only to preaching in this passage is contradicted by Gregory's own elucidation of Ezekiel's vision of the four creatures with human hands under their wings on each of their sides (1:8). The whole vision in this homily is related to preaching and preachers, and Gregory says explicitly here that the two lives represented by the hands and the wings, by Martha and Mary, are the two lives of those who preach: 'For there are two lives of holy preachers, that is the active and the contemplative'. He does not elaborate, however, on whether one can preach and live out a contemplative life at the

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93 Maria spiritali tantummodo intenta doctrinae, Jesu pedibus inhaereret, quos osculans bonae confessionis liniebat unguento, praefertur tamen a Domino quod et meliorem elegerit partem. Cassian, Collationes 1.8 (PL 49:491).

94 Unde et Rachel pulchra sed sterilis; Lia autem lipppa est sed fecunda, quia nimium mens am contemplandi oita appetit plus videt sed minus Deo filios generat; am vero ad laborem se praedicationis dirigit, minus videt sed amplius parit. ... Quid enim per Mariam, quae verba Domini residens audiebat, nisi contemplativa vita exprimitur? Quid per Martham exterioribus obsequuis occupatam, nisi activa vita signatur? Sed Marthae cura non reprehenditur, Mariae vero etiam laudatur, quia magna sunt activae merita sed contemplativae potiora. Unde ned auterri unquam Mariae pars dicitur, quia activae vitae opera am corpore transseunt, contemplativae autem gaudia melius ex fine convalescunt. Gregory, Moralium in Job 6.61 (PL 75:764).
same time, but implies a temporal succession from preaching to contemplation, 'for the active life is prior in time to the contemplative since from good work one tends towards contemplation'.  

In a later homily Gregory outlines the active life in an early list of what were to be formalised as 'works of mercy'. Here 'spiritual works' and 'corporal works' are not distinguished but many are connected with preaching and many are later applied to Mary Magdalen:

For the active life is to feed the hungry, to teach the word of knowledge to the ignorant, to correct those in error, to recall one's proud neighbour to the way of humility, to care for the sick, to provide for the needs of each, to give guidance to those committed to our care.

These activities will be literally performed by the Magdalen, almost in this very sequence, in the developed legend which tells of her apostolate in Provence and her conversion of the prince of Marseilles and his wife. She obtains food and shelter for her hungry companions, teaches and preaches to the citizens about the error of their idolatry, brings the noble couple to a humble confession of faith, protects the wife who has apparently died in childbirth, and guides them both safely home from their voyage to Rome and the Holy Land. Gregory's subsequent outline of the contemplative life again seems to have influenced the Magdalen's hagiography for he states that:

... the mind is aflame to see the face of its creator, so that it is now aware of the weight of corruptible flesh that it carries with sadness, and seeks with all its desires to have a place in that hymn-singing choir of angels, to mix with the citizens of heaven, and to rejoice forever in the unchanging

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95 Duae autem sunt sanctorum praedicatorum vitae, activa scilicet et contemplativa; sed activa prior est tempore quam contemplativa, quia ex bono opere tenditur ad contemplationem. Gregory, *Hom. in Ezch.* 1.4.9 (PL 76:809).


97 On this development of the legend, see Chapter Two.
Gregory's exegesis was clearly influential and was repeated by several later writers, including Alulfus Tornacensis, Bede, Haymo of Halberstadt and Rabanus Maurus. The correspondences between the Magdalen legend and the succession of the active and contemplative lives that Gregory describes here is so great that it seems that the medieval hagiographers were almost creating a calque, an impression traced from an original image, from this particular homily which had proved so popular among exegetes and theologians, showing how the two lives could be combined in one person, and she a preacher.

Some later writers did differ from Gregory. Taio Caesaraugustanus quotes his interpretation of Ezekiel but only applies the two lives to 'holy men' rather than literally to 'holy preachers'. He goes on to deny that contemplation can be combined with preaching:

The contemplative life is truly more beautiful in the mind, but while it seeks to rest in silence, it does not bear children by preaching: it sees and does not produce, for its intent zeal for quiet inflames itself less in gatherings of other people. And preaching is not sufficient to reveal to others how much it sees internally.

98 Contemplativa vero vita est charitatem quidem Dei proximi tota mente retinere sed ab exteriore actione quiescere, soli desiderio conditoris inhaerere, ut nil iam agere libeat, sed calcatis curis omnibus, ad videndum faciem sui Creatoris animus inardescat; ita ut iam noverit carnis corruptibilis pondus cum moerore portare, totisque desideriis appetere illis hymniciis angelorum choris interesse, admisceri coelestibus civibus, de aeterna in conspectu Dei incorruptione gaudere. Gregory, Hom. in Ezech. 2.2.8 (PL 76:953). Hippolytus had already implied Mary's heavenly ascent from the feet of the risen Christ: O beata mulier, quae adhaesit pedibus eius ut in aerem posset evolare! Comm. in Cant. (CSCO vol. 264, 46).

99 Alulfus, Expositio Novi Testamenti (PL 79:1211); Bede, In Luc. Ev. Exp. 3.10 (PL 92:471) and Homiliae [subdititia] (Hom. 57) (PL 94:420); Haymo, Hom. de sanctis 6 (PL 118:768); Rabanus, Hom. in Ev. et Ep. 150 (PL 110:435).

100 Another Mary, the Blessed Virgin, had long been seen as fulfilling both lives herself; see Giles Constable, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', in Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought (Cambridge, 1995), 8-10.

101 Contemplativa vita valde speciosa est in animo, sed dum quiescere in silentio appetit, filios non generat ex praedicatione: videt et non parit, quia quietis suae studio intenta minus se
Such dissent was not common, however, for by the thirteenth century the rise of the Friar Preachers led to just the reverse of this statement with the assertion that to preach is no more or less than to pass on the truths discovered in contemplation, *contemplata aliis tradere*. It seems no coincidence that by the end of the thirteenth century Mary Magdalen, contemplative and preacher, was being claimed as a patron for the Dominican Order.\textsuperscript{102}

Conclusions

The evidence from patristic and early medieval authors prepared the way for the efflorescence of the cult of Mary Magdalen in the eleventh century. Contained in it are many different strands which appear to have contributed to the development by the Cluniac monastery at Vézelay of the legend that the Magdalen came to France after the ascension and preached, before she retired into the wilderness as the superseded *Vita eremitica* maintained.

Patristic exegesis credited her with playing a dynamic and positive part in the economy of salvation, compensating for the guilt of Eve for all people, as well as merely for women. In this she is described as literally bearing the word of life to humanity, or bringing the message of salvation to 'men', by whom the disciples are meant but such phrases could clearly allow of a wider, universal interpretation, especially in the light of Jesus' own prophecy that her actions would be remembered throughout the world. In her role as witness to the resurrection, the Magdalen is literally described in early commentary as an apostle, in terms which allow no distinction between her and the male apostles,

\textit{in aliorum collectione succeddit. Et quantum introrsum conspicit, aperire aliis praedicando non sufficit. Taio Caesaraugustinus, Sententiarum 3.21 (PL 80:875).}

\textsuperscript{102} See below, Chapter Four.
although the more ambiguous term *apostola apostolorum* gains greater currency later. She is said to have preached the good news, and to have taught and spoken 'in church' in direct contradiction of Pauline prohibitions on women, so it is clear that the gospel account of her commission from the risen Christ was generally preferred to the Apostle's proscription.

As a typological figure, Mary Magdalen is invested with authority as the church which preaches the resurrection to all, especially the church of the gentiles for whom the gospel replaced the law. Deriving from this, she is seen as representing the actual conversion of the gentiles, and her anointing of Jesus is said to be a type of preaching, thus leaving only a small gap for the medieval imagination to bridge in order to portray her converting the gentiles herself by her preaching. In addition, although Mary is interpreted as a type of the contemplative life, her actions as recorded in the gospel cannot be overlooked by exegetes and so balance is given to a purely quiescent understanding of contemplation. In fact it is frequently argued that a contemplative life follows on from an active one, and this gives a useful model for those medieval writers who sought to combine accounts of the Magdalen's active life with the earlier eremitic version, so she is said to progress from preaching to contemplation in the wilderness. Finally, and perhaps conclusively, medieval hagiographers seem to have drawn upon Gregory's outline of the various activities appropriate to each life to form a literal calque in the Magdalen's active preaching and works in Provence.

These examples show that the new legend could derive justification from patristic authority sufficient for it to appear orthodox and gain currency as Mary Magdalen's cult flourished into the twelfth century. Thus new insight is gained into the one of the processes which could be employed by medieval hagiography, that of taking traditional typology literally, as it were, and fleshing out the abstract figures of exegesis. This shows both the fertility of imagination
that the Magdalen's hagiographers possessed to embellish such apparently scattered and bare comments into such a vibrant and popular story, and also their literal-mindedness to perceive such possibilities in the familiar reading material of the office and lectionary. It also gives a new perspective on the interpretation of typology in the Middle Ages. Not only, in this example, was a woman presented as a type of the church, which is seen as the female figure *ecclesia*, but this female figure could actually inform a hagiographic account of a woman who preaches and teaches men without criticism, which is presented as a factual and didactic truth.
PART TWO: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER TWO

THE EVOLUTION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE PREACHING LEGENDS

Having described the patristic and early medieval background which formed, as it were, the seedbed out of which the legends about Mary Magdalen as a preacher grew and flourished, we now turn to the legends themselves, to study the earliest forms which germinated at Vézelay, and the fruit that they immediately bore in progressively more elaborate and complex versions of her active life. The richness of the theme is at once made clear by the creative achievement of the Magdalen's first legendary hagiographers in the eleventh century. Accounts of her preaching apostolate were rapidly incorporated into monastic lectionaries, into sermons in the twelfth century, and into legendaries proper, especially the highly influential Legenda Aurea in the thirteenth century. This chapter, then, will concentrate on the evolution of the preaching legends and their diffusion into these Legendary accounts to the end of the fifteenth century.

The earliest Vézelien forms

The legends ascribing an active preaching career to Mary Magdalen in the West
originated at Vézelay,¹ and can be seen to have been developed by the monks of the Benedictine community there seeking to authenticate their claim to possess her relics. While no precise dates can be given to the legends from internal evidence, it is possible to deduce from external evidence when the claims which they were designed to support were being made. The earliest recorded Vézelien claim to the Magdalen's relics dates to the years 1024-25 with the reference in the Gesta of the bishops of Cambrai that a monk Badilon 'was said to have brought the body of Saint Mary Magdalen from Jerusalem to the place Vézelay in Burgundy'.² A collection of miracles ascribed to Mary Magdalen at Vézelay, compiled after the years 1037-40 attributes promotion of her cult to Geoffrey, who assumed the abbacy of the monastery in 1037, and ascribed the 'paix de Dieu' truce in Burgundy in 1040 to the Magdalen's intervention.³ By 1040 Vézelay's reputation as a place of pilgrimage had spread, for in this year the capitul of Barbezieux in Saintonge is known to have visited the shrine with his wife.⁴ Vézelay's claim was formally ratified, for on April 27th 1050, pope Leo IX issued a bull making Mary Magdalen patron of the abbey at Vézelay.⁵ Eight years later, on March 6th 1058, Stephen IX in a letter recognised Vézelay's

¹ Although René Louis and others tried to argue that they originated in Provence; see Baudouin de Gaiffier, 'Hagiographie Bourguignonne', Analecta Bollandiana 69 (1951): 135-6.
² Est dives abbatia ubi vir Dei venerabilis Baidilo requiescit, qui corpus sanctae Mariae Magdaleneae de Hierusalem in Burgundiam in loco Vercelliaco attulisse furtur. Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium, bk. 2, ch. 43, MGH Script. 7 (1846): 464, cited in Saxer, 'L'origine des reliques de Sainte Marie Madeleine à Vézelay', Revue des Sciences Religieuses 29 (1955): 2. St Badilon was monk at St-Martin d'Autun until it was sacked in 879 when he went to Vézelay, and later to Leuze. He had the reputation of having travelled widely. On the dating of the Gesta, see E. Van Mingroot, 'Kritische onderzoek omtrent de datering van de Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium', Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire 53 (1975): 281-332.
⁴ Saxer, Le culte, 74-6.
⁵ It is probable that abbot Geoffrey was instrumental in prevailing upon Pope Leo when he assisted at the council of Reims in 1049; Saxer, ibid. 69.
possession of her body.  

The 'official' Vézelian account of how they came to have Mary Magdalen's relics seems to have taken a little time to work out. Notwithstanding the early attribution to Badilon in the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, in the collection of miracles from Vézelay the author disarmingly says at one point that people had no idea how the relics had arrived from Judaea. He does, however, point out that all things are possible with God, that the saint herself has appeared to authenticate them and, he concludes pragmatically, no-one else has claimed to possess them. 

Victor Saxer suggests that two more developed versions of the Vézelien legend were being related orally between 1037 and 1043, and were written down by about 1050 or shortly after. He attributes precedence, however, to the form he calls "Omnipotentis" - *Translatio prior* while describing the 'Vita apostolica' as belonging to the second wave of more energetic assurances of Vezelay's position. I would challenge this assertion, and argue that from the internal evidence of how these two vitae describe the Magdalen's active ministry, the *Vita apostolica* is necessarily earlier.

The *Vita apostolica* is a developed legend of the Magdalen preaching and

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7 *Nam cunctatur a multis qualiter fieri potuit ut corpus Mariae Magdalenae, cuius exorta in Judaea fuit, de tam longinque regione ad Galliarum partes delatum sit. Sed paucis his repondendum, quoniam omnia possibilia sunt apud Deum, et quaecunque voluit fecit. ... Illud etiam certissime praenotandum, quod nusquam ab aliquo, ut de plerisque solet, praeter Vicelaicum dicatur corpus eiusdem haberi. BHL 5471, 5473; Faillon, *Monuments Inédits*, vol. 2, 739-40.
9 Faillon unaccountably separated the *vita* 'Omnipotentis Dei clementia' from the *narratio translationis* with the result that the Bollandists ascribed separate numbers (BHL 5442 and 5488) to the two sections of what is a continuous text in the eleventh century manuscript, Paris BN Lat. 17627; *Monuments inédits*, vol. 2, 573-4, 741-4. Attention was finally drawn to this error by Baudouin de Gaiffier, 'Hagiographie Bourguignonne', 136.
converting, and it exists in several forms (BHL 5443-9) of which some seven manuscripts date from before the end of the eleventh century, and at least another nine from the twelfth century. In it the early church is described as taking shape after the resurrection, ascension and Pentecost, when:

... all believers were together with the women and Mary his mother, as Luke the evangelist narrates; and the word of God was spread and the number of believers grew daily: so that many thousands, through the preaching of the apostles, followed the word of faith and scorned their possessions.

Then due to the envy of the Jews, persecution arose, Stephen was martyred, and the Church was scattered.

... So as this storm of persecution was raging, the scattered believers sought different kingdoms, ascribed to them by the Lord, bringing the Word of salvation to the gentiles to drink. There was at that time with the apostles blessed Maximin, one of the seventy disciples, a man outstanding to all for the correctness of his ways, and famous for his learning and miraculous skill alike. Blessed Mary Magdalen was drawn to his sanctity of faith, and joined him in holy companionship, as blessed Mary ever Virgin (had) to St. John the Evangelist when she was entrusted to him by the Lord himself. So in the aforementioned dispersion blessed Mary Magdalen was allied with him and they made their way to the sea. Boarding a ship, after a favourable journey they arrived at Marseille. There, leaving the motion of the ship, with the Lord's favour they approached the county of Aix, paying out the seeds of the divine Word freely to all, and persisting day and night in preaching, fasting and prayer, they drew the unbelievers of that region, who had not yet been reborn in the baptismal font, to the acknowledgement and worship of almighty God.

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11 See David A. Mycoff (tr.), The Life of Saint Mary Magdalen and her Sister Saint Martha (Kalamazoo, 1989), 5-7, on the confusion of forms and BHL numbers.
13 ... erant omnes credentes simul cum mulieribus, et Maria matre Ihesu, ut Lucas narrat evangelista, et verbum Dei disseminabatur, crescebatque numerus creditum cotidie, adeo ut multa milia per predicationem apostolorum verbo fidei obedirent, suarum rerum contemplato effecti. Lobrichon, 'Le dossier magdalenien', 165.
14 Hac igitur persecutionis procella seviente, dispersi credentes, petierunt deversa regna terrarum a Domino delegata, verbum salutis gentibus propinando. Erat autem tunc temporis cum apostolis beatus Maximinus unus ex septuaginta discipulis, vir universa morum probitate conspicuus, doctrina pariter et miraculorum virtute praecipuus. Huius religionis sanctitudini,
The distinctive use of the verb *propinare* of the apostles' mission, echoing its use by Gregory, Rabanus, Haymo, 'Odo' and others of the Magdalen's resurrection commission as the second Eve, seems to indicate that the writer was acknowledging his authorities. It is interesting also that this *Vita*, like many later versions, refers to the biblical account of women playing a role in the early church, as given in Acts 1:14, as if to give a scriptural basis for a woman's active involvement later. The ministry of the Magdalen and Maximin is then described strictly in parallel, with their actions together represented by plural verbs: *direxerunt... ascendentes... pervenerunt... reliquentes... aggressi sunt... erogantes... perducerent*. It is notable, however, that the phrase that sums up their apostolic activity, *die noctuque praedicationibus, ieiuniis et orationibus insistendo*, while it echoes the ministry of Paul and Barnabas around Antioch (Acts 14:21-3: *evangelizassent... exhortantes (or exorantes)... et orassent cum ieiunationibus (or ieiuniis)*) , is also closely linked to Luke's description of the prophetess Anna's worship in the temple (Lk 2:37: *ieiuniis et obsecrationibus serviens nocte et die*).

The *Vita apostolica*, then, is forthright about the Magdalen's preaching activity whereas, by contrast, the *Vita 'Omnipotentis' - Translatio prior* is much more reticent. In this version, the legend of the Magdalen arriving in Provence (the *Vita 'Omnipotentis Dei clementia'*) precedes an account of the translation of the Magdalen's relics to Vézelay along with those of Maximin by a knight called Adeelme, supposedly in the late ninth century (which Saxer dubs *Translatio...* 

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15 See above, pages 27 and 32.
prior). Only two manuscripts survive, one of the eleventh century (which also contains the *Vita apostolica*) and one of the fifteenth century.16 The *Vita Omnipotentis* gives an account of the events that brought Mary Magdalen to Provence which is substantially similar to that of the *Vita apostolica*, except that she is accompanied by Lazarus and Martha instead of by Maximin. Significantly, however, the hagiographer tries to imply in a single sentence that the Magdalen did not preach publicly herself but, being aware of the Pauline injunction, left the task to her brother. This sentence contradicts the whole tone of what has preceded it, where the Magdalen's apostolic ministry is roundly praised. Thus it seems probable that an original *vita* has been corrupted while it was being copied, in a conservative attempt to counter the preaching ministry ascribed to the Magdalen which was already circulating in accounts such as the *Vita apostolica*. The careful explanation of how Mary Magdalen withdrew from preaching seems inexplicable except as a reaction to an earlier claim that she had indeed preached.

The incongruity of this single passage is best demonstrated by quoting it in context:

... Therefore, among the twelve whom (Christ) chose, he led many others of either sex to the recognition of faith in him, so that in all the earth the sound of their preaching might go out and their words advance to the end of the world (Ps. 19:4). Among this famous band was our holy protector Mary, three and four times blessed..., (who) as we learn in the gospel story, from being a sinful woman made herself so favoured that she merited hearing from him: Her many sins are forgiven for she loved much; and again: Mary has chosen the best part which will not be taken from her in eternity. Yet some are uncertain about what she did in her (later) life, whom after the Lord's death we know to be more glorious among all women, besides that which is told in the gospel story, or where and with whom she stayed except for what is read in the *Acts of the Apostles*: the apostles were singleminded in persistence in prayer with the women, etc.. Despite this, the true account of many holds that she departed with blessed Lazarus her brother and blessed Martha her sister, as the persecution by the Jewish people was growing, like the other apostles. She indeed was the apostle of apostles for, leaving (the Jews) like the apostle (Paul) says: Since you reject the word of the Lord and judge us unworthy, behold we will turn to the gentiles (*Acts* 13:46); she made her way to

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where there was seaport on the borders of the city of Marseilles, where, strengthened by the companionship of the other saints whose company was favoured by her, as is recorded in the ancient writings of the inhabitants of that place, and is now confirmed by everyone’s story, she made her way even to the aforementioned town, to sow the grace of God’s word to the people. But because she knew that the female sex was prohibited and should not speak divine sermons with people listening publicly, she employed Lazarus her brother as more suitable for this task, so that as he was worthy to obtain resurrection of spirit and body from Christ the Lord, so he might rouse the people spiritually to life.17

The *vita*, which has used singular verbs about the Magdalen on her own to this point, continues briefly in the plural about the Magdalen and Lazarus together:

After they had withdrawn to a place which they had previously chosen, they persevered in the divine work for a very long time, and reaching the end of their present lives with outstanding virtue, were carried to the joys of eternal life, and contemplated the face of him whom they loved most.18

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17 *Igitur inter duodecim quos elegit, multos utriusque sexus ad fidei suae cognitionem pertraxit, ut in omnem terram sonus praedictionis eorum exiret, et in fines earum (terrarum) procederent verba. Ex eo autem incilito agmine protectricem nostram sanctam Mariam ter quaterque beatam ... sicut in evangelio narrante didicimus, ex peccatrice muliere adeo sibi gratam effecit, ut mereretur ab eo audire: Dimissa sunt ei peccata multa, quoniam dilexit multum. Et iterum: Optimam partem elegit sibi Maria, quae non auferetur ab ea in aeternum. Quid autem in vita gesserit illa, quam post mortem Domini gloriosiorem inter omnes mulieres novimus, praeter quod evangelica pandit historia, nonnullis incertum habetur, quo vel cum quibus manserit, excepto quod in libro Actuum apostolorum legitur: Erant apostoli perseverantes unanimitate in oratione, cum mulieribus, et reliqua. Ceterum veridica multorum relatio eam cum beato Lazaro fratre suo atque beata Martha sorore sua habet discississe, ingruente persecutione plebis iudaicae, sicut et reliqui apostoli. Ipsi quoque vere apostola apostolorum, reliictis illis, sicut apostolus dicit: Quoniam verbum Domini sprevistis et indignos nos judicastis, ecce convertimur ad gentium populos; ubi maris portus abebatur, Marsiliae civitatis finibus devenit, ubi reliquiorum sanctorum vallata contubernio cum quibus illi erat gratia societas, sicut apud incolas loci illius antiquorum scriptis retinetur et universorum Hodieque narratione confirmatur, ad praenominatam etiam urbem <ad> verbi Dei gratiam spargendam gentibus devenit. Sed quia multiebri sexui noverat prohibitionem, publicis auditis, non debere divinum inferre sermonem, ad peragendum illud opus idoneum fratre adhibuit Lazarum, ut sicut ille spiritu et corpore a Christo Domino resurrectionem promeruit obtinere, ita populos ad vitam spiritualiter suscitaret. de Gaiffier, 'Hagiographie bourguignonne', 145-6.

18 Postea vero ad locum quem prius delegerant regressi, divino operi diutissime insistentes praesentis vitae finem praecialis virtutibus adipiscentes eternae vitae gaudii inlati eius quem potissimum dilexerant faciem contemplantur. *Ibid.*, 146.
From a modern perspective this account seems extraordinary, given the 'inclusiveness' of the majority of the text and the parallel drawn between Mary Magdalen and the apostle Paul, for its abrupt juxtaposition of her renouncing a public preaching ministry because of the Pauline injunction. The Magdalen is *ex eo inclyto agmine*, the sound of whose preaching has gone out into all the earth; she is truly *apostola apostolorum* as she has turned to the gentiles; and she is unequivocally described as intending 'to sow the grace of God's word'. The reference to the Book of Acts compares her to Paul, the self-styled 'Apostle to the Gentiles', and thus what Paul said of himself in the following verse could be implied of the Magdalen, that God had commanded her 'saying "I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth"' (Acts 13:47 quoting Isaiah 49:6). It should also be noted that this is perhaps the earliest use of *apostola apostolorum* in the context of the Magdalen preaching to others beyond the apostles themselves. It may even convey the sense now that she was the 'apostle of apostles' or 'apostle among apostles' in a *prima inter pares* sense.

The hagiographer's repeated references to the authority of existing accounts, even implying a tradition in Provence itself, also supports the assertion that he was adapting another *vita* about the Magdalen. The preface to the *Vita apostolica* does claim that there was at least a *Vita Maximini* in circulation, as it alludes to *ipsius sancti presulis vita* to corroborate its own authenticity about the Magdalen's career. No early version of a *vita Maximini* survives, however, so it could be

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19 There are other inconsistencies about the text also. It makes no mention of Maximin travelling to France, yet the Magdalen is said to have been buried (with other saints) in the church 'erected in honour of the blessed confessor Maximin, bishop of the said city'. This ascription to Maximin of the bishopric of Marseilles, rather than that of Aix, again gives the impression that the redactor was adapting a version which had already mentioned Aix, yet neglected to correct Maximin's see.

20 See Lobrichon, 'Le dossier magdalénien', 165.
that the author of the *Vita apostolica* was practising the sort of self-authentication that the writer of the *Vita 'Omnipotentis'* then attempted.\(^\text{21}\) Yet contrary to the latter's assertion that his ancient authority 'is now confirmed by everyone's story', it was to be the *Vita apostolica* rather than the *Vita 'Omnipotentis'* which became popular.\(^\text{22}\)

If it seems surprising that the earliest forms of the active legend should be so fully developed as to account for the Magdalen's presence in Provence by means of her active preaching, it has already been shown how the weight of late antique commentary on the Magdalen as witness to the resurrection and a representative of the conversion of the gentiles, which has been examined in the first chapter, would have led up to this point. In addition, Baudo\(^\text{\textregistered}\)n de Gaiffier has shown how the new Magdalen legend follows an established tradition local to Vézelay which promoted legends (known as the 'Burgundian cycle') about saints coming from the east and landing at Marseilles before spreading the Gospel in Gaul.\(^\text{23}\) Saints Andochus, Thyrsus and Felix, saint Andeol and his companions, saint Benignus, saint Cassian, the three *jumeaux* of Langres called Speusippus, Eleusippus and Meleusippus, were all potential models for the Magdalen's hagiographers.\(^\text{24}\) The influence of this cycle of legends on that of the Magdalen is shown by the details of the favourable voyage which predominate

\(^{21}\) The Bollandists only refer to the later *Catalogus sanctorum* of Petrus de Natalibus. Otherwise under 'Maximinus' they only say 'Vid. etiam de Maria Magdalena' and do not ascribe a single BHL number; vol. 2, 850.


\(^{24}\) All of these legends seem to derive from a communal sixth-century source; see W. Meyer, 'Die Legende des hl. Albanus des Protomartyr Angliae in Texten vor Beda', *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft zu Göttingen* NF 8.1 (1904): 21-81, cited in de Gaiffier, 'Les sources de la vie de S. Cassien', 42.
in the early forms of the Magdalen's *vita* and echo the descriptions given in the Burgundian cycle.\textsuperscript{25} In contrast, later versions of the Magdalen legend develop the idea of a forced voyage in a rudderless, sail-less boat. Although de Gaiffier refuses to accept that even in the *vita apostolica* the Magdalen is described as preaching together with Maximin, his own evidence demonstrates how '(l)es moines de Vézelay ... ont rangé Marie-Madeleine dans la liste déjà longue de ces Orientaux qui venaient évangéliser la Gaule.'\textsuperscript{26} The saints of the Burgundian cycle arrive at Marseille with the specific intention (which they fulfil) of preaching in Gaul,\textsuperscript{27} so it does not seem surprising that the new Magdalen legend parallels this tradition as well.


\textsuperscript{26} de Gaiffier, *Hagiographie bourguignonne*, 140. Unaccountably he says of BHL 5443, the *vita apostolica*: '(a)rrivee en France, eile ne prechera pas, mais se retirera dans la solitude'.

\textsuperscript{27} For example, Polycarp tells his disciples as they board the ship: *Verbum Domini gentibus praedicate; adventum Christi omnibus annuntiate* [AASS Sept. VI, 675-6]. Polycarp is described: monens saepiusque inculcans, ut verbi divini semina sulcis mentium inderent, et fidem Domini gentibus intrepidis praedicarent [AASS Nov. I, 164]. Andeol is commissioned similarly by Benignus: ubicumque ieritis, verbum Dei intrepide et incessabiler praedicare; adventum Christi omnibus anuntiante [AASS May I, 37]. Cassian's apostolic achievement is described: praedicatione ipsius multi deorum suorum simulacra deserentes, ad poenitentiam et baptismi gratia pervenerunt [AASS Aug. II, 64-5].
Later Vézellen forms and their reception

Building on these foundations, an array of versions of the legend begin to appear. Another *Vita* with the incipit *Cum in suis actibus* (BHL 5450) combines elements of the *Vita apostolica* with commentary on the gospel accounts from the sermon of 'Odo of Cluny' earning it the title of *Vita Evangelico-apostolica*, and is attested from the later eleventh century. Mary Magdalen is sent by the risen Christ as *apostola apostolorum* to announce his resurrection and future ascension (although the women are said to be so fearful as they leave the tomb that they speak to no-one until Jesus appears to them again). The participation of women in the early church is again specified; here (with no mention of the martyrdom of Stephen) it almost sounds as if it is the depth of the Magdalen's piety that rouses persecution by the Jews:

> After the Lord’s Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, the disciples and Jesus' mother and other women were singleminded in persistence in prayer, and blessed Mary, the lover of God, remained with them so long in holy devotion, until the envy of the Jews roused persecution against the church... 

The Magdalen is again described as joining with Maximin, and their joint role in evangelising the people is defined by the use of the plural verbs of the *Vita apostolica* which gives them exactly equal status:

28 Saxer, 'La Crypte', 202 and 217. Mycoff, *Life of Saint Mary Magdalen*, 6, seems to be in error when he describes the *Vita evangelico-apostolica* as combining 'Odo' and the *Vita apostolica-eremitica* while 'abbreviating the account of the contemplative retreat'.

29 ...sed quia unice dilexit, prima mortalium ipsum Salvatorem videre promeruit. ... et sic demum cognitus apostolis eam destinat apostolam resurrectionis gaudium et ascensionis triumphum eis nuntiaturam... . Faillon, *Monuments Inedits*, 443.

30 Post Dominicam igitur resurrectionem et ad coelos ascensionem, discipulis et matre Jesu alisque mulieribus unanimiter in oratione persistentibus, beata Dei dilectrix Maria tamdiu cum illis pia devotione permanedit, donec invidia Judaeorum in Ecclesia persecutionem excitaret... . *Ibid.*
Blessed Mary Magdalen joined herself to his religion and sanctity with the bond of charity, so that wherever the Lord called them she would not be separated from his company or companionship. So embarking on the sea with the south wind blowing, they reached Marseilles after a favourable voyage. Without delay they sought the region of Aix and sowed the seeds of heavenly doctrine in the hearts of the gentiles "and persisting day and night in preaching, fasting and prayer, they drew the unbelievers of that region, who had not yet been reborn in the baptismal font, to the acknowledgement and worship of almighty God."  

The *Vita apostolica* was also employed in another compilation, dating from the twelfth century, into which a middle section was inserted dealing with the Magdalen's solitary life in the wilderness. Thus is has been called the *Vita Apostolico-eremitica*. As it copies the details of her active life so closely from *Vita apostolica* which has already been examined, these need not be repeated here, other than to point out that the circulation of the account of the Magdalen's preaching career with Maximin was thus augmented. Here, then, the active tradition was finally fused with the *Vita eremitica*, and the resultant sequence that the Magdalen first preached and then withdrew to a contemplative life became the standard form of the legend for almost all later adaptations.

Dating from the twelfth century, the brief *Vita 'Fuit Secundum'* focuses mainly

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31 Cuius religioni atque sanctitati beata Maria Magdalene caritatis vinculo se coniunxit, ut quocumque eos Dominus vocaret ab eius comitatu seu contubernio non separaretur... Quapropter aequoris undas ingressi, spirantibus austris, prospero cursu Massiliam applicuerunt. Nec mora; Aquense territorium expetentes doctrinae coelestis seminaria gentilium cordibus inspargebant, die noctuque... (etc., as *Vita apostolica*). Ibid., 443-4.

32 There was also an interpolated form (BHL 5443B); Saxer, 'La Crypte', 204. The *Vita eremitica* did not achieve a wide circulation in France, possibly due to the contrasting claims of the native *vita apostolica*. Lobrichon, 'Le dossier magdalenien', 177-80, gives an interpolated late-twelfth century version from St-Victor.

33 Saxer, 'La Crypte', 213, indicates a copy of this vita in one manuscript (a lectionary from Echternacht) from the twelfth century, eight from the thirteenth, two from the fourteenth, and three from the fifteenth century. Mycoff, *Life of Saint Mary Magdalen*, 6, seems again in error when he dates the creation of this *Vita* to 'the eleventh century during the resurgence of Western eremiticism that began in northern Italy.' Saxer to the contrary cites the rapid multiplication of copies from the twelfth to the thirteenth century as 'le signe qui ne trompe pas de son caractère récent au XIIe siècle.'
on the Magdalen's early career and draws on the sermon attributed to Odo and the *Vita apostolica*. Significantly, Saxer has shown that phrases are also taken from the liturgy for Mary Magdalen's feast, which had been recently developed at Vezelay. The main interest in this account for the purposes of this study lies in its final paragraph, which is based on the *Vita apostolica* prologue but introduces Lazarus and Martha as companions of the Magdalen and Maximin on the voyage to Provence. They have already been mentioned as her siblings in the new outline of the Magdalen's genealogy with which the piece opens, and Jesus is described defending the Magdalen sitting at his feet "contra sororem suam". It is perhaps possible that the scribe, having mentioned Lazarus and Martha at the start, naturally included them from a sense of symmetry at the end for the voyage. This would weaken Saxer's argument that the author of the *Fuit Secundum* must have drawn this detail from the unique *Vita 'Omnipotentis'* which is the only other text yet to have mentioned them. This increment of the Magdalen's companions anticipates subsequent additions, in which many of the saints individually associated with evangelising in France are said to have sailed with her.

By the early twelfth century, therefore, a range of *Vitae* had appeared. The idea of Mary Magdalen as preacher had been taken on to a new stage of development and the first signs of the influence of this new hagiographical tradition can be traced. In some of the earliest manuscripts, the *Vita apostolica* was divided into lessons for the monastic office for the Magdalen's feast day, so the legend was promoted by its incorporation into the lectionary. Hence, it must have derived sufficient popularity and familiarity to become a subject for sermons. It comes as no surprise to find Geoffrey, abbot of Vendôme, preaching

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36 Lobrichon, 165-168, prints a version divided into eight readings.
confidently to his monks in a sermon dated 1105 that Luke’s ‘woman sinner was
certainly none other than Mary Magdalen, who had before been a famous sinner
but afterwards was made a glorious preacher’. By comparison with the
Magdalen he refers critically to St Peter, who denied ‘him whom the woman
preached, and she showed that he was God of the universe with her mystical
anointing’. But the conclusion of the sermon clearly shows that Geoffrey knew
the apostolic legend for he describes the Magdalen pursuing an active career in
preaching after she had proclaimed the resurrection to the disciples:

O what a venerable disciple of the truth who, after she had received
absolution of all her sins from the Lord Jesus Christ, and after his
resurrection and ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit,
shunning the envy of the Jews and saying a final farewell to her country,
underwent exile rejoicing for love of her Creator! She thus left the bounds
of her own country, continually preaching that the Lord Jesus Christ was
the true God and witnessing to the truth of his resurrection. She remained
persevering in the truth of this assertion to the end of her life.

Geoffrey makes no concession to the eremitic legend, and the detail he includes
of the Magdalen ‘shunning the envy of the Jews’ makes it probable that he was
drawing on the Vita Evangelico-apostolica as his source.

The late eleventh and early twelfth centuries also witness the first western
iconographic representations of Mary Magdalen as apostola apostolorum. This
reflects the increasing popularity of her cult generally, but it is significant that it is

37 Istam peccatricem feminam nulli dubium est Mariam fuisse Magdalenam, quae prius quidem
exstitit famosa peccatrix, sed postea facta est gloriae praedicatrix. Geoffrey of Vendôme,
Sermo IX In festivitate B. Mariae Magdaleneae (PL 157: 271).
38 Illum siquidem Petrus negat, quem mulier praedicat, et quia Deus est universorum mystica
39 O quam venerabilis discipula veritatis, quae post perceptam a Domino Jesu Christo
absolutionem omnium peccatorum, post eius resurreccionem et ascensionem in coelos, et sancti
Spiritus adventum, declinans invidiam Judaerum, et patriae ultimum vale dicens, pro sui
Conditoris amore suscepit gaudens exsilium! Est itaque de propriis egressa finibus, Dominum
Jesum Christum Deum verum assidue praedicans et eius resurrectionis testificans veritatem.
Mansit usque ad exitum vitae in hac veritatis assertione perseverans. Ibid. (PL 157:273-4).
her apostolic role which is highlighted in such images. Magdalen LaRow notes four examples of this scene from the eleventh century, eight from the twelfth, and fourteen from the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{40} In the St Alban's Psalter (1120-30), which was possibly made for Christina of Markyate, the Magdalen confronts eleven sombre disciples standing together under an apse.\textsuperscript{41} If the apse is meant to denote a church building, then this is a pictorial contravention of the Pauline dictum that women may not speak 'in church', as well as of that which forbids women to teach men. The twelfth-century Gospel Book of Henry the Lion actually gives the Magdalen words. Both she and the seven apostles shown hold scrolls, so in answer to their question, 'Tell us, Mary, what you saw on the way?', she replies, 'The tomb of the living Christ and the glory of the risen one'.\textsuperscript{42} These words come from Wipo of St Gall's eleventh-century trope, the \textit{Victimae paschali}, which by the twelfth century had been incorporated into the Easter drama, the \textit{Visitatio Sepulchri}. The 'dramatic' impact of this liturgical reenactment of the Magdalen's role as \textit{apostola apostolorum}, publicly proclaiming the news of the resurrection, can only have confirmed the growing perception of her ministry as a preacher.\textsuperscript{43} The significance of this perception for women is shown by the incidence of illustrations of her as \textit{apostola} in psalters specifically made for women. As well as the St Alban's Psalter mentioned above, the Ingeborg Psalter, which was produced in the late twelfth century for the wife of Philip

\textsuperscript{40} Magdalen LaRow, 'The iconography of Mary Magdalen: the evolution of a western tradition until 1300' (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1982), 219, 221, 224; cited in Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 84 n. 28.

\textsuperscript{41} Illustrated in Haskins, \textit{Mary Magdalen}, frontispiece.


\textsuperscript{43} See Karl Young, \textit{The Drama of the Medieval Church}, 2 vols (Oxford, 1933), vol. 2, 273-306.
Augustus,'\textsuperscript{44} shows the Magdalen holding a scroll which announces '\textit{Vidi Dominum}' to (strangely) twelve disciples.\textsuperscript{45} The psalter of Jutta Tersina of Liechtenfels (c. 1200), on the other hand, shows the donor kneeling at the feet of the Magdalen who has the words \textit{Sancta Maria Magdalena apostolorum apostola} inscribed over her head.\textsuperscript{46}

The early apostolic legends themselves refer to the Magdalen's own tomb bearing a depiction of her taking the news to the disciples on Easter morning. Thus they at least reflect the recent emergence of this iconographic image, even if it cannot be claimed with any certainty that the legends themselves might have prompted the development of the image. The eleventh-century account of the translation of the Magdalen's relics by Girart, duke of Burgundy (which superseded the story of Adelelme and so is called the \textit{Translationis narratio posterior}), describes the carved decoration of the tomb where she was found. A complex scheme of six scenes represented on three panels is indicated: the Magdalen washing Jesus' feet, and then anointing his head; mistaking him for the gardener on Easter morning, and then wanting to hold his feet and worship him after she recognised him; and finally:

\begin{quote}
... on the right hand side (she is shown) as when she came to the Lord's sepulchre bringing perfumes and merited the enjoyment of angelic conversation. Thence indeed, coming to the apostles, she announced what
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{44} It may not be coincidental that Philip Augustus met Richard I at Vézelay before they together launched the third crusade.

\textsuperscript{45} Florens Deuchler, \textit{Der Ingeborgpsalter} (Berlin, 1967), pl. XXVI. The illustrator of the Ingeborg Psalter had an illustrious precedent for this error concerning the number of disciples after Judas' suicide, for even St Paul states that Jesus appeared 'to the twelve' (I Cor. 15:5).

\textsuperscript{46} Haskins, \textit{Mary Magdalen}, 220-1, 452 n. 78. The Magdalen is also represented as \textit{apostola apostolorum} in the stained glass windows at Chartres (1200-10) and at Semur-en-Auxois (1225-30); see Colette Deremble, 'Les premiers cycles d'images consacrés à Marie Madeleine', \textit{Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Moyen Age}, 104.1 (1992): 187-208.
The interpolated form of the Vita apostolico-eremitica seems to derive its description of the tomb decoration from the Narratio posterior:

And the sculptures of her tomb clearly depict how she was persistent at the Lord's tomb and how the Lord first appeared to her and sent her as apostle to the apostles and she announced to them what she had been instructed by the Lord.

Gilbert Crespin, abbot of Westminster (†1117) also knew of the recent Magdalen legends, for in seeking to demonstrate that Luke's sinner was to be identified with the Magdalen who witnessed the resurrection, he describes how Saint Maximin 'led this blessed woman, that is Mary Magdalen, with him to Marseilles, and kept her with him until the end of her life...'. Although he does not specifically mention the fact that the Magdalen (or Maximin) preached, Victor Saxer has shown from the details he describes about the Magdalen's tomb that Gilbert almost certainly copied them from the Vita evangelico-apostolica, and so he would have been clearly aware of the full implications of the preaching legend.

47 In dextro quippe latere, veluti cum ad sepulcrum Domini veniens aromata deferebat, angelica collocutione frui meruit. Deinde vero ad apostolos veniens, que viderat nuntiavit. Lobrichon, 'Le dossier magdalénien', 173. See Saxer, 'La crypte', for a masterly analysis of the significance inherent in the different accounts of the location and decoration of the Magdalen's tomb.

48 Et qualiter circa sepulcrum Domini sedula fuerit et quomodo di Dominus primo apparuerit et ad apostolos apostolam direxerit eisque a Domino quod sibi iniunctum fuerat nuntiaverit, eminens sepulcri depromit sculptura. Saxer, 'La crypte', 204.

49 Mulierem beatam videlicet Mariam Magdalenam secum Massiliam duxerit (beatus Maximinus) et usque ad finem illam secum habuerit.... AASS July V, 215-6, par. 158.

50 Saxer, 'La crypte', 212-14. Gilbert's only other source would have been a personal eye-witness account, but even this is unlikely to have furnished him with exactly the same details as the Vita, given the different accounts of how many scenes, and which, were carved on the tomb.
Further developments in the twelfth and thirteenth century

In the course of the twelfth century the tradition expanded yet further. The *Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae*, once ascribed to Rabanus Maurus,\(^{51}\) is probably the most extensive of all the legendary lives of the Magdalen and is thought to have been written by a follower of Bernard of Clairvaux. The earliest manuscripts date from the late twelfth and very early thirteenth century and contain other Cistercian or 'Claravallian' writings.\(^{52}\)

In this version every aspect of the Magdalen's life is expanded and endowed with symbolism, and the writer adds many details which have a bearing on her active life. In expanding the references made by the *Vita evangelico-apostolica* to Mary Magdalen's family and inheritance, Ps-Rabanus attributes significant personal characteristics to her: 'a complete knowledge of Hebrew letters', 'a most pleasing lucidity of speech', and claims she was 'decorous and gracious in speech'. Jesus' words of forgiveness to her after she anoints his feet are said to have transformed her completely:

> From that moment, there was no corruption, either of soul or body, within her; from that moment she was the most chaste of women; from that moment she vanquished nature and triumphed over herself; ... within her there was nothing but good - there was no portion of evil.\(^{53}\)

In describing the resurrection, Ps-Rabanus comments on each gospel version in succession, so that he 'might not wander even a little from the sense of the

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\(^{51}\) The attribution derives from one later manuscript which was edited by Faillon, Magdalen College Oxford, MS Lat. 89. Small rubrics across the top of each double spread state: *Rabanus de vita ... I ... Marie Magdalene*. The manuscript itself dates from the early fifteenth century as it contains a letter dated 1408.

\(^{52}\) Saxer, 'La "Vie de sainte Marie Madeleine" attribuée au Pseudo-Raban Maur, oeuvre claravallienne du XIIe siècle', in *Mélanges Saint Bernard, XXIVe Congrès de l'Association bourguignonne des Sociétés savantes, Dijon 1953* (Dijon, 1954), 408-421.

evangelists'. So the Magdalen arrives at the tomb, fetches Peter and John, is joined by the other women; they meet angels both outside the tomb and in and the other women leave and stay silent; the Magdalen meets the angels and then Jesus, goes to tell the disciples, goes back to the tomb with other women and they meet more angels and then they all find and touch Jesus. Yet Ps-Rabanus is insistent about the honour shown to the Magdalen, that as a second Eve she was made evangelist, apostle and prophet:

Just as before he had made her the evangelist of his resurrection, so now he made her the apostle of his ascension to the apostles - a worthy recompense of grace and glory, the first and greatest honour, and a reward commensurate with all the services of his standard-bearer. Mary, seeing herself elevated by the Son of God, her Lord and Saviour, to such a high position of honour and grace; seeing herself alone favoured with the first and most privileged of his appearances could not do otherwise than exercise the apostolate with which she had been honoured. She went immediately to find the apostles and said to them 'Welcome me, all you who love the Lord, for the one for whom I was searching has appeared to me, and while I wept before the sepulchre I saw my Lord and he said to me: "Go to my brothers and say to them: 'Here is what the Lord has said..."''. Behold how the life, which was lost on earth through Eve has been restored by him who was brought forth by the Virgin Mary. Just as Eve in paradise had once given her husband a poisoned draught to drink, so now the Magdalen presented to the apostles the chalice of eternal life. Eve drank the gall of bitterness for the first time in a garden of delights; Mary saw victory over death for the first time in a garden consecrated to burial. Eve persuaded her own husband with the promise of the serpent: 'You shall be as gods knowing good and evil.' Mary announced to her fellow apostles the good news of the resurrection of the Messiah... and prophesied of the ascension... Mary prophesied with greater truth than Eve did; she bore far better news than the first message-bearer did... she received a very different office from that she had thought to discharge - messenger of the living Saviour, sent to bear the true balm of life to the apostles. So far we have spoken of the first appearance of the Saviour, in which it was his will to show himself to Mary Magdalen alone before any other mortal... and of the apostolate of Mary, to which she was raised by the Son of God himself... of her mission to announce the resurrection for the first time to her fellow apostles and alone to prophesy the future ascension; and of the draught of life she first brought to the apostles, which cancelled the potion of Eve, according to the testimony of the evangelists. The divine honours given her were indeed multiplied, for she was glorified by his first appearance; raised up to the honour of an apostle; instituted as the evangelist of the resurrection of Christ; and designated the prophet of his ascension to his apostles.  

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54 Mycoff, Life of Saint Mary Magdalen, 73-9.
The Magdalen is one of the first listed among the followers of Jesus with whom he is said to have feasted immediately prior to his ascension, when:

... he charged them with the office of preaching; he told them to proclaim the Kingdom first in Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria, and then when the Jews had rejected the word of life, to teach the Gospel throughout the world, promising to all who proclaimed him the power to do miracles.  

Then she is present at the ascension of which she had prophesied:

... just as she learned of the resurrection in the garden, so she witnessed the ascension on the mountain; just as she had announced to the apostles the first event as soon as it had taken place, so she foretold to the the future ascension; and standing with the apostles at the ascension, as though pointing with her finger at the ascending host, she showed she was equal to John the Baptist in being more than a prophet.

After Pentecost, Ps-Rabanus describes how the Magdalen is revered and preached about:

Because of the magnificent, inestimable, and all-embracing friendship she had with the Saviour, this holy woman received the same love and honour that the glorious Mother of God and the holy apostles received. They ... honoured her all the more highly, proclaiming abroad that the Creator and Redeemer of the world had honoured her. They ... frequently preached to the people how she had turned away from worldly vanity to follow the Saviour.

She is held up as an 'example of conversion', a 'pledge of the certain hope of remission' and a 'mirror of all sanctity'.

However, the account of Mary Magdalen's own preaching career which follows after such an evaluation of her gospel ministry is surprisingly low key. In this Ps-Rabanus creates difficulties for himself, for despite the Magdalen's previous active service and witness, he now tries to describe her as an example of the contemplative life, while Martha is said to have been more active in preaching, conversion and healing. Yet the writer seems to have been unable to ignore the

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55 Ibid., 82.
56 Ibid., 84.
57 Ibid., 89.
tradition of the Magdalen's active apostolate in Provence, and presents her as alternating between action and contemplation. He also denounces the extreme version of her ascetic life in the *Vita eremitica* as clearly plagiarised from the legend of Mary of Egypt.

So Ps-Rabanus tells how, following the persecution after Stephen's martyrdom, 'the faithful were dispersed to seek out the diverse places of the world that God assigned to them to preach ceaselessly the word of salvation to the gentiles ignorant of Christ'. The Magdalen sails with Maximin and the other elders, and landing at Marseilles:

...they divided among themselves the provinces of the region to which the Holy Spirit had guided them, inspired in this by that same Spirit. And soon they went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them, confirming their words with the signs that followed after. The king of powers, beloved of the beloved, gave the word to those who preached with great power ... 58

In Aix, Maximin alone is described in the words of the *Vita apostolica*, while the Magdalen is first said to have led a contemplative life, but then her preaching is immediately extolled:

The blessed Maximin ... sowed the seeds of heavenly doctrine in the hearts of the gentiles, "preaching, praying and fasting day and night that he might lead the unbelieving people of the region to the knowledge and worship of almighty God". ... With him in the same church the glorious friend of the Lord and Saviour devoted herself to contemplation, for she was in fact the most ardent lover of the Redeemer, the woman who had wisely chosen the best part... She who had before remained on earth now walked in spirit among the angels in the spaciousness of the heavenly choirs. But she was also mindful of the wellbeing of her friends who had come to the western ends of the earth, so from time to time she left the joys of contemplation and preached to the unbelievers or confirmed the believers in the faith, pouring into their souls the sweetness of her spirit and the honey of her words. For her lips spoke from the fullness of her heart, and because of this all her preaching was a true exercise of divine contemplation. 59

She uses herself as an exemplar in her preaching, and Ps-Rabanus specifically

58 Ibid., 93.
59 Ibid., 95-6.
links her preaching ministry with Jesus' words about her; the Magdalen herself fulfills Christ's prophecy that 'wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her' (Mt. 26:13; Mk. 14:9):

Who among the apostles dung so firmly to the Lord? Which of them drank so avidly his sweet doctrine? It was fitting, then, that just as she had been chosen to be the apostle of Christ's resurrection and the prophet of his ascension, so also she became an evangelist for believers throughout the world. This is what he intended who, when she anointed his head, saw her devotion and praised it, saying: 'She has done a good deed for me. Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world, what she has done will be told in her memory'.

Finally Mary, like Martha, is said to have confirmed her preaching with miracles, although Ps-Rabanus does not describe any of them:

... Mary performed miracles with inexpressible ease to establish the truth of her words and to provoke faith in her listeners. Both sisters were reverenced for ... persuasiveness in words. Never or rarely was anyone found who departed from their preaching unbelieving or without weeping.

The miraculous episode of Mary Magdalen's conversion of the prince of Marseilles and his wife is contained in the Vita 'Postquam Dominus Noster Jesus Christus' (BHL 5457) and its epitome 'Post Domini Nostri Jesu Christi gloriosam resurrectionem' (BHL 5458), and is frequently inserted into later versions of the Vita apostolico-eremitica. The content of this new addition to the legend may be summed up in the words of one greatly abridged manuscript form:

Blessed Mary Magdalen, entrusted by St Peter to St Maximin, one of Christ's seventy disciples, came to Marseilles together with him and many others. There they spent the night in the porch of a temple and when it was morning she proclaimed Christ to the people gathering about their idols, and to the ruler of that region who came with his wife to sacrifice to the gods on the following day. In a dream blessed Mary warned this couple who were very rich to assist her neediness; they gave alms and the woman who had been sterile conceived. Then her husband, to prove

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60 Ibid., 96-7.
61 Ibid., 97.
whether what the Magdalen preached about the Lord Jesus was true, after she had made the sign of the cross on his shoulder, set off on pilgrimage to Jerusalem with his pregnant wife. But a tempest rose up and the wife died in premature childbirth. Her husband laid her out decently with the dead child on a desert island, and continuing his journey, was welcomed by St Peter in Jerusalem. After two years he returned to his country, via the island where his dearest lay buried, where first he discovered the little boy alive and then found the body of his wife unharmed and uncorrupted, looking as if she were asleep. After he prayed, she came to life, and proved to him that she together with blessed Mary Magdalen had also journeyed to Jerusalem.62

Although Mycoff claims that Ps-Rabanus' omission of this part of the legend was 'almost certainly the result of choice rather than of ignorance regarding the tradition...', it seems possible that the writer might indeed have been unaware of this episode. Ps-Rabanus is forthright enough in mentioning the Vita eremitica in order to criticise the 'tale-spinners' who are like poisoners in passing on their false fabrication. He includes a lively account of Martha and the dragon of Tarascon which proves that he did not gloss fabulous episodes completely, and he is clearly unaware of any tradition which brought Lazarus to Marseilles, but describes him instead staying in Bethany as bishop before becoming patriarch of

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62 ... Beata Maria Magdalena S. Maximino, qui erat de septuaginta Christi discipulis, a S. Petro commendata, una cum eo et aliis multis Massiliam venit: ubi in porticu quae praeerat fano illius gentis pernoctans, facto mane gentibus ad idola confluentibus Christum annuntiat, et altero ab adventu die ipsius regionis praeposito, qui cum uxore ad templum diis sacrifiaturus venerat. Hos, utpote divitiis abundantes, in somnia monent beata Magdalena suae inopiae subveniant. Eleemosynis autem erogatis, mulier huiusque sterilis utero concepit. Tunc vir ut experiretur num vera essent quae de Domino Jesu beata Magdalena praedicaret, accepto ab ea in humero signaculo crucis cum uxore gravida Hierosolymam peregrinatus est. At suborta tempestate mulier praematurae enixa moritur. Quam cum fetu mortuo in insula deserta maritus superstes decesit composuit. Inde pergens suam iter, Hierosolymis a B. Petro excipitur. Elapso biennio in patriam revertitur, divertens tamen ad insulam ubi sibi carissima iacebant sepulta. Ibi primum puerulo viventi occurrit; dein reperit uxoris suae funus omni corruptione illaesum, dormientis speciem habens. Tunc fusam oratione mulier revexit. Quae marito testata est se comite B. Maria Magdalena iter Hierosolymitanum suscepisse. Catalogus Codicum Hagiographorum Bibliothecae Regiae Bruxellensis, ed. hagiographi Bollandiani, 2 vols (Brussels, 1886-9), vol. 1, 212-4; Cod. N° 380-82 (a fifteenth century manuscript from the 'monasterii Canonicorum regularium Vallis sancti Martini in Lovanio').

63 Mycoff, Life of Saint Mary Magdalen, 7.
Cyprus. Hence it seems that his was the earlier text.

Chronological considerations also support this argument: Victor Saxer thinks that Ps-Rabanus was an immediate disciple of St Bernard and suggests his one-time secretary Geoffrey of Auxerre or Nicholas of Clairvaux as possible candidates for the authorship. This puts the necessary date of composition of the *Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae* closer to the mid-twelfth century, while the *Vita Postquam Dominus Noster Jesus Christus* details are not attested before the last quarter of the twelfth century. The story of the Magdalen's conversion of the prince and his wife is first found included in the *Gesta et miracula sanctorum* of Josbert, canon of Saint-Jean de Soissons, which was written after 1173.

The popularity of this episode is demonstrated by its rapid transmission into vernacular preaching. It is found developed in a sermon from western Picardy, attested in a manuscript from the end of the twelfth century. The sermon consists of a straightforward hagiographical exposition and emphasises the Magdalen's active ministry and 'daily' preaching:

... But the Magdalen and St Maximin arrived at Marseille and they landed to preach in Marseille and the whole kingdom of Aquilea (sic). ... The

64 Saxer, 'La "Vie"', 420-1.

65 Nicole Bériou, 'La Madeleine dans les sermons parisiens du XIIIe siècle', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Moyen Age*, 104.1 (1992): 295 n.82. Part of Josbert's account is reproduced by Faillon, *Monuments inédits*, vol. 2, 573-80. Saxer, 'Maria Maddalena', suggests that the episode was inspired by the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, a classical romance. In this Apollonius sails to Tyre to claim the throne and his pregnant wife insists on accompanying him. She dies in premature childbirth while they are delayed at sea by a contrary wind, is put into floating coffin with the baby and both are found to be alive by those who discover the coffin washed up on the shore. The family are later reunited. The story was familiar in monastic circles in the sixth century and became very popular in the later Middle Ages when it was included in the *Gesta Romanorum*. See Peter Goolden, *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre* (Oxford, 1958), ix-xiii. A Latin version is edited by G. Schmeling, *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* (Leipzig, 1988).

Magdalen preached so well and so beautifully and so earnestly, that everyone could see in her face the great affection in her heart and the great desire that she had to bring the people to the faith of Jesus Christ, and since she preached in such a manner many people believed. In addition Our Lord did such great miracles through her that (the truth of) everything in her sermon was established. ... Not long after this, when the king returned to the Magdalen's preaching very joyful and jubilant, saying that his wife was pregnant, the Magdalen praised Our Master and said to the king that he should pay what he had promised to Jesus Christ and this he did. He was baptised with all his household, and afterwards the Magdalen enjoined him to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and meet St Peter there ... and then she gave him the cross which it is said was the first cross that was carried in pilgrimage to Jerusalem. ... When St Peter heard news of the Magdalen, it was no wonder that he was jubilant, since he loved her more than all the other disciples. ... The Magdalen who had chosen of the two lives the better part complained each day to Lord: 'Master, how long will you allow me to suffer in this great travail of heart and body. This is not the part that I chose. Master, when it is your sweet pleasure, call me to the other life. And indeed she had great travail, for it was appropriate for her to order the whole estate of the holy church, to preach every day, and to do the other works that belong to the active life. Before Our Master heard her, she must have made this prayer many times, and when Our Master saw that she had won the whole kingdom of Aquilea and of Marseille to the faith, he sent his grace on the people, and confirmed them in the true faith, so that everywhere they renounced Mohammed and the other idols they had cultivated. When the Magdalen saw how her Lord was served everywhere that she had preached, she went to pray and give thanks to Our Lord for the good he had done for the people that she had won for him....

67 ... Mais li Magdalaine et Sains Maxemiens ariverent a Marseile et si prisen terre a preechier Marseile, et tot le roialme d’Aquilee. ... La Magdelaine prechoit si bien et si bel et si desiranment, ke chascuns pooit veir a son viaire la grant affection de euer et la grant volenté ke ele avoit de traire lo pueble a la foi Jhesu Crist, et por ce ke ele en tele maniere preescohit, creoient mult de gent. Avoc tot ce faisoit Nostre Sires si grans miracles par li ke tot cil ki estoient a son sermon s’en esbaissoint. ... No mie lonc tans apres ce revint li roi au sermon la Magdelaine, mult joianz et mult liez, se li dist ke sa femme estoit griés, la Magdelaine en loa Nostre Sanior et si dist au roi k’il piaiast ce k’il avoit promis a Jhesu Crist, et il se fist. Il se fist baptisier et tote sa mainie, et apres la Magdelaine li enjoinst k’il alaist en pelerinage en Jerusalem, et la troveroit Saint Pierre... et puis se li dona se crois dont on dit ke se fut la premeraine crois ki fut portee en pelerignage en Jherusalem.... Quant Sains Pierres oi noveles de la Magdelaine, n’est pas mervelhe s’il en fu liéz, kar il l’amoit plus ke toz les autres deciples. ... La Magdelaine ki avoit eslite de dous vies la melhor partie disoit chascun jor en complaignant a Nostre Sanior: "Sire, com longement me sofferrez vos en cest grant travail de cuer et de cors. Ceste partie n’avoie je mie eslite. Sire, quant voz dolz plaisirs est, apelez moi a l’autre [vie]." Et sans failhe ele avoit grant travailli car li convenoit ordiner tot l’estat de sainte eglise, chascun jor preeschir, et faire les aultres oeuvres ki appartinent a vie active. Ançois ke Nostre Sires le volisist oir, eut ele mult sovent faite ceste proiere, et cant Nostre Sires vit k’ele eut conquis a la foi tot le regne d’Aquiler, et de Marseille, il envoia sa graze el pueble,
Besides being the earliest extant vernacular version of the legend, this sermon is notable in that it describes the Magdalen encouraging the prince to go on pilgrimage to St Peter after he has embraced the Christian faith and been baptised, rather than the prince undertaking his journey in order to prove the truth of the Magdalen's preaching. A positive motivation for the pilgrimage is also given by the Dominican Jean de Mailly who included the story of the prince's conversion in his *Abreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum*, the first legendary written explicitly for the use of ordinary parish priests wishing to instruct the people in their care. The Magdalen 'shines' in preaching and defends her faith with reference to the miracles and teaching of St Peter at Rome, but corroboration by him is not a condition of the prince's faith:

When the blessed Magdalen arrived in Provence and shone there with her extraordinary grace in preaching, a noble one day asked her if the faith which she preached was well founded. The saint replied: Certainly, its surety is guaranteed by the daily miracles and the teaching of our master St Peter the apostle, who presides over the church at Rome. Then the man promised her that he would believe and be baptised if she obtained for him from God the birth of a son. To which the Magdalen replied that the condition would soon be fulfilled. Indeed the noble's wife conceived at about that moment. Rejoicing in his hope, and on the Magdalen's advice, he departed with his wife to go to visit St Peter...
Thus any implicit scepticism about the effectiveness of Magdalen's sermons, or any suggestion that they needed verification is avoided in these early versions. In addition, as Alcuin Blamires has pointed out, 'the ability - claimed by Mary - to 
defend the faith one preaches was normally reckoned by schoolmen to involve attainment quite beyond a woman.'

Jean de Mailly is known to have admired the new cathedral at Auxerre, where at the bishop's behest, the conversion of the prince of Marseilles by the Magdalen is depicted in one of the stained glass windows dating from about 1230. This is one of the earliest known representations of the active life of the Magdalen and she is shown preaching in two of the thirteen panels. Unlike one of the images of Mary Magdalen in the windows of the church at Semur-en-Auxois, dated 1225-30, where she preaches sitting down with a book in her hand, at Auxerre she is shown standing with her companions in a pulpit 'dans un espace clairement ecclésial', and in the second preaching panel the effectiveness of her sermon after the prince's return upon her attentive audience is shown by the

impetraret. Non propter <...> inquit remanebit. In ipso <...> tempore uxor eius concepit, et ipse consilio Madgalenae ad sanctum Petrum cum uxore iter aggressus est....

70 Alcuin Blamires, 'Women and preaching in medieval orthodoxy, heresy, and saints' lives', Viator 26 (1995): 143. He refers to Henry of Ghent's citation of an Augustinian distinction between knowledge sufficient for salvation and the complex knowledge necessary to defend the faith against the irreligious. Women are incapable of reaching the latter 'perfection of knowledge on account of their weakness of intellect' and in any case woman is not allowed 'to persuade others publicly and defend (the faith) against adversaries' since she is not allowed to teach publicly; Summae quaestionum ordinarium (Paris, 1520; facsimile New York, 1953), 1.12.1.5, f. 84 r. On Henry of Ghent's arguments, see further below, Chapters Three and Four.

71 Dondaine, Abrégé des gestes et miracles des saints, 9.


73 Ibid., 204. The lack of uniformity of dress and attributes for the Magdalen's companions leaves their identity open to debate. Deremble sees only Maximin accompanying the Magdalen, while Virginia Chieffo Raguin, Stained Glass in thirteenth-century Burgundy (Princeton, 1982), 156, says Lazarus is with her in the preaching scenes while Maximin is shown baptising the prince's family. Faillon, Monuments inedits, vol. 2, 99-102, describes and illustrates the Auxerre window in a schematic and misleading way.
hand of God appearing above her in a gesture of divine benediction. In both popular preaching and ecclesiastical iconography the legend was starting to be disseminated in increasingly accessible forms.

Vincent of Beauvais includes a detailed retelling of the Magdalen's apostolic activities in his great historical compendium, the *Speculum historiale*, of which a first edition appeared in 1244, and a final version after 1252. After he has described the missionary activities of the apostles and their disciples, Vincent next goes on to recount the lives of Mary Magdalen and Martha 'who were themselves also disciples of Christ and comrades of the apostles'.74 The Dominican experience of acting as confessors and moral guardians to pious women seems to influence Vincent's portrayal of the sisters' relationship to Maximin to whom they are entrusted by St Peter, 'so that he who had baptised them should lead them to the kingdom of heaven with his example of good conduct'.75 Despite Maximin's custodial role, after their arrival in Marseilles it is

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74 *Haec de apostolis et eorum discipulis dicta sufficiant; nunc de beatis mulieribus Martha scilicet et Maria, quae et ipsae Christi discipulae, et apostolorum contubernales fuerunt, historiam ex gestis eam collectam ab initio prosequamur.* Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* (Douai, 1624), book 9, ch. 91, 355. The author of the late fourteenth-century *Scottish Legendary* also uses this reasoning when he places the legends of Mary Magdalen and Martha immediately after those of the 'apostles' (a title he uses to include Paul, Mark, Luke and Barnabas); William M. Metcalfe (ed.), *Legends of the Saints in the Scottish dialect of the fourteenth century*, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1888-96), vol. 1, 256-284, ll. 28-30, 43-50:

... & þe magdalene, þat was worthy,
þat for hyre mekil halynes / co-apostil syne callit was.

... bot a sampil I set certane, / þat fel in the magdalane,
þat fyrst hyre gaf til al delyt, / & [syne] was of a gret meryte,
as men fyndis in haly wryt, / quha ȝarnis for to se lt,
and is callyt co-apostol; / þare-for the apostolis we set hyre next til.

75 *... ut qui eas olim baptizaverat, ipse bonae conversationis exemplo ad regnum celorum eas perduceret.* Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, book 9, ch. 94, 356. The new dynamic of
the Magdalen who preaches the word of salvation to the 'perverse generation' of people and to their prince and his wife, in accordance with the traditional form of the legend.76 Vincent also adds certain significant details about the Magdalen's preaching. Before the prince and his wife depart it is implied that she defended the faith which she had preached to them by 'instructing them sufficiently that, with Peter, prince of the apostles, leading them, everything that she had preached to them about the Lord Jesus would be revealed to them.' When St Peter meets the prince 'he was delighted to see the sign of the cross on his shoulders, for he knew that in the area from which he came the word of God was being preached.'77 And significantly when the royal family returns to Marseilles, they find the Magdalen preaching to a large crowd surrounded by her own following of disciples, a detail which becomes standard in subsequent legendaries.79 Together with Martha and Maximin, the Magdalen then goes on to Aix and the success of their preaching by which 'the greatest part of the people were

this relationship is also reflected by the fact that the Magdalen addresses Maximin as 'Mi pater' and calls herself his 'filia' when she comes to receive her final communion.

76 Mane facto convenit illa generatio prava ut idolis more solito sacrificaret, cui Maria Magdalenæ assurgens vultu placido, lingua diserta verba salutis praedicavit; et admirati sunt omnes præ illius specie et eloquentiae dulcedine. Sequenti vero die quidam nobilissimæ advenit cum uxore sua qui universae provinciae praerat ut ibidem sacrificaret sicut consuerat: erat enim non modico dolore afflictus, eo quod spe prolis diu desideratae frustraretur; cui Magdalenæ Spiritu sancto plena, Christum praedicavit; ideoque sacrificia dissuasit. Omnes igitur ad eam confluabant. (Prince decides on journey) ... ut experiri posset si verum esset quod beata Maria Magdalenæ de Iesu Christo domino nostro praedicavit. Ibid., ch. 95-6, 356.

77 ... sufficienter illos edocens quod duce Petro apostolorum principe omnia quae praedixerat eis de domino Iesu, in notitiam cederent.... Ibid., ch. 96, 357.

78 ... viso signo crucis humeris eius affixo gavisus est. Novit enim quod in partibus unde venerat verbum dei praedicatum est. Ibid., ch. 97, 357. The Magdalen had herself blessed the pilgrims before their journey and made the sign of the cross on their shoulders.

79 Paulo post Marsiliae portui applicuerunt: et ingressi beatam Mariam Magdalenam cum discipulis suis magnæ gentium multitudini predicantem invenerunt; ac pedibus suis provoluti dixerunt: O beata Maria Magdalenæ magnus est ille, quem in terris praedicás, Deus tuus.... Ibid., ch. 98, 357.
converted to Christ' is described in terms adapted from the *Vita apostolica*.80

The popular dissemination of the Magdalen legend was undoubtedly secured by its appearance in the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine. The popularity and extraordinary diffusion of this hagiographical work (which was compiled between about 1255 and 1266, and of which the earliest manuscript is dated 1281) can scarcely be overstated and is implicit in its common title. Yet Voragine drew heavily on the work of his Dominican predecessors, Jean de Mailly and Vincent, and scarcely adds anything new to the legendary details of the Magdalen's preaching. Vincent's statement that all who first heard her preach in Marseilles 'admired her beauty and the sweetness of her eloquence' is expanded and explained by Voragine:

... she preached Christ most constantly and everyone admired her beauty, her fluency and the sweetness of her eloquence. Nor is it any wonder that her mouth, which had imposed such reverent and such beautiful kisses on the Saviour's feet, should give out the perfume of the word of God more than others.81

He keeps to de Mailly's account of the Magdalen defending her faith to the prince, and he and his wife say they are ready to obey her words in everything if she obtains a son for them from the God whom she preaches. Yet after the prince's wife conceives, Voragine introduces the first note of scepticism into the prince's motive for his journey since, even after Mary Magdalen has said she is prepared to defend the faith which she preaches, the prince still wants to prove

80 Tunc territorium Aquense adeunt, et ieiuniis ac precibus insistentes populum incredulum miraculorum signis et predicationibus ad fidem Christi converterunt. ... Predicantibus ergo beato Maximino et Martha et Maria, maxima pars populi ad Christum conversa est. *Ibid.*

the truth of what the Magdalen had preached about Christ and begins to want to
go to visit St Peter.\textsuperscript{82} It is clear, however, that in the scheme of classification
proposed by Alain Boureau for Voragine's work, whereby saints are presented
as either witnesses to the faith, defenders of the faith, or preachers who witness,
defend and actively convert, the Magdalen belongs to the third and most exalted
category according to Dominican values.\textsuperscript{83}

The tradition in later English Legendaries

Around the mid-thirteenth century at the same time as the Legenda Aurea, a
vernacular verse legendary from southwestern England was being composed. It
is thought that an original draft of this South English Legendary was started before
Voragine's work became available to the author, but that in the course of the
draft or immediately after it was finished, someone gained access to a copy of
the Legenda Aurea (possibly through the Dominicans at Oxford or Gloucester)
and used it in revising the work.\textsuperscript{84} Thus two different versions of the Magdalen
legend are found in the South English Legendary; both agree, however, that the
Magdalen began preaching in Judea even before she sailed to Provence. The

\textsuperscript{82} Cum autem quadam die Maria Magdalena praedicaret, praedictus princeps dixit ei: putas
posse defendere fidem, quam praedicas? Cui illa: equidem illam defendere praesto sum, utpote
quotidianis miraculis et praedicatione magistri mei Petri, qui Romae praesidet, roboratam. Cui
princeps cum coniuge dixit: ecce dictis tuis per omnia obtemperare parati sumus, si a Deo, quem
praedicas, nobis filium impetrabis. ... Tunc vir eius coepit velle proficisci ad Petrum, ut
probaret, si, ut Magdalena de Christo praedicaverat, sic veritas se haberet. \textit{Ibid.}, 410.

\textsuperscript{83} Alain Boureau, \textit{La légende dorée: Le système narratif de Jacques de Voragine} (†1298) (Paris,
colloque international sur la Legenda Aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires, à l'Université
du Québec à Montréal 11-12 mai 1983} (Montréal/Paris, 1986), 57-76, esp. 68-72

\textsuperscript{84} Manfred Gorläch, \textit{The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary} (Leeds, 1974), esp.
25-31.
earlier version says that she was specifically commissioned in this by Jesus after her conversion:

Crist hire hauede a-boute i-sent: to sarmoni and to preche:
To sunfole men he was ful rad: to wissi and to teche,
and to sike men heo wa[s] ful glad: to beon heore soule leche;
Mani on to cristinedom: heo brouȝhte, and out of sunne,
Fram lecherie und hore-dom: þoru schrift, to Ioye and alle wunne.\(^{85}\)

The revised version describes the Magdalen encouraging her brother and sister to give up all their possessions, and then all three of them preach and teach:

Þeruore hure broȝer and hure soster: as heo made attelaste
Alle þreo ssolde al hore god: atte apostles fet it caste
And sede hi wolde al þan world: clanliche forsake
And in wildernesse ech inis side: to Iesu hore herte take
And næþes þoru þe apostles rede: wiþ þam longe hi were
And prechede forþ wiþ hom: and oþer men to lere.\(^{86}\)

In Marseilles, this version goes on, the Magdalen speaks so well that all are amazed and no one can refute her:

Marie was hardiost aþen hom: he[o] wende anon
He[o] gan to speke aþen hore lawe: so uair reson and god
Þat non ne coupe aþen hore lawe: ac as gidi echmon stod
Gret wonder þoþte euerich mon: þat so uair creature
So wiþlich spak & so wel: echmon to hure.\(^{87}\)

She preaches God’s law to the prince and his wife, and is ready to defend her faith:

Marie iseie ham þat hi hadde: hore sacrefise ibroȝt
He[o] prechede and sede hom to soþe: þat it neha[l]p hom rþt noþt
... Marie Magdalein [:] was baldost of echon
Heo prechede þe prince and is wif: of god lawe anon
Þo he[o] hom hadde muche itold: of þe ioie of heuene blis
Womman quaþ þe prince þo: woltou waranti al þis
Ich it wole waranti quaþ Marie: and muche more iwis
Þoru Petres lore our maister: þat pope of Rome is.\(^{88}\)

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\(^{85}\) Carl Horstman (ed.), *The Early South-English Legendary or Lives of Saints* (London, 1887), 466, II. 158-162.


\(^{87}\) *Ibid.*, II. 72-76.
Yet when the prince's wife conceives, the Magdalen tells the prince to thank St Peter as she does everything according to his teaching:

Ne þonkeþ me nozt quaþ Marie : noþing of þis dede  
Ac þonkeþ Peter oure maister : for ich do al bi is rede.  

89

When the royals return from their consequent journey, they find the Magdalen preaching as she frequently did: 'Hy fonde Marie stonde & preche: as heo was iwond ilome' (l. 254), and then she proceeds to convert many other 'countries' by her teaching, so that she and her companions 'established Christendom':

Hi turnde anon to Cristendom : alle þat þer ney were  
And ech contreie after oþer : as Marie ham gan lere  
So longe as al þat lond : auenge Cristendom  
Marie wende forþ anon : and is felawes wiþ hure nom  
And caste adoun þe sinagoges : þat in þe londe were  
And in eche stude þer hi stode : a churche he[o] let rere  
Sein Lasar þe bisop made : in þe hexte stude þere  
And sein Maximin eles were : that folk forto lere  
At eche churche hy sette a preost : as we dop yute here  
So þat Cristendom stable was : þoru Marie & hure uere.  

90

The earlier version, however, is the first text in which we find the words which the Magdalen preached to the crowd quoted in direct speech. This is a significant development in that direct evidence is given, as it were, of her preaching, rather than it only being reported as a narrative detail. The full text of her sermon is introduced and runs as follows:

Þe Marie Maudeleine : heo saiþ þat folk a-rise,  
Riche and pouere, knyþht and sweyn : to don þat sacrefise:  
heo was a-nuyd and of-drad : þat hire bi-gan to grise;  
To spoken of god heo was ful rad : and so dude on hire wise.  
Op heo stod with wordes bolde : and with briþt neb and glade chere,  
And seide, "herkniez to me, junge and elde : þat wullez beon christes:  
Ne bi-lieuez noþht opon Mahun : ne on teruagaunt, is fere,  
For huy beoth boþe deue and doumbe : and huy ne mouwen i-seo n i-here,  
Ne huy ne mouwen eov helpe nouþht : of non kunnes þingue.

88 Ibid., II. 81-2, 111-16.  
89 Ibid., II. 125-6.  
90 Ibid., II. 263-72.
Pei men of heom jelpen ous: ne no guod to eu bringue:  
For huy bez doumbe and deue: crokede and eke blinde,  
heore mijhte is fallen to grounde: bi-foren and bi-hinde.  
Ake ze schulde lieuen on iesu crist: oure heije heouene kyng,  
Pat al his worldes maister is: with-oute ani ending:  
For he may don is wille: of euereche cunnes þing  
Pat ze wulniez with riȝhte: and with-oute sunegyng:  
He is with-oute þe bi-guynningue: and he is with-oute ende,  
with-oute fuylþe and sunegyng: so corteyz and so hende  
Pat al þing þat man with skile him biddez: he wolde him þyue and sende,  
To Man þat goth and eke rit: þat wole to him wende;  
He is wuryte of alle þing: he makede heouene and helle,  
Ne may no kayser ne no kyng: his vertues alle teile;  
Þe man that him seruez wel: ne may him no feond ewelle,  
Ake huy þat wullez a-sein him fiȝhte: to grounde he wolde heom felle;  
He makede day and eke nyȝht: steorrene and sonne and Mone;  
Þe man þat trewe is and louez him ariȝt: he wolde graunti him is bone  
And þat he biddez him with treuȝe: he it grauntez him ful sone,  
he helpez boþe king and knyȝht: þe pouere alle mididone."91

Nevertheless, the prince seems as much struck by the Magdalen's appearance as  
by her message:  
To Mariæ preachingue: he lustnede ful sone;  
For þat heo was so fair a þing: to hire huy token guod gome.92

She, however, continues to preach, and is prepared to defend her faith:  
Opon a day heo bi-gan: godes word for-to preche  
And of godes lawe, with gret wit: ase heo þar mijhte a-reche;  
To leden heore lyf in guod fey: alle heo gan heom teche,  
And for-to louie god and don a-vey: wrathþe and onde and wreche.  
Þe prince saide þo to hire: with egleche wordes and bolde:  
"Mijhte þou proui with treuȝe: þat þou prechest may beo wel i-holde?"  
Þe Maudeleyne saide, "þe: ich am redi eov to teche,  
Bi ore maistres conseile: and mid is holie speche -  
Þat is seinte petre of rome -: hov þe schullen on take  
Þe blisse of heouene for-to afongue: and þe feondes lore for-sake."93

After the time of the South English Legendary, the influence of the Legenda Aurea  
became pervasive on subsequent legendary accounts of the life and preaching

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91 Horstman, Early South-English Legendary, 468, ll. 199-226.  
92 Ibid., ll. 229-30.  
93 Ibid., 470, ll. 277-286.
career of Mary Magdalen. To demonstrate this influence in one specific regional area, it will suffice to look briefly at later forms of the Magdalen legend in Middle English and the works related to them.94

The *Auchinleck Mary Magdalen* dates from the early fourteenth century, and its author implies that he is translating the *Legenda Aurea* for the benefit of those who do not understand Latin.95 The Magdalen preaches and teaches in the temple and among the people in Marseilles to great effect since she had kissed Christ's own feet with her mouth.96 The prince and his wife 'herd ñe Maudelain, / Fast sche preched ñer-ojain' (ll. 149-50), and interestingly not only is his wife put in fear of the 'god, of whom sche ginneþ to preche' (l. 201), but it is she who wants the Magdalen to prove

\[
\begin{align*}
3if \text{ } & \text{hat sche hadde power & mi3t} \\
& \text{Forto avowe her lawe ari3t,} \\
& \text{ñat sche of preched ni3t & day.97}
\end{align*}
\]

95 Carl Horstmann (ed.), *Sammlung Altenglischer Legenden* (Heilbronn, 1878), 163-70, ll. 670-2: ...pat pis stori in Inglisse rim / Out of latin hap ywrouȝt, / For alle men latin no conne nouȝt.
96 *Ibid.*, ll. 125-144, 209-214:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ñe Maudeleine } & \text{bo & hir fere } / \text{Wenten in to the temple } \text{ñere.} \\
\text{Anon } & \text{ñe Maudelein gan preche, } / \text{ñat folk } \text{ñe riȝt bileue to teche,} \\
\text{Of } & \text{Jhesus in Carnacdun}, / & \text{hau he suffred passioun } (*\text{corruption of 'incarnation'}*) \\
\text{For hir } & \text{þeous and al mankinde } - / \text{Of dedely sinne god ous vnbinde,} \\
3if ani of ous } & \text{ñer-in be. } / \text{Amen, seyt alle par charite.} \\
\text{ñe folk of hir gret wonder hadde, } / \text{Of hir bileue } \text{ñai held hir madde;} \\
\text{Wonder } & \text{ñai hadde more & lesse } / \text{Of hir faucoun } & \text{ñir fairnisse.} \\
\text{No wonder, } & \text{hei in hir mouȝe } / \text{More svetnisse were couþe} \\
\text{ðan in ani other miȝt be; } & \text{For Jhesu, } \text{ñat dyed on } \text{ñe tre,} \\
\text{Wip } & \text{derworþi kisse } & \text{wip wepe } / \text{Lete hir kisse his fair fet.} \\
\text{... Among that pople } & \text{burgh vertu } / \text{Sche gan preche of Jhesu,} \\
\text{His passioun } & \text{& his uprist, } / \text{ñat mani man } \text{ñerof agrist;} \\
\text{Mani man to hir } & \text{þer come } & \text{& underfenge cristendome.}
\end{align*}
\]

The Magdalen answers that God will show with miracles,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pat stable is our lay and trewe,} \\
\text{Riʒt as seint Peter ous teche}\text{ʒ,} \\
\text{Our maister, in Rome, ðer he preche}\text{ʒ.}^{98}
\end{align*}
\]

After the royal couple return, 'þer þai founde þe Maudelain, / Riʒt wįþ her
deciples alle' (ll. 472-3), and leaving Lazarus as bishop, the Magdalen and
Maximin go on to another land and together, through many miracles,
'Cristendom þai gun taken, / & chirches fast þai gun maken.' (ll. 495-6)

The Magdalen legend in the *Northern Homily Collection*, which was revised and
expanded in about 1350, while it shows the influence of the *South English
Legendary* in some places, draws heavily on the *Legenda Aurea* for the Marseilles
episode.\(^{99}\) The writer describes the Magdalen's resurrection commission as a
mandate from the risen Christ to preach to all people, and says that she put this
into effect and gained followers even in Judea:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{parfore kindenes to hir he kyd /More þan he vnto oþer did:} \\
\text{For, when he rase, als we er lerde, /Vnto hir first he þan aperde,/} \\
\text{To mak hir in hir trouh be stabill, /To trow it fast with-outen fabill;} \\
\text{And þan he made hir messangere / Vnto al his appostels dere,} \\
\text{And bad hir tell to lerde and leude /His rising - þus kindnes he scheude.} \\
\text{þan with þe appostels furth scho dweld,/ And euer in halyne(s) scho hir held;} \\
\text{... Mari Maudelayne with hir menæ /Dwellid þan in þe land of Jude.} \\
\text{Ful mani folk Pore gun scho draw/ Forto lif by Cristes lawe.}^{100}
\end{align*}
\]

In 'Marcyle', the Magdalen's effectiveness in preaching is again spelt out, and
after she wins hospitality in the palace she is said to persist in preaching at
mealtimes.\(^{101}\) On being required to defend her faith, the Magdalen describes


\(^{99}\) Mycoff, *Critical Edition of the Legend of Mary Magdalena*, 31, attributes the freedom
apparent in the use of this source to the author's *own* imaginative power, rather than another
contributory model.

\(^{100}\) Carl Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden, Neue Folge* (Heilbronn, 1881), 81-92, ll. 65-76, 95-
8.

\(^{101}\) *Ibid.*, ll. 121-3, 140-159, 170-176, 260-4: Bot sone, when þai war wun to land,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Omong þe folk þai went prechand, / Of Cristes faith fast þai declarid;}
\end{align*}
\]
herself as having authority direct from the pope:

Pan answerd scho with stabil chere:
'I am redi with hert and hend / Pe faith of Crist forto defend.
My mayster, Peter, þe pape of Rome, / Has biden me do efter his dome;
He wil wele mayntene al mi dede / And þarfore, sir, it es no nede
So straitly of me to enquere / To defend þe law þat I sow lere.'

The prose Gilte Legende (c. 1438) is the first actual translation of the Legenda Aurea into English, although it is clear in the Magdalen legend that the author also knew of Jehan de Vignay’s earlier French translation, the Légende dorée. Although Voragine’s introductory etymologies are omitted and the account ends at the Magdalen’s burial, as a translation it clearly preserves the full impact of the

... (seeing the people come to sacrifice) pan was scho ful wroth on hir wise,
Furth scho stode with face ful playne / And said, þaire werkes war all in uayne;
With stabill tung to þam scho spak / And þaire law fast gun scho lak;
Of Crist scho prechid al opinly, / And said þaire werk was maumetry.
Hir wurdes war so wisely wroght, / Þat al þe folk grete ferly thoght;
Þai had ferly of hir fairehede / And how scho durst do swilk a dede.
Bot hir wurdes war so swete to here, / Þat many men held hir dedis dere-
Bot no wunder if þe wurde war swete/ Of þe mouth þat kist Cristes fete!
Hir wurdes þarfore war of swilk grace, / Þat mekil pople in þat same place
Vnto hir tales swilk tent þan toke / Þat þaire fals sacrifise þai forsoke;
Sum lerid ful fast of Cristes lay.
(The royals come to sacrifice) ... And when Mari wist what þai ment,
Ful opinly scho þam reproved, / And diuers maters þore scho moued
þat in þat maumet might was none / Ne comfort, bot in Crist allone;
þis proued scho wele by proces playne, / And so scho gert þam turn ogayne.
... And euyn als þai sat at the mete, /
Mari was carpand euer of Crist / And diuers maters scho poplist:
"None oþer lord es to a-low, / Ne oþer trowth es none to trow"...

102 Ibid., II. 276-284.
103 This is demonstrated by the fact that the town of Aix is rendered as 'the citee of Daies', a corruption which can only derive from the French form 'la cite d'Aies'; Julius Zupitza, 'Das Leben der heiligen Maria Magdalena, in me. Prosawissenschaftliche Untersuchungen, Ms. 5.2.14', Archivum für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, 47 (1893): 222. On the Légende dorée, see Mycoff, Critical Edition of the Legend of Mary Magdalena, 37-8, and his transcription of the Magdalen legend from MS London BL Stowe 50-51, 210-242.
preaching ministry of the Magdalen, who is called 'felawe to the appostulis'.

Osbern of Bokenham, whom some have credited with authorship of the *Gilte Legende*, tells us that his *Lyf of Marye Maudelyn* (which is one of his collection of *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*) was requested by Isabel, Countess of Eu, in 1445, since:

'Thau, quod she, 'of pure affeccyoun
Ful long tym had a synguler deuocyoun
To pat holy wumman, wych, as I gesse,
Is clepyd of apostyls pe apostyllesse;
Blyssyd Mary mawdelyn y mene...'

The Augustinian friar of Stoke Clare cites Voragine (called 'Ianuence' from his see of Genoa) as his authority for the Magdalen's later life, yet some poetic elaboration on his source is clear. In 'Marsilye', when 'She hem revokyd from hyr ydolatrye,/ And prechyd hem cryst most stedefastlye'(ll. 5785-6), the effect

104 ... And whan the blyssid Mary Magdaleyn sawe the puple assemble to that temple for-to do sacrifice to the ydollis, she aroos hir up pesibully with a glade visage and a discrete tunge and wel spekyng and bigan to preche of Ihesu Crist and to with-drawe the puple fro worsheppyng of ydollis. And than alle hadden grete merveyle of the bewte and of the resoun, that was inhir, and of his faire spekynge. And it was no wonder, though the mouthe, that so debonairely and so goodely kyssid the feete of oure lorde, were more enspired with the worde of god, than other. ... And Mary Magdaleyn prechid of Ihesu Crist to hem and reprovid his sacryfice.... In a tyme, as Mary Magdaleyn prechid to the forside prync, than seide the prync to hir: 'Wenest thou, that thou myghtist diffende the lawe, that thou prechist?' And she seide: 'Syker, I am redy to diffende it, as she (*fides*), that is confermyd every daye bi myraclis and by the predicacioun of oure maister, seyne Petre, that sitteth in the see of Rome.' ... And than the housbonde wolde go to seyne Petre for to prove, whethir the verite were suche of Ihesu Crist, as Mary Magdaleyn prechid. ... thei arryved at the porte of Marcellis and fonde the blessid Mary Magdaleyn prechinge with hir disciplis .... Zupitza, 'Das Leben der heiligen Maria Magdalena', 212-20.


of her beauty and eloquence upon her listeners are such:

\[ \text{\textit{at hei hadyn a uery delectacyoun}} \\
\text{\textit{Styyle to stondyn & here hyr predycacyoun.}} \\
\text{And no wundyr pow pat mowth sothly} \\
\text{\textit{Wych so feyr kyssys & so swete}} \\
\text{So oftyn had bredyd & so deuothly} \\
\text{\textit{Vp-on cryst oure salatourys feet,}} \\
\text{Dyuers tymes whan she hym dede mete,} \\
\text{Past ojir swych grace had in fauour} \\
\text{Of goddys wurde to shewe ë sauour.}^{107} \]

Osbern, however, says that even though she 'made a long sermoun' to the 'prynce & hys wyf' it availed nothing, and even after his wife conceives the prince decides to go to Peter 'Maryis doctryne ëat he myht preue' (l.5909). The Magdalen's authority is upheld by Peter who tells the prince he has rightly given credence to her 'holsum counsel' (l. 6028), and back in Marsyle the prince and his wife fall at her feet with great humility when 'Wyth hyr dyscyplys Mary ëei fonde/ Prechyng ëe peple, as won was she' (ll. 6132-3).

Finally, Caxton tells us that in his prose Golden Legend, of which ten editions were printed between 1483 and 1527, he used French, Latin and English sources. Yet since the French and English versions in question are in fact the Légende dorée and the Gilte Legende, his account of the preaching career of Mary Magdalen, 'felawe to the Appostlyys, and made of our Lord Appostolesse of th'Appostles' (l. 145), is entirely based on Voragine and shows no distinctive elaboration, although additional legendary elements are introduced elsewhere.\(^{108}\)

\(^{107}\) Ibid., ll. 5792-5800.

\(^{108}\) ... she aroos vp peasibly with a glad visage, a dyscrete tongue and wel spekyng, and began to preche the faythe & lawe of Ihesu Cryst, and withdrewe them fro the worshippyng of th'ydollis. Thenne were they adumerueylded of the beaute, of the reson, and of the fayr spekyng of her. And it was no merueylye that the mouth that had kyssed the feet of our Lord so deboneyrly and so goodly shold be en spyred with the worde of God more than the other. ... and Marie Magdalene prechid to them Ihesu Cryst and forbade them tho sacrefyses. ... Thenne, as Marie Magdalene prechyd on a tyme, the sayde prince sayd to her: 'Wenest thou that thou mayst defende the lawe that thou prechest?' And she answerd: 'Certaynly I am redy to defend
Conclusions

In this examination of the legendary accounts of the Magdalen's preaching apostolate in Provence, it has been demonstrated that the earliest Vézelien form was explicit about her active ministry and describes her in unison with Maximin, 'paying out the seeds of the divine word freely to all and persisting day and night in preaching, fasting and prayer...'. Although it could be argued that Maximin provided a type of masculine authority and authorisation for the Magdalen's preaching activity in his shadow, the controversial Vita 'Omnipotentis' form describes the Magdalen making her own way in Provence 'to sow the grace of God's word to the people. While this latter version then makes her subject to the Pauline injunction, it is clearly far outstripped in popularity among its first ecclesiastical audience by the Vita apostolica which shows no such inhibitions. The Magdalen's apostolic life takes its place alongside the eremitic life as a standard legendary detail, which is retold in numerous forms, disseminated outside its original monastic environment and makes its way into a wide array of sermons and popular legendaries.

Subsequent elaboration and embellishment of this legend added increasing detail and 'artistic verisimilitude' to the narrative. In the story of the conversion of the prince of Marseilles and his wife, which comes to dominate the legendary narrative, it is the Magdalen alone who addresses the people and preaches the faith of Christ and she is able to defend the faith she preaches when questioned by her hearers. In some later forms, the logical extension is made that she had preached at Christ's command in Judea before the dispersion; in others she cites St Peter as her authority in preaching, and even claims that he has instructed her

it, as she that is confermed euery day by myracles and by the predycacion of our mayster Seynt Peter, whiche now sitteth in the see at Rome.' Mycôff, Critical Edition of the Legend of Mary Magdalena, 123-4, ll. 172-189, 234-241.
for her apostolate. This detail appears to be a clear attempt to attribute an early form of papal authority to her for her ministry, and the gathering of disciples she is said to have attracted adds a further contemporary note, evoking the medieval experience of wandering preachers who pursued the ideal of the *vita apostolica* with bands of disciples in this way. Finally the direct quotation of the sermon that the Magdalen preached anticipates the enactment of her active life in the sacred drama of the sixteenth century, notably the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, which would explicitly present a woman preaching and converting, and teaching not only her 'staged' audience but also, by implication, the real audience who heard the words she preached.

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109 Chronological constraints have prevented detailed consideration of the Digby *Mary Magdalene* in this thesis. In many ways it marks the extreme development of the medieval Magdalen legend on the threshold of the Reformation. Clifford Davidson, 'The Digby Mary Magdalene and the Magdalene cult of the Middle Ages', *Annuaire Medievale* 13 (1972): 70-87, suggests that the play may have been written as a reaction to the 'single' Magdalen controversy prompted by Lefèvre d'Étampes. On the dating of this play to the second decade or perhaps even the second quarter of the sixteenth century, see D. C. Baker and J. L. Murphy, 'The late medieval plays of MS Digby 133: Scribes, dates and early history', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 10 (1967): 162-3.
As has been seen, one of the earliest forms of the active legend contains intrinsic reassurance for those concerned about the Pauline injunction on women speaking publicly. Mary Magdalen's preaching career is anticipated but in the event she is said to refrain and she shows due reticence in the presence of her brother:

... she made her way even to the aforementioned town, to sow the grace of God's word to the people. But because she knew that the female sex was prohibited and should not speak divine sermons with people listening publicly, she employed Lazarus her brother as more suitable for carrying out this task...  

As was indicated earlier, this version of her vita did not prove popular: apart from the eleventh-century original only one fifteenth-century manuscript survives. Vincent of Beauvais also alludes to St Paul's dictum in relation to the Magdalen, but reconciles it with a preaching ministry described in terms just as effusive as the Legenda Aurea. To achieve this he adopts a plausible historical perspective that apparently Mary Magdalen had reached Provence and pursued her apostolate before St Paul had made his pronouncements. Thus she ceased preaching after Paul's judgement was made known to her, although the phrase used by Vincent does not necessarily imply that she desisted immediately.

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1 ... ad praenominatam etiam urbem verbi Dei gratiam spargendam gentibus devenit. Sed quia muliebri sexui noverat prohibitum publicis auditibus non debere divinum inferre sermonem, ad peragendum illud opus idoneum fratrem adhibuit Lazarum.... de Gaiffier, 'Hagiographie Bourguignonne', 146.

2 See above, pages 60-64.
Rather, she was encouraged to stop as she had an alternative occupation in mind:

Meanwhile saint Mary Magdalen, when she had preached the word of the Lord for a long time and especially when it had come to her attention that the Apostle had instructed women to keep quiet in churches, was greatly desiring to spend time in contemplation; instructed by the Lord she made her way to a very rough wilderness and in the place prepared for her by the hands of angels spent thirty years unknown to any person, and refreshed by heavenly sustainance continued in praise and prayer to God.3

Another Dominican, Giovanni de San Gimignano († 1333), similarly considers that the Magdalen escaped the Pauline injunction by virtue of chronology, yet preached not merely as apostola apostolorum but as apostola populi before Paul's pronouncement: 'One reads that after Pentecost she preached as an apostle of the people. But then it is prohibited to other women by the Apostle saying Let women keep silent in church.'4

St Paul's authority in the Middle Ages meant that many writers contemporary with the Magdalen's hagiographers were duly repeating the church's official ban

3 Interea sancta Maria Magdalena cum diutius verbum domini praedicasset, maximeque cum ad eius notitiam pervenisset, quod Apostolus mulieres in ecclesiis tacere praecepisset, contemplationi arctius vacare desiderans, monente Domino, ad eremum asperrimum se contulit et in loco angelicus manibus sibi preparato per xxx annos omnibus hominibus incognita, et coelestibus tantum fomentis reducta in Dei laudibus et orationibus permansit. Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum historiale, book 9, ch. 102, 359. The Magdalen appears to conform to the Pauline prohibition in an early Breton chanson entitled Conversion Mari-Madalen. Her role in the gospel is retold and then, after setting sail with Martha, Lazarus and Joseph (of Arimathea), she announces their arrival in Marseilles and tells her brother to preach the faith while she will look for a remote place to pray to God day and night:

Madalen: Chetu-ni e Marseill arruet; / Va breur Lazar, sermon ar Feiz, / Ha me ya da glasq ur plac secret / Da pedi Doue nos ha deiz.

She proceeds, however, to have a long dialogue with a sinner in the wilderness by which he is converted. Eugène Rolland, Recueil de chansons populaires, 6 vols (Paris, 1883-90), vol. 6, 50-80.

4 Unde post pentecostem legitur tanquam apostola populis pr(e)dicasse. Quod tunc aliis mulieribus ab apostolo prohibetur dicente (I Cor. 14) Mulieres in ecclesia taceantur. Giovanni de San Gimignano, Sermones de sanctis (c. 1323-7), MS BAV Barb. lat. 513, f. 98v. (RLS 3:377); cited in Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 71.
on women's public ministry which was precisely codified by canon law in the
twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and repeated by clerical writers in various
contexts. By contrast the Augustinian Albert of Padua († 1282) presents Mary
Magdalen preaching and teaching about the resurrection despite the Pauline
injunction:

'Indeed Mary Magdalen was made herald of Christ's resurrection and the
relayer of his words, although the apostle prohibits women teaching and
preaching. Her merits of grace gathered this special privilege for blessed
Mary Magdalen'.

In this chapter such a spectrum of attitudes is explored. The pronouncements of
decretalists and jurists are presented, which prohibit women from teaching and
then specifically from preaching. Further prohibitions are adduced from
scholastics in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries who reinterpret the
Johannine account of the resurrection to show that by the manner of Jesus'
appearance to Mary Magdalen he was actually forbidding women to preach.
The case of preaching by women in heterodox groups is studied, together with
inferences from the catholic writers who condemned such a practice that the
Magdalen was an exemplar for such women. Then significant evidence is
presented from the thirteenth century which shows how many theologians
accepted the active legends as true and endeavour to explain why the Magdalen
was not subject to the traditional proscription. Some of these explanations try to
prove that the proscription should hold for other women despite this notable
exception; others, however, clearly demonstrate that under certain circumstances
women's preaching had, at least in theory, to be accepted. In this debate the
theology of the medieval church intrinsically reflects the tension between the

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5 Facta est autem Maria Magdalena resurrectionis Christi praenuncia, et verborum ipsius
relatrix, cum tamen apostolus prohibeat mulierem docere et praedicare. Quod speciale
privilegium merita gratiarum beatae Mariae Magdalenae accumulant. Albert of Padua,
Evangelia Totius Anni Dominicalia (Turin, 1529), 172; cited in Jansen, 'Mary Magdalen', 71.
gospel accounts and the Pauline letters by admitting the currency of the Magdalen preaching legends while still attempting to limit women's ministry for all practical purposes. Ultimately, however, the gospel picture prevailed in the Magdalen's hagiographical image. In the same way, it is clear that the 'fact' of Mary Magdalen's preaching prevailed in devotion to her at both a popular and an institutional level.

Prohibitions on women preaching in Canon law

In the middle of the twelfth century, the Decretum of Gratian became the standard expression of canon law for the church. Written around 1140, it systematised earlier legislation and specifically codified the exclusion of women from priestly ministry. The injunctions concerning women are said by Gratian to be derived from the Fourth Council of Carthage, but in fact date back to the interpretation of I Timothy 2:12-14 in the Syrian Didascalia Apostolorum of the early third century and the Apostolic Constitutions of the fourth century. The Didascalia says that women are not allowed to teach since Jesus only entrusted (male) disciples with teaching although he could have also sent the 'women disciples' who were with them:

For when the gentiles wish to understand and hear the word of the Lord, if they are not spoken to firmly as is fitting for their edification to eternal life, and especially if they are spoken to by a woman about the incarnation of our Lord and the passion of Christ, they will deride and despise the word of doctrine rather than celebrate with praise, and she will be judged greatly guilty of sin. So it is neither fitting nor necessary for women to teach, and especially about the name of Christ and about the redemption of his passion. For you are not constituted for this that you should teach, O women and great widows, but that you should pray and petition the Lord God, for the Lord God Jesus Christ our teacher sent us twelve that we should teach the people and the gentiles; for there were with us the women disciples, Mary Magdalen and Mary Iacobi and the

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other Mary, but he did not send them to teach the people with us. For if it was necessary that women should teach, our teacher would have commanded these women to teach with us.\(^7\)

The list of women disciples given, which is a composite of the women who visited the tomb and were witnesses to the resurrection, almost undoes the writer's argument for, according to Matthew and John at least, Jesus did command the women (and Mary Magdalen actually greets him as 'teacher') to teach the disciples if not to teach 'with them'. The *Apostolic Constitution* expands the list of women, thus managing to avoid this problem, to 'the mother of the Lord and her sisters, plus Mary Magdalen and Mary Jacobi and Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, and Salome and certain others'.\(^8\) It also specifies that it is not fitting for women to teach 'ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ' (cf. I Cor. 14:34,35) and so escapes the *Didascalia*’s self-contradictory prescriptions as to how a widow should answer when questioned 'about justice and faith in God' by implying that she may teach outside the church.\(^9\)

\(^7\) Cum enim gentes cognoscere volentes verbum Domini audiunt, si non dicitur firmiter, prout decet, in aedificationem ad vitam aeternam, et praeertim quia a muliere eis dicitur de incarnatione Domini nostri ac de passione Christi, potius derident et contemnunt verbum doctrinae quam laudibus celebrant, et rea fit magni iudicii peccati. Non decet ergo neque necessarium est, ut mulieres doceant, et praeertim de nomine Christi et de redemptione passionis eius. Nam non ad hoc estis constitutae, ut doceatis, o mulieres ac maxime viduae, sed ut oretis ac rogetis Dominum Deum, quia Dominus Deus Jesus Christus magister noster nos duodecim misit, ut doceamus populum et gentes; erant enim nobiscum discipulae Maria Magdalene et Maria filia Iacobi et altera Maria, neque emisit, ut nobiscum populum doceant. Si enim necesse fuisset, ut mulieres docerent, magister noster has ipsas iussisset nobiscum docere. *Didascalia* 3.5.6-6.2, in Franz Xaver Funk (ed.), *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn, 1905), 190.

\(^8\) *Const. Ap.* 3.6.2 (Funk, 191).

\(^9\) *Const. Ap.* 3.7.3 (Funk, 193), implies merely that widows are not to preach in a holy place, nor enter into theological disputation; cf. *Didascalia* 3.5.3 (Funk, 188). C. M. Henning, 'Canon Law and the battle of the sexes', in *Religion and Sexism: images of women in the Jewish and Christian tradition*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York, 1974), 267-291, suggests this prohibition actually underlines the original teaching function of deaconesses and widows. Neither a widow nor a layman, however, ought to speak about 'the dissolution of idols and that there is only one God, and about hell and heaven and the kingdom of the name of Christ
Ivo of Chartres (c. 1040-1116), an influential decretalist who preceded Gratian, invokes the authority of Augustine and Ambrose in attributing the subjection of women to Eve's ability to persuade Adam:

> It is agreed that woman is subject to the rule of man and has no authority, for she is not able to teach, nor to be a witness, nor make an oath, nor judge: much less is she able to rule. ... Adam was deceived by Eve, not Eve by Adam whom the woman incited to sin. It is right that he should assume government over her, lest he fall again through her womanly way with words.¹⁰

This reasoning (which ultimately goes back to I Tim. 2:14) clearly bears out the argument put forward by Sharon Farmer that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the issue of clerical celibacy led to Eve being represented in an increasingly negative way as a sexual temptress, enticing men and bringing disorder into society.¹¹ Such reasoning, it seems, disregards both the positive patristic interpretation of women's witness to the resurrection and their restorative role in the salvation of humanity, and also the pragmatic fact that the example of Eve actually shows that women could clearly be very effective teachers, and potentially better able to influence others for good, if they chose, than men.

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¹⁰ Mulierem constat dominio viri subiectam esse et nullam auctoritatem habere, nec docere enim potest, nec testis esse, neque fidem dicere, nec iudicare; quanto magis non potest imperare. Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum* 8.85 (PL 161:601) [from (ps-)Augustine *Quaestionum veteris et novi testamenti* 45 (PL 35:2244)]. Adam per Evam deceptus est, non Eva per Adam, quem vocavit ad culpam mulier. Justum est ut eam in gubernationem assumat, ne iterum feminia facilitate labatur. *Ibid.* 8.91 (PL 161:603) [from Ambrose *Hexaemeron* 5.7].

Gratian's own decretals seem most closely derived from the wording of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, for he too conflates the two Pauline texts, that women may not teach (I Tim. 2:12) and they may not speak 'in church' (I Cor. 14:34,35). He pronounces that 'A woman, however learned and holy, may not presume to teach men at a gathering. Indeed a lay person may not dare to teach when clergy are present unless they themselves ask'. Thus Gratian, like all the previous authorities, does not mention preaching explicitly. It is the canonist Huguccio, expanding on Gratian (in 1198-91), who defines the teaching which women may not presume to do literally as preaching: 'A woman, however learned and holy, may not presume to teach men at a gathering publicly, that is climbing into a pulpit in church and making a sermon to the people'. He uses this circumlocution for the verb *praedicare* to define the activity exactly, interpreting Gratian's ambiguous *'in conventu'* as meaning *'in ecclesia'*. He goes on, however, to allow an important exception in the case of abbesses who are allowed to teach and preach in their convent:

...but if she is an abbess, in the seclusion of the cloister or chapter or choir she can teach her nuns and lay-sisters and even her lay-brothers, and preach to them, but this is forbidden to other women, ... And note that women are thus forbidden to teach men lest they think that they should have precedence over them.

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This is a significant concession that there were circumstances where a woman was presumably thought sufficiently docta et sancta to teach men as well as women, and even to preach. The explanation Huguccio gives as to why other women are not able to teach is thus a curiously unreasoned recourse to Pauline authority in the light of the exception he has just admitted. After this he even defines all teaching as a type of preaching, and it is thus said to be part of a priest's office alone (although in the absence of a priest he allows that other women may exhort and admonish). Nonetheless, the verb praedicare has now been used in this context of women's authority (or lack of it), and from this time on jurists specify the function of preaching in their prohibitions for women. It seems not simply coincidental that this comes about at the end of the twelfth century when legends depicting the Magdalen not merely teaching but preaching publicly are current.

By the thirteenth century exceptions such as Huguccio allowed were overruled and the prohibitions on women preaching were reinforced by jurists. In 1210 Innocent III put an end to the type of concession which was being allowed to abbesses, among others to the abbess of Las Huelgas, the Cistercian convent near Burgos. In a letter dated December 11th, which was quoted afterwards in Canon law, he writes to the two Spanish bishops concerned telling them to ensure that abbesses could no longer preach in public after they had read the gospel, nor give benediction to their nuns nor hear confessions as they had been doing. He uses the same argument as the Didascalia, that Jesus had only... docere, id est predicare; hoc est enim officium sacerdotis ... set tamen in eorum absentia possunt exortari, admonere.... Ibid. Blamires, 'Women and preaching', 139, argues that some authorities use "teaching" in an inclusive sense which incorporates "preaching", since the Pauline prohibition on teaching is central to the debate. This seems to be the opposite of Huguccio's definition and does not allow for the finer distinctions of 'exhortation' and 'admonition' which were allowed to women, while the public, ecclesial context of 'preaching' was prohibited to them. See further below.
entrusted these functions to his male followers:

Recently certain news has been intimated to us, about which we marvel greatly, that abbesses, namely those situated in the dioceses of Burgos and Palencia, give blessings to their own nuns, and they also hear confessions of sins and, reading the gospel, they presume to preach in public. This thing is inharmonious as well as absurd, and not to be tolerated by us. For that reason, by means of our discretion from apostolic writing, we order that it be done no longer, and by apostolic authority to check it more firmly, for although the Blessed Virgin Mary surpassed in dignity and in excellence all the apostles, nevertheless it was not to her but to them that the Lord entrusted the keys to the kingdom of heaven.\(^\text{15}\)

However, in adducing this argument of 'the power of the keys', Innocent only strictly deals with the issue of the abbesses giving absolution, as indicated by the fact that in the *Decretum* the letter is quoted in the section entitled *De poenitentiis et remissionibus*. As Thomas of Chobham shows in his *Summa confessorum* (c. 1215) the 'keys' were not necessarily thought to concern preaching specifically, but binding and loosing were understood particularly as pronouncing absolution or excommunication respectively.\(^\text{16}\)


\(^{16}\) *Thomae de Chobham Summa Confessorum*, ed. F. Broomfield (Louvain/Paris, 1968), art. 5, dist. 1 (De potestati ligandi et solvendi), 199: ... quomodo et quando et quibus debeat iniungere penitentiam vel quos debeat suspendere vel excommunicare. Often the effective power for the two functions of preaching and 'binding and loosing' together was conferred with the *cura animarum* (see Thomas of Chobham's *Summa de arte praedicandi* 3, ed. F. Morenzoni (Turnhout, 1988), 54, and Jean-Pierre Renard, *La formation et la désignation des prédicateurs au début de l'Ordre des prêcheurs* (1215-1237) (Fribourg, 1977), 37-41). Yet preaching is frequently mentioned in addition to binding and loosing, demonstrating that it was considered a separate
The Decretals of Gregory IX which were formulated in 1234 by the Dominican Raymond of Peñafort further amplify Gratian, forbidding women to enter sanctuary, celebrate mass, preach, read the gospel in public and hear confession. The decretalist Bernard of Parma in his commentary on Gregory IX's collection (c. 1245) denies the force of precedent, as if the right to preach for some women was still being argued from this. In his gloss on Innocent's ruling about abbesses he states that, whatever might be found in earlier practice, women may not teach or preach, touch sacred vessels, veil or absolve nuns, or exercise judgement, and 'in general the office of a man is forbidden to women'.

It should be noted in this context, however, that artists, as well as hagiographers, were not disposed to observe the niceties of the canon lawyers' pronouncements. In the previous chapter, the depiction of Mary Magdalen in the stained glass windows of Auxerre cathedral has already been mentioned: she has climbed into a pulpit to preach with God's blessing. The Magdalen is also portrayed in the pulpit in the mid-fourteenth century fresco cycle by Giovanni and Battista Baschenis de Averara in the church dedicated to her in Cusiano, Trentino. From the late fourteenth century there is the (now damaged) fresco of the Magdalen chapel in the church of Sant' Antonio di Ranverso, near Turin, where she preaches from a high pulpit to a rapt audience below. Also one of

17 Cardman, 'The medieval question of women and orders', 596, citing Raming, The exclusion of women, 81-2.
18 I am grateful to Katherine Jansen for this reference, which appeared (with an illustration) in the draft of her article, 'Maria Magdalena', but was not included in the published version.
19 Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 72. The image is reproduced by Enrico Castelnuovo, 'Appunti per la storia della pitture gotica in Piemonte', Arte antica e moderna 13/16 (1961): 97-111, as figs. 33b and 34b.
the bas-reliefs on the Lazarus chapel altar made by Francesco Laurana for La Vielle Major in Marseilles in 1481 shows her preaching to the prince and his followers from a pulpit. Thus some disparity is clear between official doctrine and official, let alone popular, practice.

**Noli me tangere as a prohibition on ministry**

In the first chapter, comment was made on Ambrose's reading of Jesus' words to the Magdalen, 'Noli me tangere', which presented her as as the first recipient of resurrection preaching rather than its first witness. This strained prioritising of Pauline teaching is found repeated in twelfth-century scholasticism. In the *Glossa ordinaria* on the gospel according to John, which is thought to date back to the commentary of Anselm of Laon (d. 1117), the verse is interpreted in a mystic sense as meaning: 'Do not set your hand on those who are greater than you, but go to those who are more perfect, who may easily believe the resurrection. For it is not allowed for women to teach in church'. Peter Comestor (d. 1179) amplifies this in his gloss in a manner which completely denies Mary Magdalen's traditional role as witness:

... this is expressed in a moral sense, and the Lord speaks to the womanly sex saying, *Do not touch me*, that is do not presume to lay your hand on the greater sacraments or to announce anything in church but *Go to my brothers and tell them*, (that is) beg that they might announce, that *I ascend to the father*, that is relinquish administration of the sacraments and preaching to men as more perfect.

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20 Illustrated in Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', fig. 3.4.
21 The following references are all cited in Lauwers, 'Marie Madeleine', 244 n. 183.
22 Mystice, *Noli me tangere*. Noli manum maioribus adhibere, sed vade ad perfectiores qui facile resurrectionem credant. Mulieribus enim in ecclesia docere non permittitur. *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria* (Strasbourg, 1480/1; facsimile Brepols, 1992), vol. 4, 268.
23 ... exponitur etiam moraliter, et loquitur dominus ad muliebrem sexus, dicens *Noli me tangere*, id est maioribus sacramentis in ecclesia ne presumas manum apponere vel in ecclesia
This rendering is extraordinary in the way it 'translates' that by Go ... and tell Jesus actually meant 'Beg that they might announce'. Peter Cantor (d. 1197) combines the two previous readings in a more moderate form: 'Do not set your hand on the greater sacraments, that is of the church, but go to those who are more perfect who may easily believe and preach the resurrection. For it is not allowed for women to teach in church.'

Jacques de Vitry even adds this 'mystical' explanation of Jesus' words in a sermon for Easter Sunday after he has given the prevailing Gregorian interpretation that Jesus was not literally forbidding Mary Magdalen to touch him, and then he contradicts his own argument by conflating Matthew's account and telling how Jesus appeared to her and the other women a second time when they embraced his feet:

Indeed he did not simply prevent her touch, for he allowed himself to be touched by many sinners, but by this he implied that he wanted to be touched spiritually by faith so that he might be believed equal to the Father. (He said) Do not touch me as if to say Rather touch me by believing in your heart than by handling me with your body. Indeed mystically he gave it to be understood that women ought not to lay hands on the greater ministries of the church. For it is not allowed that they should preach or administer the sacraments. But when Mary Magdalen went to announce to the disciples what she had heard and seen, Jesus appeared again to her and to the other women who were with her, saying to them Hail, as it is told in Matthew. Indeed they approached and held his feet and worshipped him. And Jesus said to them Go, tell my brothers to go to Galilee where they will see me. Now therefore Mary Magdalen is not prevented from touching the Lord, because from these things which she heard and saw she now believed. Indeed the Lord said to them Hail, so that the first curse of Eve might be dissolved. For as he left the sealed

aliiquid adnunciare sed vade ad fratres meos et dic eis, supple ut ipsi annuncient, quia ascendoto ad patrem id est sacramentorum administrationem et predicationem viris quasi perfectioribus dimitte. Peter Comestor, Glossa in Glosa in loh. 20:17 from MS Paris Bibl. Nat. lat. 620, f. 267vb.


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tomb to reveal the glorification of the flesh, so he allowed his feet to be held and touched so that he might prove his flesh was real. Even by what he said *Tell my brothers*, he showed that he had taken on the same humanity again. ... So Mary Magdalen went with the others and announced to the disciples that 'I have seen the Lord and he said these things to me'. As a woman related the death-bringing words of the serpent, so now a woman announced the words of the life-giver. Thence guilt is cut off whence it arose. A woman gave death to a man to drink, but a woman announces life to men. 25

Here he does not seem to perceive either that the two readings seem to contradict each other, or the danger of his argument that if Jesus said 'Do not touch me' but allowed himself to be touched, the mystical sense actually might allow women to preach and administer the sacraments.

Jacques de Vitry's use of this mystical interpretation is in any case undermined by an incident which he relates in his *Life of Mary of Oignies*. He describes how one of Mary's 'familiers' (and it is thought that he is speaking from his own experience) sought to take her hand but heard a voice from heaven which

25 Non autem simpliciter a tactu prohibuit, quia a multis peccatoribus se tangi permisit, sed per hoc innuebat, quod spiritualiter per fidem tangi se volebat, ut crederetur aequalis patri. *Noli me tangere*, quasi dicat: Potius tange me corde credendo, quam corpore palpando. Mystice autem per hoc intelligi dedit quod mulieres maioribus ecclesiae ministeris manum apponere non debent. Non enim licet eis praedicare vel sacramenta ministrare. Cum autem iret Maria Magdalene nuntiare discipulis, quae audierat et viderit, iterum apparuit ei Iesus, et aliis mulieribus, quae cum illa erant, dicens eis: Avete, sicut dicitur in Matthaeo. Illae autem accesserunt et tenuerunt pedes eius, et adoraverunt eum. Et ait illis Iesus: Ite nuntiate fratribus meis, ut eant in Galilaeam, ibi me videbunt. Nunc igitur Maria Magdalene non est prohibita a contactu Domini, quia ex his, quae audierat et viderat, iam credebat. Dixit autem illis dominus: Avete, ut in mulieribus primum solveretur maledictum Evae. Sicut autem de sepulchro clauso exit, ut carnis glorificationem ostenderet, ita pedes suos teneri et palpari permisit, ut veram carmen comprobaret. Per hoc etiam quod ait: Nuntiate fratribus meis, eandem humanitatem se resumpsisse ostendit... Venit ergo Maria Magdalene cum aliis annuntiantis discipulis, quia vidi Dominum et haec dixit mihi. Sic mulier mortifera serpentes verba narravit, ita nunc mulier verba vivificatoris nunciavit. Inde culpa absconditur unde processit. Mulier mortem viro propinavit, modo vitam nunciat viris. Jacques de Vitry, *Sermo In die sancto Paschae* (= RLS 84) in *Sermones de tempore*, ed. Anvers (Antwerp, 1575), 386. He leaves the text of Mk. 16:1-7 to comment on Jn. 20:11-18 (proper for Easter Thursday or perhaps the Magdalen's feast day) with reference to Mt. 28:9-10.
warned *Noli tangere me*. He explains that God wanted to preserve the chastity of his *amica* and so averted her familiar from imminent danger.²⁶ The implications of this episode are striking in that here Mary is cast in the role of Christ by the heavenly voice as it refers to her in the first person, and thus de Vitry is seen as the Magdalen who is warned not to lay hands on (her) teacher in a physical sense. Yet he clearly does not apply the mystical interpretation to himself, as he is an established preacher and minister of the sacraments.²⁷

**Heresy and preaching by women**

In part, this growing insistence by jurists and scholastics on prohibiting women from preaching must be seen as a reaction. It has been suggested that the legendary details of Mary Magdalen's apostolate reflected contemporary interest in the *vita apostolica*, and it is clear that such interest resulted in some groups seeking to imitate the apostles and claiming the right to preach without official sanction from the church. Inevitably, many of these groups were considered heretical, often for this claim alone but sometimes also on the basis of more demonstrably heterodox beliefs. One of the distinctive features of some groups, especially the Waldensians and Cathars and later the Lollards, was that they considered that women might validly preach. While it is difficult to tell whether this understanding was influenced by the growing orthodox acceptance of the role of the Magdalen as a preacher, certain links between these groups and the tradition concerning Mary Magdalen can be drawn.

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²⁷ But see below, chapter 5, for the way in which Mary achieved a preaching role indirectly through de Vitry.
Part of the scandal caused from the start by Waldes and his followers was not just that they prepared vernacular translations of Scripture for their own use and preached without authority, but that they also allowed women to preach.\textsuperscript{28} Joachim of Fiore, writing between 1190 and 1200, approves of the papal bull \textit{Ad abolendam} issued by Lucius III in 1184, which likened all preaching without authorisation to heresy.\textsuperscript{29} He considers that women were among those thus condemned:

\begin{quote}
Rightly does the church anathematise the heretics of Lyons, who, men and even women, without learning, without grace, without office, casually and flagrantly adulterate rather than proclaim the word of God, and under a guise of sanctity build a conventicle of Satan! \textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

A contemporary, Alan of Lille, deals with the Waldensians in the second of his four books on heretics and enlarges on the dangers of men and women preaching in contradiction of the Pauline proscription:

\begin{quote}
If it is dangerous for the wise and holy to preach, it is extremely dangerous for the foolish, who do not know what to preach, to whom to preach, how to preach, when to preach or where to preach. They even go against the Apostle in that they take little ladies (\textit{mulierculas}) with them, and make them preach in gatherings of the faithful, since the Apostle says
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{28} Some recent scholarship is cautious about the extent of Waldensian and Cathar women's active participation; see Blamires, 'Women and preaching', 135, esp. n. 2. Peter Biller has demonstrated, however, how Waldensian sisters are described as teaching and preaching in the records of early Waldensian trials in France, thus confirming these early literary references; P.P.A. Biller, 'Medieval Waldensian abhorrence of killing pre-1400', \textit{Studies in Church History} 20 (1983): 138 esp. n. 48. That Waldensians did consider women as teachers is also shown by the recantation in the \textit{propositum} of Bernard Prim in 1210: ... illud inficiantes omnino quod videlicet mulieribus Evangelium in Ecclesia licitum esse docere... . Innocent III, \textit{Regesta} 13.94 (PL 216:292).

\textsuperscript{29} ... omnes, qui vel prohibiti, vel non missi ... publice vel privativum praedicare praesumpserint ... haereticos iudicareuerint, pari vinculo perpetui anathematis innodamus. Lucius III, \textit{Epistolae et Privilegia} 171 (PL 201:1298).

\textsuperscript{30} Merito anathematizat ecclesia lugdunenses hereticos, qui indifferenter et indiscrete, tam viri quam mulieres, sine doctrina, sine gratia, sine ordine, non tam annuntiant quam adulterant verbum Dei, et in specie sanctitatis faciunt conventicula sathanel Joachim of Fiore, \textit{De articulis fidei}, ed. E. Buonaiuti in \textit{Fonti per la Storia d'Italia} (Rome, 1936), 78.
women should keep silence in the churches.\textsuperscript{31}

The Dominican Stephen of Bourbon, writing in the mid-thirteenth century, is particularly critical of the early Waldensian men and women who preached:

Preaching in the streets and in the broad ways (Cant. 3:2) the gospels and those things that he (Waldes) had learned by heart, he drew to himself many men and women that they might do the same, and he strengthened them in the gospel. He also sent out persons even of the basest occupations to preach in the nearby villages. Men and women alike, stupid and uneducated, they wandered through the villages, entered homes, preached in the squares and even in the churches, and induced others to do likewise.\textsuperscript{32}

The Premonstratensian Bernard of Fontcaude, who similarly criticizes the Waldensians for allowing lay people to preach on the basis of Christ's command to the apostles, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature' (Mk. 16:15), devotes a whole chapter of his tract against the heresy to countering the suggestion that women also may teach and preach.\textsuperscript{33} As one of his arguments he denies that there is any gospel precedent for women preaching:

'Besides, it is not read that the glorious Mother of God and Virgin who is shown as "keeping all these things and pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19) preached; neither Mary Magdalen nor any other of the women who followed the Lord.'\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Si sapientibus et sanctis periculosum est praedicare, periculosissimum est idiotis, qui nesciunt quod praedicandum, quibus praedicandum, quomodo praedicandum, quando praedicandum, ubi praedicandum. Ipsi etiam obviant Apostolo, in hoc quod mulierculas secum ducunt et eas in conventu fidelium praedicare faciunt, cum Apostolus dicat I Cor 14; I Tim 2. Alan of Lille, De Fide Catholica Contra Hereticos Libri Quatuor 2.1 (PL 210:379).


\textsuperscript{33} Praeterea errores jam dictos, graviter errant; quia feminas, quas suo consortio admittunt, docere permittunt, cum hoc sit apostolicae doctrinae contrarium. ... Bernard of Fontcaude, Adversus Waldensium Sectam 8 (PL 204:825-828).

\textsuperscript{34} Praeterea gloriosa Dei Mater et Virgo, quae 'conservabat omnia verba' sibi ostensa, 'conferens in corde suo' (Lk 2), non legitur praedicasse. Sed nec Maria Magdalena, aut aliquia de
This is the earliest surviving indication that the Waldensians might have based their practice of allowing women to preach on the model of Mary Magdalen as a biblical exemplar. Although Alcuin Blamires is cautious in his comments on this passage,\(^{35}\) it is probable that this appeal to gospel precedent derived from a genuine Waldensian claim. Bernard was unarguably in a position to know of such claims, since in about 1190 a public debate, called by the archbishop of Narbonne and attended by many clerics, had taken place between Waldensian and Catholic representatives in or near Narbonne, to the south of Fontcaude. He himself says that his tract describes 'the texts and arguments by which they (the Waldensians) defended their stand and the reply to them by us Catholics, with the scriptural texts by which the Catholic faith was defended'.\(^{36}\) In the thirteenth century the Dominican inquisitor Moneta of Cremona in his *Summae Adversus Catharos et Valdenses* (c. 1241) explicitly states that the Waldensians claimed the Magdalen's role as witness was a precedent for women to preach (and at the start of his treatise he has declared that the *argumenta* and *responsiones* he relates come both from the heretics' writings and *ex ore eorum*).\(^{37}\) First he

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\(^{35}\) Blamires, 'Women and preaching', 143 n. 36: 'From the calm tone of this statement it seems unlikely that the Waldensians had themselves been citing Mary Magdalene as a model'. Yet Blamires has already stated (138-9) that 'much of this treatise is taken up with representative samples of Waldensian arguments justifying their policy on preaching...' and that Bernard's treatise 'identified the biblical passage about Anna the "prophetess" ... as one which the heretics used in defence of women's preaching.' Blamires does not appear to know of Moneta of Cremona's comments (below).


maintains that while the office of preaching is not for all men, it is completely prohibited to women, and interprets I Cor. 14:34 as literally forbidding preaching. Concerning the pronouncement of I Tim. 2:12, he goes on:

The Waldensians go against this precept of the apostle, for their women preach in church, if their congregation should be called a church, which it truly is not. To this they say that Christ sent Mary Magdalen to preach, saying (Jn. 20:17) Go to my brothers and tell them ... Mary Magdalen went and announced to the disciples that I have seen the Lord. But this must ascribe poor intelligence to the heretics (who say) from this that he sent her to preach; for what the Evangelist says is that she did not preach but rather she is said to have announced to the disciples. Surely whenever some woman is sent to announce something good to someone we do not have to say that she preached to him? No.

Although no extant Waldensian text actually cites the Magdalen as a model for women preachers, it seems unthinkable that two churchmen could intentionally supply the heretics with an argument they had not actually used, particularly as the refutations they attempt are tenuous. Traditional authorities in the church since the time of Jerome, as has been demonstrated, had described the Magdalen fulfilling her commission from the risen Christ by literally...

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38 Adhuc scien dum quod sicut officium praedicationis non est universale viris, ita etiam ex toto prohibitur foeminis; unde I Cor 14:34 Mulieres in Ecclesiis taceant, non enim permittitur eis loqui id est praedicare. Ibid., 5.5.8.

39 Contra hoc praecptum Apostoli veniunt Val denses: Mulieres enim eorum praedicant in Ecclesia; si tamen Ecclesia debet dici eorum congregatio, quod verum non est. Ad hoc autem dixerunt, quod Christus Mariam Magdalenam misit praedicare dicens Jn. 20:17 Vade autem ad frates meos et dic eis... Venit Maria Magdalene annuncians discipulis: Quia vidi Dominum. Sed pravae intelligentiae haeretici est adscribendum, quod ex hoc miserit eam ad praedicandum; non enim praedicasse, sed tantum nuntiasse dicitur discipulis, id quod Evangelista dicit. Nunc quid quandocumque aliqua mulier mittatur aliquod bonum nuntiare aliqui, debet dici praedicare ei? Non. Ibid.

Evidence from the later Middle Ages confirms that Mary Magdalen was a figure of interest and importance to the Waldensians, even if it does not present her explicitly as a preacher. Euan Cameron has shown that several witnesses in the trials of the late fifteenth century thought that saints ought to be venerated and honoured, despite the strictly biblical basis of the Waldensians' beliefs. A Waldensian manuscript of this period, containing writings in a southern French dialect to do with preaching and hearing confessions, has an index to 'parables' at the end where the section de Magdalena contains many gospel references (including Luke 10 and John 11) showing that the conflated 'Gregorian' figure was accepted, and additions have been made in a different ink which indicate the interest in her that the book's owner felt. In an earlier passage dealing with virtues and vices, Mary Magdalen is described as having had seven demons cast out of her, which are taken to represent the seven deadly sins as in catholic

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41 Bernard of Fontcaude does not specifically say that he is referring only to the Gospel when he states, 'It is not read that ... Mary Magdalen preached'. By the 1190s it was patently untrue to say this without such a qualification.

42 Peter Biller, 'Medieval Waldensian abhorrence of killing', 129, notes the general persistence of Waldensian beliefs 'during the later centuries of an underground and only slowly changing movement', so it does not seem inappropriate to adduce this later evidence.

43 Euan Cameron, The Reformation of the Heretics: the Waldenses of the Alps 1480-1580 (Oxford, 1984), 71. Jame Bérard of l'Argentière thought saints were to be 'venerated as holy martyrs and confessors and should be prayed to' though God alone was to be worshipped. Others believed variously that 'saints should be venerated though they did not hear prayers'; saints and the Virgin were not to be honoured but should not be despised; a special status was due to the Virgin; and one believed in saints Peter, Gregory, Silvester and John but not Paul, thus blurring any simple distinction between scriptural and non-scriptural figures.

44 CUL MS Dd xv 29 entitled 'Vaudois MS'; f. 223v-225v. On this manuscript as representative of the distinctive 'little books' carried by Waldensian preaching brothers, see Peter Biller, 'Multum ieiunantes et se castigantes: Medieval Waldensian Asceticism', Studies in Church History 22 (1985), 215-228, esp. 222.
The most interesting passage, however, comes from a tract on preaching itself, entitled *De la parola de dio*, in which the Magdalen is presented as an example of the power of preaching:

> With that (preaching) sinners are made the friends of God: thus the Magdalen, in whom countless evil acts are repudiated, homicide, fornication, betrayal and hatred. What keeps God's people in their faith if it be not preaching? How can they hear the Word if it is done without faith?...\(^{46}\)

While the Magdalen is not said to have preached herself, her sins that are said to have been remitted by the power of preaching include betrayal and hatred, which appear to allude to the medieval legend of her betrothal to John the Evangelist.\(^{47}\) They also include even murder, for which no clear traditional legendary basis is apparent. It would seem, therefore, that some particular Waldensian legend about the Magdalen had evolved and was in circulation to which this detail specifically refers. Such a tantalising insight is particularly intriguing given the noted abhorrence of killing and murder on the part of the Waldensians.\(^{48}\)

Another Waldensian text of the fifteenth century which has interesting implications for this investigation is an exposition of the Song of Songs exalting the ascetic life. The commentary on 'Upon my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves' (Cant. 3:1),\(^{49}\) refers to Mary Magdalen and Cornelius and other

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\(^{45}\) CUL MS Dd xv 29, f. 105v.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., f. 94r. I am grateful to Professor Peter Rickard for confirming the translation.


\(^{48}\) As discussed by Biller, 'Medieval Waldensian abhorrence of killing'.

\(^{49}\) The passage, Cant. 3:1-5, was traditionally read in the catholic Church as the epistle for the feast of Mary Magdalen.
repentant sinners:

If Mary Magdalen and Cornelius and the other pagans and all penitents were not previously provided for through the disposition of God, then they would not seek the Beloved upon (their) bed, that is in their heart. ... For the angels found Mary as she sought her Beloved in the tomb...

Mary and Martha are referred to in the commentary on a subsequent verse, 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, ... that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please' (Cant. 3:5):

Hence, whoever is weighed down by unnecessary and superfluous things, will be roused by the daughters of Jerusalem. Mary, hearing the Word at the Lord's feet, sleeps in the wilderness of bliss. But the anxious Martha wished to wake her. But the angels or the apostles or the holy preachers or any others who rejoice over the salvation of the church, when they see her ascending through this blissful wilderness, say joyfully: (v. 6) Who is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the (fragrant) powders of the merchant?

Although nothing in this enigmatic passage proves concretely that the writer was familiar with the Magdalen's preaching legend, resonances from the eremitic legend are striking, and in the later Middle Ages the two were usually interwoven, with her retreat invariably set in Provence following on from her active life. Women, the 'daughters of Jerusalem', are said to be able to turn people actively from their earthly cares, which leads on immediately to thoughts

50 Wenn Maria Magdalena und Cornelius und die anderen Heiden und alle Bußfertigen nicht zuvor versehen wären durch die Anordnung Gottes, so würden sie den Geliebten nicht suchen im Bett das heißt in ihrem Gemüthe. ... Denn die Engel fanden Maria, wie sie den Geliebten im Grabe suchte.... J. J. Herzog, 'Cantica oder waldensische Übersetzung und Auslegung des Hohen Liedes, nach einer Handschrift auf der öffentlichen Bibliothek in Gens', Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie 31 (1861), 479-600, 507-8.

of Mary listening to the Word. Her 'wilderness of bliss' cannot help but recall her thirty years in the desert, and her ascent from it would rightly be hailed by the angels who bore her, the priest who witnessed her being lifted up, or any who proclaim the divine favour thus shown to her as she fulfils the expectations of those apostles and holy preachers who 'rejoice over the salvation of the church'. It is clear at least from these texts that the Magdalen was a figure of interest to the Waldensians, and they were familiar with some form of the legendary tradition.

The origins of Catharism are to be found earlier than Waldensianism, yet it persisted longer and grew until it 'appeared to be the most powerful heresy of the thirteenth century'. As with the Waldensians, an active role was allowed to women, and perfectae existed alongside the perfecti who could preach. As with the Waldensians also, it is difficult to gauge the Cathar attitude to a biblical saint like the Magdalen, and it is only circumstantial evidence which seems to indicate that she was of significance to the sect. A Catholic account of Cathar doctrine from the early thirteenth century describe the Cathars teaching 'that Christ was the husband of Mary Magdalen. To show this they explain that he was alone with her three times: in the temple, in the garden, and at the well'.

Lapidary reasoning is clarified by a similar and probably related text:

She was the Samaritan woman to whom he said 'Call thy husband'. She was the woman taken in adultery whom Christ set free lest the Jews stone her, and she was with him in three places, in the temple, at the well, and in the garden. After the resurrection he appeared first to her. 55

While the conflation may seem somewhat bizarre (not least that it implies Jesus was the husband wronged by the act of adultery), it does provide a plausible explanation for Jesus' behaviour which would have otherwise outraged Jewish sensibilities in being alone in female company. 56 That the Magdalen was literally Jesus' wife seems hard to equate with the Cathar conception of Christ as spirit with only a phantom body and their complete rejection of the flesh and sex in general, 57 but it seems likely that such a statement might derive from a genuine Cathar belief about the Magdalen's privileged position among Jesus' followers along the lines of the Gnostic view of her as a 'beloved disciple' whom he 'kissed often on the mouth'. 58 Such a belief would have probably been corrupted in retelling by orthodox prejudice about the sect and its illicit activities, a fact clearly shown by the monk Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay who wrote an account of the

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56 For further suggestions about the significance of the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalen see, for example, John Shelby Spong, Born of a Woman: a bishop rethinksh the birth of Jesus (San Francisco, 1992), 187-99.

57 Lambert, Medieval Heresy, 107-11.

Albigensian crusade and describes the Cathars 'saying in their secret (meetings) ... that Mary Magdalene was (Christ's) concubine and she was the woman caught in adultery about whom the gospel tells.\(^{59}\) This pejorative interpretation of Cathar views, claiming that the Magdalen was perceived to be Jesus' concubine rather than his wife (effectively implying that Jesus was guilty of adultery himself), was argued by the monk Peter as a reason why the worst massacre in the sack of the city of Béziers at the start of the crusade in 1209 took place on the Magdalen's feast day in the church dedicated to her:

The aforementioned city was taken on the feast of saint Mary Magdalen. O most just measure of God's disposition! As at the beginning of this book I said that the heretics say that blessed Mary Magdalen was Christ's concubine; besides in her church in the city, as I mentioned above, the citizens of Béziers (had) killed their lord and broke the teeth of their bishop; so rightely were they taken and destroyed on the feast of her about whom they had spoken so much slander ... and in her church ... on her (feast) day when the city was taken up to seven thousand of these people of Béziers were slaughtered.\(^{60}\)

The indiscriminate slaughter of the citizens of Béziers who had not left the city earlier with their bishop raises many questions about the conduct of the crusaders and the apparent lack of distinction between catholic and heretic. Peter's account, like that of the legates who made an official report to Innocent III, says that the citizens refused to repudiate the heretics who lived among


\(^{60}\) Fuit autem capta civitas sepedicta in festo sancte Marie Magdalene. O iustissima Divinæ dispositionis mensura! Sicut in principio libri huius diximus, dicebant heretici beatam Mariam Magdalenamuisse Christi concubinam: preterea in ecclesia ipsius, que erat in civitate, sicut supra tetigimus, cives Biterrenses dominum suum occiderant, episcopo suo dentes confrerent: merito igitur in illius festivitate capti sunt et destructi, de qua tot contumeliosae dixerant, cuius etiam ecclesiam sanguine domini sui, vicecomitis videlicet, necnon et episcopi fedaverant canes impudentissimi; in eadem etiam ecclesia, in qua, sicut sepe dictum est, dominum suum occiderant cives Biterrenses, in ipsa die captionis civitatis fuerunt usque ad septem milia de ipsis Biterrensibus interfecti. Ibid., vol. 3.91, 91-2 (PL 213:566-7).
them. The bishop's predecessor had been relieved of office for not denouncing the heretics in the city, and this together with the citizens' similar refusal in 1209 suggests an interesting dynamic of solidarity between catholic and Cathar. It does not seem merely coincidental that a list drawn up by bishop Reynaud in 1209, naming some 222 people (including women) as members of the sect, indicates that greatest proportion of adherents lived in that area around the Magdalen church, the bourg de la Madeleine in which the greatest number of people were killed. This rather seems to imply that the inhabitants of this region of the city were united in their resistance in part by devotion to the Magdalen as a patron. Nothing more than conjecture can perhaps be advanced.

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61 ...imo super defendenda civitate contra signatos cum ipsis haereticis iuramento interposito convenerunt. Innocent III, Regesta 12.108 (PL 216:139).


63 The list, mentioned in the Hystoria (vol. 3.89, 90), has been edited by L. Domairon, 'Rôle des heretiques de la ville de Béziers à l'époque du désastre de 1209', Cabinet historique 1 (1863): 95-103, who suggests that the number of people named reflects a total of perhaps a thousand heretics in the city altogether. Pierre Belperron, La Croisade contre les Albigeois et l'union de Languedoc à la France (Paris, 1948), 163, assumes similarly that the list just names the perfecti and perfectae. The official figure for the total number killed in the city is given as twenty thousand including seven thousand in the Magdalen church, although Belperron, 165-7, discusses the plausibility of these figures.

64 Another implication is perhaps that the crusaders were acting on information of the sort provided by the bishop's list and knew where the heretics (and their sympathisers) were to be found, which would belie the official story that the ribaldi accompanying the crusade started sacking the town, killing people and setting buildings alight before the knights could intervene and control them. Alternatively one must question whether the date of the attack was deliberately chosen since many of the people of Béziers would be keeping the festival of one of their patron saints. The Magdalen's prayers would have been especially fervently invoked on her feast day as the crusaders had just arrived to besiege the city, and it was thought that the city would withstand a long siege (PL 216:139), so the citizens may well have gone to hear mass and pray to the saint especially in her church. The ringing of the church bells in the city, described twice in the provençal Chanson de la croisade as occurring during the sack, could in fact have been a cue for the crusaders' assault when the people were congregating in church like good catholics! See La Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise by Guillem de Tudela, ed. Eugène
here, but it seems that more lies behind the details of the massacre in Béziers than the official reports wished to convey, with specific implications for the cult of the Magdalen by the Cathars.

Thus, while there is no sure evidence for either the Waldensians or the Cathars of familiarity with the legends about Mary Magdalen as preacher, in both cases the Magdalen is seen as a significant figure to these movements by their Catholic critics. It is highly unlikely, given the heterodox preaching tendency of each group, that a possible model would have been adduced for these claims by their detractors, unless it had some foundation. Although the evidence, therefore, is inconclusive it is still definitely suggestive.

The issue of lay preaching

Official ecclesiastical opinion in the late twelfth century was divided about the validity of preaching by lay persons in general. The writers of tracts to counter heresy, such as Bernard of Fontcaude and Alan of Lille, were particularly intolerant of those who sought to preach without qualification or clerical authority. Bernard gave no quarter to the Waldensians since he augmented the conditions necessary for a person to be equipped to even 'exhort their neighbour' let alone preach: knowledge, virtue, celibacy, mission, detachment from world. Alan of Lille goes even futher, condemning the followers of

Martin Chabot (Paris, 1931), vol. 1, 54-7. One of these references is admittedly to the cathedral church where the priests and clerics are said to have vested and rung the bells as if for a mass de mortuorum. It does indicate, however, that some sort of liturgical celebration was indeed going on during the sack.

65 See especially Philippe Buc, 'Vox clamantis'.
66 R. Zerfass, Der Streit um die Laienpredigt (Fribourg/Bâle/Vienne, 1974), 32-40, cited in Buc, 'Vox clamantis', 10 n.16.
Waldes, who was:

led by his own spirit and not sent by God... so that without authority from a prelate, without divine inspiration, without learning, without reading he presumed to preach. A philosopher without reason, a prophet without vision, an apostle without mission, a teacher without an instructor, whose disciples, or rather 'mouse-cipes' presume to preach rather to satisfy the belly than the mind....

By contrast, scholastics like Peter Cantor (who taught Innocent III) and Huguccio clearly considered that there was a case for lay preaching, although their arguments only instance men validly taking this role. Even Gratian had allowed that a person could teach on the basis of divine inspiration: 'Nor should someone assume for themselves the office of teaching without clerical authority, unless perhaps prompted inwardly by divine grace'. Peter refutes the argument put forward by Bernard and Alan that those whose mission is from God alone and not from a human authority should be able to prove their divine legitimacy by working miracles, citing Herod's expectation that Jesus would perform some sign after his arrest (Lk. 23:8), and asserting (as Peter Comestor had done) that miracles and martyrdom characterised apostolic times and the infancy of the church and should no longer be necessary. Peter even contradicts the usual interpretation of Paul's question 'How shall they preach unless they are sent?'

67 Hi Waldenses dicuntur, a suo haeresiarcha, qui vocabatur Waldus, qui suo spiritu ductus, non a Deo missus, novam sectam invenit, scilicet ut sine praelati auctoritate, sine divina inspiratione, sine scientia, sine litteratura praedicare praesumeret. Sine ratione philosophus, sine visione propheta, sine missione apostolus, sine instructore didascalus, cujus discipuli, imo, muscipuli, per diversas mundi partes, simplices seducunt, a vero avertunt, non ad verum convertunt. Qui potius ut satient ventrem quam mentem, praedicare praesumunt.... Alan of Lille, Contra Hereticos 2.1 (PL 210:377).

68 Nec officium docendi sibi assumere liceat sine auctoritate clericorum, nisi forte divina gratia intus commoniti.... Decretum, part 2, ch. 16, q. 1, d. 40; Friedberg 1.773. Gratian cites the case of the abbot Equitius, commissioned to preach by angels in a dream, despite the fact that, as Peter Cantor was to point out, the pope had forbidden him to preach since he was simple and ill-educated; Buc, 'Vox clamantis', 12.

69 Buc, 'Vox clamantis', 12 n. 24.
(Romans 10:15), which was thought to show that legitimate mission came from a bishop alone. He demonstrates from John 1:6 that John the Baptist was 'sent by God' not by man, and he asks with particular reference to the verse from the letter to the Romans:

But by whom was Paul sent? Immediately after his conversion he preached without being sent by the apostles. Similarly I believe that anyone ought to preach if he sees his brother falling into sin, but not in church unless he has the permission of the bishop or priests. It is sufficient for someone to be sent by the Holy Spirit, and not by a person nor any other authority. It is said that one should not preach unless sent by a person; shall I never give alms to the poor unless sent? Yet preaching is a work of alms-giving and so the gospel is preached by many (without mission). 70

In the later twelfth century, however, the challenge facing ecclesiastical authority in dealing with the many semi-religious groups emerging at the time which were not overtly heretical, made it critical to make practical distinctions about who could preach, publicly or privately. Inevitably Peter Cantor's wide theoretical arguments in favour of lay preaching had to be modified, but his influence seems clear in the official acceptance of some forms of lay public speaking which emerged. The Waldensians had been anathematised for their preaching pretensions in 1184, but by 1199 a less severe approach had been adopted under Innocent III, and Michel Lauwers suggests that a distinction was wrought during

70 Sed a quo mittebatur Paulus? Statim post conversionem sine missione apostolorum predicavit. Similiter credo quod quilibet predicare debet si fratrem viderit deliquentem, sed non in ecclesia nisi cum permissione episcopi vel sacerdotis. Sufficient si quis mittitur a Spiritu sancto, licet non ab homine, nec aliqua auctoritate. Exprimitur quod non predict quis nisi missus ab homine. Nunquid non dabo elemosinam pauperi nisi missus? Predicare autem opus elemosinarium est, quasi, multis predicatum est evangelium. Peter Cantor, In Rom. 10:15 (Paris Bibl. Mazarine 176, f.172vb), edited by Buc, 'Vox clamantis', 36-7. Buc, 13, makes the interesting suggestion that Paul's progress, from preaching outside the confines of the early church to being reconciled and receiving permission from the first apostles, resembles those in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century of the Poor Catholics under Durand de Huesca, the Humiliati under Bernard Prim and St Francis himself, initially commissioned by God and then by the papal successors of the apostles.
this period between official preaching (*praedicatio*) which was reserved to the clergy, and unofficial exhortation (*exortatio*) which was allowed to lay people.\(^7\) Thus Innocent III expresses concern about the group of lay women and men in Metz who threatened to usurp the 'officium praedicationis' with their vernacular translation of scripture about which they preached to each other (*sibi invicem praedicare*), yet he does not condemn their *studium adhortandi* nor their *desiderium intelligendi divinas scripturas*.\(^7\) In 1201, the pope approved the *propositum* of the Humiliati which allowed them to address a *verbum exhortationis* to those who came to hear them. Again in 1208 he instructed prelates to give Durand of Osca and the Poor Catholic group a *licentia exhortandi* to address people at appropriate times and places, and similarly in 1210-12 allowed a *licentia exhortandi* to Bernard Prim and certain of his followers. In 1212 a penitential group which included both men and women, directed by the Poor Catholics in the diocese of Elne, was given the right by the pope to gather on Sundays to hear the *verbum exhortationis* given by one of their number.\(^7\) In 1216, at the urging of Jacques de Vitry, Innocent also gave approval for women in beguine communities to practise mutual exhortation: *sese invicem mutuis exhortationibus ad bonum invitare*.\(^7\)

Lauwers argues that this distinction between preaching and exhortation was critical in the acceptance and acceptability of the legends which presented the Magdalen preaching as a lay woman. He cites the sermon by Jacques de Vitry which uses the 'correct' terminology, describing how the Magdalen converted many in 'Aquitania' (*sic*) with 'words of exhortation, signs and miracles, and the

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\(^7\) Lauwers, 'Marie Madeleine', esp. 241-50.
\(^7\) Innocent III, *Regesta* 2.151 (*PL* 214:695-7).
\(^7\) Lauwers, 'Marie Madeleine', 246 n. 193, citing Renard, *La Formation*, 49-53, with whom, however, he differs as to some dates.
holy example of her behaviour'. However, Lauwers can adduce no further literary examples in which the Magdalen's preaching ministry was restricted to mere exhortation, and though he suggests that some iconographical representations might be intended to show the Magdalen exhorting her audience rather than preaching, he recognises that the distinction does not help explain away certain 'représentations particulièrement audacieuses' where the Magdalen is clearly preaching. His thesis is not ultimately convincing given the very widespread proliferation of the 'audacious representations' in legend and art in which she is explicitly, and repeatedly, described and depicted as preaching.

Even if ordinary women were not allowed official roles as preachers and teachers, by the late twelfth and early thirteenth century their moral influence and domestic authority were widely recognised. Bernard of Fontcaude admits

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75 ... Et inde in Aquitanie partes transiens, postquam verbis exhortacionis, signis et miraculis et exemplo sancte conversacionis multos ad Dominum convertit.... Jacques de Vitry, *Sermo in festo Marie Magdalene* (RLS 223), edited by Lauwers, 'Marie Madeleine', 260-61. de Vitry later makes use of the 'Gregorian' interpretation of the Magdalen's anointing of Christ: Caput igitur ungimus, dum potenciam divinitatis eius predicamus... Pedes ungimus, dum eius humanitatem predicando manifestamus. See above, pages 45-7.

76 Lauwers, 'Marie Madeleine', 250 and n. 211, also himself admits that the notion of *exhortatio* perhaps brought a solution more imaginary than concrete to real problems.

77 Something like Lauwers' distinction may possibly be implied by the early *Vita Omnipotentis* if one interprets the Magdalen's intention 'to sow the grace of God's word to the people' as a type of private exhortation in contrast to the public preaching of the *sermo divinus* which she leaves to Lazarus.

78 See, for example, Eleanor McLaughlin, 'Equality of souls, inequality of sexes: women in medieval theology', in Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed.), *Religion and Sexism: images of women in the Jewish and Christian tradition* (New York, 1974), 222-35; Sharon Farmer, 'Persuasive voices'. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: essays on gender and the human body in medieval religion* (New York, 1991), 73, also notes the great extent to which women were attributed force and importance as moral teachers both in family and in public. Didactic handbooks of the later Middle Ages addressed to women witness to the fact that they were perceived to play an important educational role as mothers, especially in religious instruction. Nicole Bériou, however, sounds a note of caution with her nuanced reading of the thirteenth century debate: 'The right of women to give religious instruction in the thirteenth
this even as he tries to refute the Waldensian argument for women preachers, and Joachim of Flora, while mentioning the Pauline proscriptions, states that, 'it is clear that all women have the right to speak to the good'. Parisian sermons of the thirteenth century often encouraged women to repeat the preaching they had heard in church to their husbands and children at home. Thomas of Chobham, in his *Summa Confessorum* (c. 1215), carried this perception further and advanced the recommendation that confessors should persuade women to act as literal preachers (*predicatrices*) to their husband, since they can be more effective than any priest:

That women ought to be preachers to their husbands. In confession it must always be enjoined on women that they should be preachers to their husbands. For no priest is able to soften a man's heart like his wife is able. Hence a husband's sin is often imputed to the woman if through her negligence her husband is not corrected....

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79 Bernard of Fontcaude, *Adversus Waldensium Sectam* (PL 204:825-8; e.g. 827): ... non est idem praedicare et loqui.

80 ... quod autem omnibus quibus licet bona loqui non liceat sollempniter predicare, manifestum est quia mulieribus quibus licet bona loqui, secundum apostolum predicare in ecclesia aut docere non licet. Joachim of Flora, *De articulis fidei*, ed. Buonaiuti, 62.

81 Bériou, 'La Madeleine', 309 n. 134.

82 Quod mulieres debent esse predicatrices virorum suorum: Mulieribus tamen semper in penitentia iniuengendum est quod sint predicatrices virorum suorum. Nullus enim sacerdos ita potest cor viri emollire sicut potest uxor. Unde peccatum viri sepe mulieri imputatur si per eius neligentiam vir eius non emmendatur.... *Summa confessorum* 7.2.15, ed. F. Broomfield, 375; cited in Farmer, 'Persuasive voices', 517-8. Thomas, however, in his preaching manual *Summa de arte praedicandi* (between 1216 and 1221/2), ed. F. Morenzoni, 58, duly repeats the conflated Pauline injunction: 'mulieres autem in ecclesia docere non permetto, sed si quid ignorant domi viros suos interrogent'. Thomas allows that laymen can preach in their homes and privately elsewhere, to their families and neighbours, even repeating what they have heard well expressed by preachers to the extent of expounding sacred scripture in their recitation. He also says that 'abbesses and prioresses can in their chapters instruct their nuns and reprove vices. But they are not allowed to expound sacred Scripture in preaching. They can however read public lessons from the apostle's writing and from legends of the saints and even from the gospel at mattins'.

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79 Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley/London, 1998), 134-145.
80 B6riou, 'La Madeleine', 309 n. 134.
This example of a cleric exhorting women to be preachers, even in a domestic setting, despite the Pauline prescriptions which even 'permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man', demonstrates clearly the ecclesiastical environment in which it came about that the Magdalen's role as a preacher was not only excused but even rationalised.

The Magdalen's special privilege

By the thirteenth century, the tradition of the preaching legends about Mary Magdalen had become so widely established that few medieval writers tried to deny their veracity. Instead many sought to explain why she was able to preach as a woman despite the Pauline prohibitions.

Gauthier de Château-Thierry in his *De officio predicandi* (c. 1245) advances several arguments about the preaching of Mary Magdalen:

*The privilege of a few does not produce a common law. Or it should be said that she did not preach but was the herald of the resurrection of Christ.... Once the church was impoverished and was allowed to use the preaching and magisterium of virgins as in the time of Catherine [of Alexandria] and the Magdalen and Cecilia and Lucy and so on. Because of the necessities of faith and the building up of the church which was then in its infancy, women were able to do what they would not have been able to do if the church had been established as recently, and this because of the lack of preachers....*

Here three separate lines of defence are attempted. Firstly, a rationalisation is

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put forward, probably quoted from Ivo of Chartres' influential prologue to his Decretum and Panormia,\textsuperscript{84} that the Magdalen was the recipient of a special dispensation, a privilegium which (though conceded on at least four occasions) ought not to be regarded as a general rule. Then Gauthier suggests, like Bernard of Fontcaude, that as messenger of the resurrection the Magdalen had not actually preached, and he attempts to ignore the legendary tradition. Finally, and in apparent contradiction of his previous point, he admits that women in the early church had indeed preached and had even had formal teaching authority (magisterium) but this was due to exigency in the early church and the scarcity of male preachers.

The Franciscan Eustace of Arras considers at length the quodlibet question (c. 1263-6) of whether a woman who preaches and teaches merits being crowned with the golden aureola for preaching in the same way as a woman might be crowned with an aureola for virginity or for martyrdom.\textsuperscript{85} As an argument in favour of the proposition he cites the case of Deborah in Judges 4:4 and the gloss on the passage:

\textit{Fragility of sex does not hinder when accompanied by purity of life. So if a woman preaching like Mary Magdalen and blessed Catherine were to have purity of life, there is no hindrance if she preaches to her receiving the reward and aureola of preaching. Again the aureola does not depend


\textsuperscript{85} The Dominican Hugo Ripelin († c. 1268) sketches this scheme of threefold reward in his Compendium theologicae veritatis 7.28 (MS London BL Harley 3447, f. 124v.): Unde patet quod predicatioribus, virginibus, et martiribus debet aureola. ... Martires enim vincunt mundum, virgines carnem, predicatores diabolum quem non solum de se sed etiam eum expellunt de cordibus aliorum. Antonio Volpato, "Corona aurea" e "Corona aureola": ordini e meriti nella ecclesiologia medioevale', Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano 91 (1984): 126 and 155, traces the origin of the golden aureola for preachers to Bede's anagogical interpretation in De tabernaculo of the golden crown which surmounted the tabernacle (Ex. 25:24-5), and indicates Alan of Lille as the first scholar to distinguish the different honours for virgins, martyrs and preachers.
on the sort of person as it is for a work of privilege. But preaching is such a work and so an aureola is due to whatever sort of person performs it. Again a woman merits the aureola of virginity as far as it applies to (conquering) lust, the aureola of martyrdom as far as it applies to (conquering) anger, so if she preaches fruitfully, she merits the aureola of preaching as far as it applies to reasoning.⁸⁶

But despite his own argument that preaching is a task which any person with the privilege may perform, Eustace then bases his counter-arguments purely on the Pauline prohibitions on women because of their sex:

For the work of preaching to be duly fulfilled, the conferral of authority is required: (Rom. 10:15) How shall they preach unless they are sent? But this is not appropriate for women ... (I Cor. 14:34, I Tim. 2:12) ..., so a woman does not preach as a due, so the aureola is not due to her for preaching. Again (on I Cor 14) the gloss says: So they neither speak in tongues nor prophesy, for it is not permitted for them to speak in church on any authority. So they do ill by preaching. But nothing done ill merits the aureola, neither do women. ... Yet some say in this matter that if someone merits the aureola through preaching, that person ought to have authority; but women do not possess such authority in the church, and so if she preaches she does not receive the aureola for it is not part of the office of women, as the Apostle seems to say (Gloss on I Cor. 14) ... that it is contrary to ecclesiastical discipline that women preach or speak in church; because the gloss (on I Tim. 2) says that If a woman speaks, she provokes and is provoked to lust, so they are not entrusted with the authority and so not with the office.⁸⁷

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⁸⁶ Utrum mulier praedicando et docendo mereatur aureolam. Quod sic videtur Jud. 4:4 Erat autem Deborah etc. Glossa: Nihil impedit sexus fragilitas ubi suppetit vitae puritas. Si ergo in muliere praedicante sicut in beata Maria Magdalena et beata Catharina sit vitae puritas, nihil impedit quin habeat fructum et aureolam praedicationis, si praedicet. Item aureola non respicit conditionem personae, sicut si sit opus privilegiatum. Sed tale opus est praedicatio, ergo a quacumque persona exerceatur ei debetur aureola. Item mulier quantum ad concupiscibilem meretur aureolam virginitatis, quantum ad irascibilem meretur aureolam martyrii, ergo quantum ad rationalem, si praedicet fructuose, meretur aureolam praedicationis. Eustace of Arras, Quodlibet IIq5 (MSS Dôle 85, f. 72v-73, and Vat. Borgh. 139, f. 72); ed. Jean Leclerq, 'Le magistère du prédicateur au XIIIe siècle', Archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du Moyen Âge 15 (1946): 119-20; cited in Bériou, 301, n. 107. The Quaestio de aureola cited by Volpato, "Corona aurea" e "Corona aureola", 165 n. 173, clarifies Eustace's lust/anger/reasoning distinction: Meritum aureole determinatur secundum ... actum excellentissimum in utraque potentia... Sunt enim tres vires motive, rationalis, irascibilis, concupiscibilis....

⁸⁷ Ad oppositum: ad hoc quod opus praedicationis debito modo impleatur requiritur auctoritatis collatio Rom. 10:15 Quomodo praeedicabunt nisi mittantur? Sed hoc non convenit mulieribus .... Ergo mulier debito modo non prae dicat, non ergo debetur ei aurola pro praedicatione. Item ... dicit Glossa Ut nec loquentur linguis nec prophetent, non enim permittitur eis ab aliqua
So he rules out the positive arguments, since:

Those who say this reply to the first argument that the gloss is true insofar as it applies to merit in life and not to ecclesiastical office, and the office of preaching is of this type, due to the aforesaid reason and to the many dangers and evils which can follow thereon. This (also) resolves the second argument. As to the third, it should be said this is not a (proper) comparison, for neither virginity nor martyrdom confer office or authority on people or over people; so a woman can well win the aureola for these, but this is not the case for preaching.\[88\]

However Eustace goes on to instance the case of the Magdalen and Catherine of Alexandria as possible exceptions to the general rule:

Others, however, piously feel in respect of the praise and glory of the saints that holy women like blessed Mary Magdalen and blessed Catherine merited the aureola, since they were not sent by a person as by a prelate with power, but prompted by the Holy Spirit and sent by the Holy Spirit they preached, and the sign of this is that they converted many and important people to faith in Christ; and so it is piously believed that God does not take from them that which is conceded for the same act to others who may have been less worthy in life. But it must be said in objection to this that they had authority from the Holy Spirit prompting them and sending them specially, and this is evident in their office: for since faith was in jeopardy, they were sent by the Holy Spirit, and about what the Apostle said, it must be said that he spoke about married women because they are in the position of women in general, not about those who were extra-specially chosen and privileged, and the gloss is to be understood thus.\[89\]
So although he attributes it to the pious belief of others, Eustace admits that the case of the Magdalen is valid and even attributes to her *missio, auctoritas* and *officium*, and hence the golden aureola. In doing this he takes the logical but nevertheless extraordinary step of qualifying the Pauline injunction: since the Magdalen and Catherine (and any others who may have been chosen and privileged like them) have clearly been exempted, the apostle can only have been talking about married women! Unlike Gauthier, Eustace does not distinguish only virgins from those *in statu communi mulierum* but rather seems to make this necessary allowance for the Magdalen's ambiguous reputation. Nor does Eustace limit the incidence of this privilege to the early church, so consequently his argument leaves room for the possibility that a similar privilege to the Magdalen's could be granted to some elect women in any age.90

A similar allowance is also made by the Parisian master Henry of Ghent, onetime archdeacon of Tournay, who discusses Mary Magdalen's preaching privilege in his *Summae quaestionum*, a compilation of lectures dating from 1276 to 1292. As well as discussing the subject 'whether a woman can and should be a recipient of (religious) knowledge', he also questions 'whether a woman can be a doctor or *doctrix* of (religious) knowledge'.91 As the third of his arguments in favour of the

90 See further below, Chapter 4, on the aureola attributed to the Magdalen.

latter proposition he uses a quotation from 1 Peter 4:10:

As each one has received a gift to use for one another: but women sometimes receive the gift of this knowledge, and so they ought to use it for others, which they cannot do unless by teaching, and so ... Mary and Martha, since they received (the gift of) different tongues with the apostles, one reads that like the apostles they taught publicly and preached.\textsuperscript{92}

Henry here accepts without question the tradition which dates from the time of Ps-Rabanus that the Magdalen and Martha were present with the apostles at Pentecost and received the gift of tongues with them. He infers also from the Petrine epistle that 'if by a special grace it is given to a woman that she may preach publicly, then this is acceptable for her since ... grace does not respect the difference between the sexes'.\textsuperscript{93} Here he goes notably further than Aquinas, who may have been his model.\textsuperscript{94} For while Aquinas had suggested that: 'some women receive the grace of wisdom and knowledge, which they cannot administer to others except by the grace of speech. So the grace of speech befits women', he concluded that such grace should be administered according to its recipients different conditions in life; so 'women ... may administer it by means of private but not public teaching'.\textsuperscript{95} Henry does, however, imply that such


\textsuperscript{92} Unusquisque sicut accepit gratiam in alterutrum administrantes, sed mulieres quandoque gratiam scientie huius accipiunt, ergo alii debent administrare, quod non possunt facere nisi docendo, ergo etc, unde Maria et Martha cum apostolis genera linguarum acceperunt et publice sicut apostoli docuissent et praedicasset leguntur. Henry of Ghent, \textit{Summae} 1.11.2.3.

\textsuperscript{93} Unde etsi ex speciali gratia detur mulieri ut publice praedicet: hoc tunc licet ei quia gratia, ut dictum est, distinctionem sexuum non respicit. \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{94} Blamires, 'Women and preaching', 141.

\textsuperscript{95} Sed quaedam mulieres accipiunt gratiam sapientiae et scientiae, quam non possunt alii administrare nisi per gratiam sermonis. Ergo gratia sermonis competit mulieribus. ... gratiam divinitus acceptam diversimode aliqui administrant, secundum diversitatem conditionis ipsorum. Unde mulieres, si gratiam sapientiae aut scientiae habeant, possunt eam administrare secundum privatam doctrinam, non autem secundum publicam. Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae} 2a2ae.177.2, ed. Thomas Gilby OP, 60 vols (London, 1963-), vol. 45, 132-3.
grace is given in only in specific circumstances: women in the Old Testament were allowed to prophesy publicly as an insult to men who had become effeminate, and 'similarly in the early church Martha and Mary were allowed to preach publicly because of the multitude of the harvest and the scarcity of the harvesters' (cf. Matthew 9:37).96

In allowing that women may and did preach and teach publicly in certain circumstances, Henry has compromised his earlier distinction between teaching de iure and teaching de facto. He had argued that while it was permissable for a woman or any lay person to teach ex beneficio if she has sound doctrine, so long as she does this privately (and 'in silence'!), to teach publicly or in church is only allowed to those who teach ex officio, and women are not allowed to hold this officium doctoris.97 The terms of this distinction mean that the Magdalen's preaching privilege cannot be equated by Henry with a special beneficium due to the 'fervour of her charity' since it was public, but the grace given to her has by implication conferred the officium doctoris and so she legitimately preached ex officio. The Dominican Johannes de Biblia (fl. 1307-1332) concedes explicitly that the Magdalen held doctoris officium as a special privilege in contravention of Pauline prescription, and finds parallels for this among the Jewish women who held the officium of prophecy and among the pagan sibyls:

For although according to the common law the apostle does not permit a woman to teach, yet by special privilege the Holy Spirit entrusted to her the office of a teacher. Similarly among the Jewish people some women had the spirit and office of prophets and among the gentiles... there were

96 ... et similiter in primitiva ecclesia propter messis multitudinem et metentium paucitatem concessum est mulieribus Marthae et Mariae publice praedicare.... Henry of Ghent, Summae 1.11.2.3.

Henry of Ghent's arguments are cited in the fourteenth century to try to refute Lollard claims that women were rightfully able to preach. Walter Brut, who was arrested and tried as a Lollard in 1391, is said to have held that women, like any Christian without sin, could validly celebrate the sacraments and they also had power to preach and absolve sin. With regard to preaching, Brut advances the ingenious argument that the Pauline injunction in fact demonstrates women's ability to teach and preach, since the apostle wishes to prohibit it:

Paul teaches that women ought to learn in silence with all subjection and does not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. Yet Paul does not say that women are not able to teach or exercise authority over men, and nor do I dare to assert this, since women, holy virgins, steadfastly preached the word of God and converted many (men) to faith and priests then did not dare to say a word.

One of the quaestiones refuting Brut's contentions on 'whether women consecrate or are able to consecrate the sacrament of the Eucharist as true priests', cites Mary Magdalen by name as one of these holy 'virgins' whose case seems to...
support the proposition: 101

To preach the word of God pertains to the office of priests, but many women steadfastly preached the word when priests and other men did not dare to say a word, as is clear from the Magdalen and Martha: therefore women can perform the office of priests. 102

A related quaestio, which quotes Henry of Ghent's criteria for public teaching in discussing 'whether women may teach men assembled publicly', also refers to the Magdalen in establishing the proposition:

This is confirmed, for one reads about blessed Mary Magdalen that she preached publicly in Marseilles and in the neighbouring region which she converted to Christ by her preaching; this is why she is called the apostle of apostles. 103

Henry of Ghent had conceded that special grace might be given to women in two circumstances, to shame men for their effeminacy and to counter the scarcity of 'harvesters' in the early church. Both the quaestiones relating to Walter Brut expand Henry's arguments to give three situations when public teaching by a woman is acceptable despite the Pauline prohibition. Thus one account says:

Yet in certain cases allowance is made for [women] to preach publicly: the first case is from special privilege (as Huldah [II Kings 22:14; II Chron. 34:22]) ... the second case is to shame men who are effeminate; the third case is on account of the multitude of the harvest and the scarcity of the harvesters, and thus it was conceded to Mary Magdalen and Martha to

101 Blamires, 'Women and preaching', 151-2, suggests that Brut himself was reticent about the identity of the women because of Lollard suspicion of such hagiography as extra-biblical. He points out the irony 'that those who stood to gain most by insisting on the activities of female saints, were sometimes constrained by sectarian scepticism about such activities'.

102 Utrum mulieres sunt ministri ydonei ad conficiendum eukaristie sacramentum; ... predicare verbum Dei ad officium pertinet sacerdotum, sed multe mulieres constanter predicaverunt verbum quando sacerdotes et alii non audebant verbum loqui, ut patet de Magdalena et Martha: ergo mulieres possunt facere officium sacerdotum. MS BL Harley 31, f. 219r.

103 Confirmatur, nam legitur de beata Maria Magdalena quod publice predicavit in Marcilia et in regione adiacente quam sua predicacione ad Christum convertit; quare vocatur apostolorum apostola. Ibid., f. 195r.
preach publicly ... on account of the scarcity of preaching.\textsuperscript{104}

The other account implies that the Magdalen qualified as a preacher on two of the three counts: firstly, she is one of the 'women in the Old and New Testaments mentioned in the second article' of the \textit{quaestio} who had received 'special grace', and she is again explicitly named in the third case.\textsuperscript{105} It is striking, however, that in this instance these three situations are prefaced by Gratian's dictum against women's teaching, quoted with a crucial rider added to accommodate them: 'A woman however learned and holy may not presume to teach men at a gathering \textit{unless necessity compels}'.\textsuperscript{106} Having amended canon law in this startling way, the writer is then at pains to limit the application of Henry of Ghent's concessions in a way Henry himself had not,\textsuperscript{107} in order, it would seem, to allow as little scope as possible for the Lollards to take advantage of it:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[104] Tamen in quibusdem casibus est cum eiusmod dispensatum ad publice predicatum: primus casus est ex speciali privilegio [Huldah] \ldots\ secundus casus est in contumelia virorum quam effeminatum erant; tertius casus est propter multitudinem messis et metencium paucitatem, et sic Marie Magdalene et Marthe concessum est publice predicare \ldots\ propter predicacionem paucitatem. \textit{Ibid.}, f. 221r.
  \item[105] \ldots\ quamvis non licet mulieribus publice docere hoc tamen in casu potest eis licere: probatur hoc in tribus causis. Primus si ex speciali gratia sit eis hoc concessum: ut patet de mulieribus tam veteris quam novis testamenti in secundo articulo \ldots\ tertius casus est propter messis multitudinem et metencium paucitatem: concessum est mulieribus Marie et Marthe publice predicare \ldots\ \textit{Ibid.}, f. 196r. These three exceptions have been written out and highlighted in the lower margin of this folio: Nota quod mulieres in tria casus publice docent - per privilegium, - in contumelia virorum, - propter paucitate doctorum.
  \item[106] Mulier quamvis docta et sancta viros in conventu docere non presumat nisi necessitate cogente; glossa, hoc enim sacerdotale est officium. \textit{Ibid.}, f. 196r. The rider seems to be imported from the Sentences of Peter Lombard, who cites as his authority the fifth Council of Carthage when he states: Mulier, quamvis sancta, baptizare non praesumat nisi necessitate cogente. Sentences 4.6.1 (PL 1*: 342). Conversely, however, Huguccio's concession to abbesses then is somewhat circumscribed: Mulieres in conventu publico scilicet in ecclesia ascendendo pulpitum et faciendo sermonem ad populum non presumant. Sed si est abbatissa secreto in claustro potest suas monachas docere, per(?) causa prohibicionis est ne putaret se debere preferri viris.
  \item[107] See Blamires 'Women and preaching', esp. 147, where he argues that, because of the legendary accounts of the Magdalen and Catherine, 'Henry leaves the door ajar' on post-biblical female preaching.
\end{itemize}
... but when it is incumbent on another by virtue of office, as with prelates and teachers, to teach the laity, a woman is excluded from public teaching. ... (Only rarely) can the scarcity of teachers, the multitude of the harvest and the lack of preachers be so great that women are allowed to teach and preach, as it is said of the Magdalen and Martha ....

While the writer does not limit this concession as absolutely as C. W. Marx's mistranslation alleges, he would clearly like to have asserted that such a situation was impossible in his day, yet critically he does not describe it as just the state of the primitive church. The impression is given that claims had been made, by Walter Brut or others, that the same conditions prevailed at this time as Gauthier de Château-Thierry and Henry of Ghent had described for the early church, and so women were legitimately authorised to preach like the Magdalen because of the scarcity of (effective) preachers and teachers. This quasi-Donatist argument is even found enshrined in canon law, and had in fact been used by Thomas of Chobham in the early thirteenth century as a reason for why laymen may preach:

On account of the lack (or inadequacy) of priests, because 'many are priests and few are priests' as the canon says, it is permitted in the

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108 ... sed quando alius ex officio ut prelatis et doctoribus incumbit laicos docere, mulier a doctrina publica excluditur. ... tanta possit esse raritas doctoribus et messis multitudo et predicatioribus indigencia quod liceret mulieribus docere et predicare sicut dictum est de Magdalena et Martha.... MS BL Harley 31, f. 196v.

109 In Blamires (ed.), Woman defamed, 255: '... woman is nevertheless excluded from teaching in public ... however few teachers there may be, however many masses, and however great the lack of preachers. Situations like these should allow women to teach and preach as it was said of the Magdalen and Martha, but they do not' (italics mine). The misreading of missas for messis also gives rise earlier to an interesting sacerdotal image for the third case in which women are allowed to preach: 'when there is a great number of masses and only a small number of those administering'; 254-5.

110 Such an argument on the part of the Lollards is likely given their claim that priestly authority depended chiefly on merit. Thus a lack of good priests is tantamount to a lack of (any) priests.

111 Multi sacerdotes, et pauci sacerdotes; multi nomine, et pauci in opere. Gratian Decretum, d. 40, c. 12; Friedberg I.147.

112 Defectus can denote numerical lack or inadequacy or moral shortcoming.
church that educated men, although they are not priests or even deacons, may preach the word of God in churches and instruct the people; yet they should not do this unless asked by the priests or prelates of those churches in which they preach for no one can send himself nor should he force his own efforts (on others), nor is anyone allowed to put the sickle into another's harvest unless perhaps danger to faith threatens. But then anyone who wishes is allowed to assist and resist in whatever way he knows or is able, especially if he sees a lack of prelates and priests.  

Thus circumstances such as those in which Mary Magdalen preached are not simply confined to the remote history of the early church. Thomas clearly considers the medieval church still to suffer from a comparable exigency in his own day. While evidence for Lollard women preaching in public is limited, the currency of the debate and statements by those who sought to attack Lollardy show that the conditions which acceptably gave rise to the Magdalen's preaching ministry were not considered unrepeatable.

Conclusions

Janet Nelson has suggested that:

... the French mission of Mary and Martha belonged to the remote and heroic (and mythical) past. When real live women attempted to imitate these female apostles, they were met with the familiar weapon of derision. In clerical reaction to the Waldensians, professional jealousy waxed most vitriolic against sisters who preached.  

113 Propter defectum autem sacerdotum, quia multi sunt sacerdotes et pauci sunt sacerdotes, sicut dicit canon, permissum est in ecclesia quod viri litterati, quamvis non sint sacerdotes nec forte diaconi, predicent verbum Dei in ecclesiis et instruant populum, sed tamen hoc non debent facere nisi rogati a sacerdotibus vel a prelatis illarum ecclesiarum in quibus predicent, quia nemo potest se ipsum mittere nec debet operas suas ingerere, nec licet aliqui falcem mittere in alienam messem nisi forte inmineat periculum fidei. Tunc enim licet cuilibet occurrere et resistere in quantum scit et quantum potest, precipue si videat defectum prelatorum et sacerdotum. Thomas of Chobham, Summa de arte praedicandi 3.59. Eustace of Arras, above, conceded similarly that the Magdalen had been legitimately sent to preach by the Holy Spirit 'since faith was in jeopardy'.

While such a perception of the Magdalen legend may be argued for the early Middle Ages, it is has been shown that Mary Magdalen's preaching ministry came to be considered by no means purely mythical, but as constituting a valid example of privilege which had to be accounted for. The story of her apostolate gained such popularity and acceptance that it prevailed not only over the Pauline prohibitions in their biblical form but also over their codification in canon law. It could be argued that at first the Magdalen legends were influential in prompting the canonists' prohibitions on women preaching, since it has been shown how the vocabulary had changed by the end of the twelfth century from proscribing women 'teaching in church' to specifically denouncing women 'preaching'. By this time praedicare had become the standard verb used of the Magdalen's ministry, and though she is occasionally described as a teacher the pronouncements of canon law reflect this currency. The jurists were unable to limit the impact of the legends, however, and by the late fourteenth century even Gratian's decretal against teaching by women was amended to take account of the Magdalen as an exception, so that it appeared to permit women to teach and preach in cases of necessity.

In the late twelfth century it was still possible for any putative claim that the Magdalen was an authoritative model, made by heterodox groups in which women preached, to be rejected by orthodox writers. One must still question what other model existed for women's preaching in sects such as the Waldensians.115 Yet in the catholic church, the Magdalen's active ministry as a

115 One could even go so far as to argue that the Magdalen was one of the only models available to the heretical groups who sought to promote women preaching alongside men on the grounds of fidelity to the practices of the apostles. While the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul give examples of women as fellow workers and helpers of the male apostles (and the precise meanings of the terms used have been hotly debated), they do not describe a woman specifically as teaching let alone preaching, which would have been too clearly incompatible
preacher was rationalised in the course of the thirteenth century, as we have shown, in terms of the contemporary debate about who was legitimately able to preach. She is attributed privilege and grace, and mission from the Holy Spirit. She is considered capable of meriting the celestial *aureola* of preachers, and we will see in the next chapter that she is represented as having received it. She is described as having formal authority, fulfilling the 'office of a preacher', and even having *magisterium* (albeit 'of virgins') imputed to her. Contrary to Nelson's thesis, it is likely that 'in clerical reaction, professional jealousy waxed ... vitriolic' precisely because the preaching apostolate of the Magdalen was felt to be a live issue at the time.

An attempt is certainly made by Gauthier de Château-Thierry and Henry of Ghent to argue that the Magdalen's mission belonged to a 'remote and heroic past', for they describe how her special privilege was due to the scarcity of preachers in the early church. Yet, as has been demonstrated, Thomas of Chobham could invoke this same argument precisely to justify lay preaching in his own day. In addition, the sort of claims put forward by groups such as the Lollards in the fourteenth century make it plain that others thought the Magdalen was a legitimate model for the ministry they sought to fulfil. The Magdalen is admitted as an exemplar of women's preaching by the very theologians who sought to refute Walter Brut at his trial, and no less than three possible situations in which a woman may teach and preach publicly are given (and highlighted by being written out in the bottom margin of the Harley manuscript). The writer on this occasion does not restrict the essential lack of preachers to the early church at all, but only tries to stress the rarity of such an occurrence, and a strong impression is given of claims from the Lollard quarter with Pauline authority. Hence medieval legends such as those of the Magdalen would have been the basis for such heterodox claims. See Blamires, 'Women and preaching'.

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that the same conditions existed then as at the time when the Magdalen preached.

While the ways in which Mary Magdalen was actually imitated as a model for active ministry and preaching is examined in the final chapter, the next chapter will explore further the developments established by the present argument. In it the Magdalen's positive qualities for her preaching ministry, as understood in the thirteenth century, will be considered, and it will be demonstrated that she was not considered subject to the traditional limitations which were said to disqualify women as preachers. To the contrary, specific enhancements of the story of her active life show that she was deliberately presented as able to meet the criteria thought essential for preachers.
Humbert of Romans, the fifth Master of the Dominican Order († 1277), echoes the argument of the quodlibet and quaestio disputations that Mary Magdalen had preached by special privilege. In a model sermon on the Magdalen, which he includes in the latter part of his treatise De eruditione praedicatorum, he says of her that

... she preached. Yet she performed this office by a singular privilege. For she preached to the people of Marseilles, and with such grace that all admired her for her beauty and ease of speech and the sweetness of her eloquence, as the story tells. Not only did she preach to the people but also to the prince of the province and his wife, not only appearing to them and preaching while awake but even while they slept. And her preaching produced such fruit that both the prince and his wife and the city of Marseilles and the neighbouring region of Aix were converted.1

Humbert not only allows that the Magdalen preached, but states that she fulfilled the formal officium praedicandi. In an earlier part of the treatise, however, he had advanced a fourfold argument as to why women may not be preachers:

1 ... predicavit. Ipsa tamen ex privilegio singulari hoc est officium executa. Predicavit enim Marsilie gentibus et cum tanta gratia ut pre specie et pre facundia et pre dulcedine eloquentie eius omnes admirarentur, sicut dicit historia. Non solum autem populis sed etiam principi provincie illius et uxori eius. Non solum autem vigilando sed et cum dormirent eis apparens predicavit. Et tantus fructus secutus est eius predicationem quod et ipse princeps et uxor eius et civitas Marsiliensis et Aquensis regio vicina sunt conversi. Humbert of Romans, Liber de eruditione praedicatorum, ed. Simon Tugwell OP (Oxford, forthcoming; cited in Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 71). I am indebted to Fr. Tugwell for sending me a copy of his text, based on the only two surviving manuscripts which contain this section of Humbert's sermon material. A lacuna precedes the above passage, for which Fr. Tugwell suggests supplying: ... Item nulla fuit mulier que tantum> predicavit. On the diverse manuscript tradition and complex structure of Humbert's De eruditione praedicatorum, see Simon Tugwell, 'Humbert of Romans' Material for Preachers', in De Ore Domini: preacher and word in the Middle Ages, ed. Thomas L. Amos et al., (Kalamazoo, 1989), 105-117.

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First, lack of understanding, because of which a woman should not attempt as much as a man; second, the subject condition which is imposed upon her, for a preacher holds a superior position; thirdly, if she preaches her appearance will provoke (men) to lust, as the Glossa says; fourthly in memory of the foolishness of the first woman, of whom Bernard says 'She taught once and subverted the whole world'.

This chapter will examine Humbert's arguments for why women could not preach alongside the arguments of two other thirteenth-century authorities, Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent. In the course of their discussion, these writers advance criteria thought necessary for preachers to fulfil the officium praedicandi, criteria which were considered to exclude women by definition. Yet all three have to concede to the tradition presenting Mary Magdalen as a preacher. It seems highly likely that the prevalence and popularity of the Magdalen legend made it impossible for them to exclude her completely. In fact, a close examination of the legends shows a marked tendency to present the Magdalen as not only excelling the limitations thought to disqualify women but also possessing the skills and personal abilities demanded for the office of a preacher.

Most remarkably, one previously unrecognised version of the legend in a manuscript from the British Library actually goes so far as to use the precise 'technical' language of the criteria thought necessary for preachers, as if to demonstrate deliberately that the Magdalen's preaching ministry was valid in

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2 De persona praedicatoris: Circa personam est notandum quod debet esse sexus virilis. I Tim. 2: Mulierem docere non permitto. Huius autem ratio est quadruplex. Prima est defectus sensus, de quo non praesumitur in muliere tantum sicut in viro. Secunda est Conditio subiectionis quae inficta est ei: praedicator autem tenet locum excellentem. Tertia est, quia si praedicaret, aspectu suo provocaret ad luxuriam, sicut dicit Glossa, hic. Quarta in memoriam stultitiae primae mulieris, de qua Bernardus: Semel docuit, et totum mundum subvertit. De eruditione praedicatorum, in Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum, vol. 25 (Lyons, 1677), ch. 12. The quotation attributed to Bernard actually derives from Chrysostom (PG 62:545) and is correctly attributed to him by Thomas Aquinas and Hugh of St Cher; Tugwell, Early Dominicans: selected writings (New York/London, 1982), 231 n. 41.
contemporary thirteenth-century terms. This *Legenda de Maria Magdalena*, written by one Bertholdus Heyder, bears witness to the fact that the Magdalen was accepted as a preacher and thus was depicted and promoted as such, regardless of her sex. Hence it was only natural that she should be described in terms appropriate to such a role. In confirmation of this, it will be demonstrated that Mary Magdalen's apostolic role was further enhanced by her hagiographers: she is awarded the preacher's golden aureola; she is represented both as *ignifera* and as the bearer of the new covenant, using details which associate her typologically with the authoritative figures of Elijah and Moses. Thus the influence of the preaching legends meant that she came to represent the contemplative and active lives combined, and this synthesis both reflected and was used to exemplify the changing perception of the religious and clerical lives in the later Middle Ages.

Reasons why women may not preach or teach

Humbert of Roman's fourfold argument is one of three important accounts from the later thirteenth century which attempt to give reasons for the lapidary Pauline pronouncement, 'I do not permit a woman to teach'. These three accounts, spanning a period of only some forty years, show an increasing tendency to concede the fact of public teaching ministry by women, as presented unmistakably in the hagiographical literature of the church. The three authors, Thomas Aquinas, Humbert and Henry of Ghent, demonstrate growing awareness of exceptions to the Pauline prohibitions and that the hagiographical

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3 On the importance of this device of using *imitatio* to establish sanctity and authority, see Thomas Heffernen, *Sacred Biography*, and especially Samuel Fanous, *Biblical and Hagiographical Imitatio in the Book of Margery Kempe* (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1997). I am grateful to Dr. Fanous for much helpful discussion on this subject.
evidence of women teaching and preaching has to be admitted.

Aquinas, the earliest of the three writers, gives the most rigorous interpretation of the Pauline injunctions. In the *Summa Theologiae* he considers 'whether the grace of speech with wisdom and with knowledge pertains to women also' and links this grace specifically to teaching. Although he allows that the grace of speech can befit a woman when used 'privately, to one or a few, in familiar conversation', he puts forward three arguments why 'publicly addressing oneself to the whole church ... is not permitted to women'. These arguments are based on i) women's perceived subject status, ii) their ability to seduce, and iii) their lack of wisdom:

First and principally on account of the conditions of the female sex, which should be subject to a man, as shown by Genesis (3:16). For to teach and persuade publicly in the church does not pertain to subjects but to prelates; even men who are subject to a commission can perform better (than women) since this subjection is not due to their natural sex, as with women, but from something accidentally supervening. Secondly, lest men's minds be enticed to lust: for it says in Ecclesiasticus (9:11), Her conversation burns like fire. Thirdly, because women generally are not perfected in wisdom, so as to be appropriately entrusted with public teaching.

Even the women's witness to the Resurrection is a problem for Aquinas for he is

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4 Utrum gratia sermonis, sapientiae et scientiae pertineat etiam ad mulieres. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.177.2; ed. Gilby, vol. 45, 132-3. The discussion is prompted by Paul's statement, 'To some is given through the Spirit speech with wisdom, to others speech with knowledge' (I Cor. 12:8).


6 Primo quidem et principaliter propter conditionem foeminei sexus, qui debet esse subditus viro, ut patet *Gen.* Docere autem et persuadere publice in ecclesia non pertinet ad subditos, sed ad prelatos; magis tamen viri subditi ex commissione possunt exequi, quia non habent huiusmodi subiectionem ex naturali sexu, sicut mulieres, sed ex aliquo accidentaliter supervenienti. Secundo, ne amini hominum allicantur ad libidinem: dicitur enim *Eccl.*, *Colloquium illius quasi ignis exardescit*. Tertio, quia communiter mulieres non sunt in sapientia perfectae, ut eis possit convenieter publica doctrina committi. *Ibid.*
led to argue against it, citing Paul and Ambrose, that 'it is preaching which makes this witness public and preaching is not a woman's function'.

Yet Aquinas' response to the question seems inconsistent. Generally, in the case of the grace of prophecy, to which he alludes, he maintains that it is:

> consequent on the mind being enlightened by God; and in this realm there is no difference of sex, according to Colossians (3:10), Putting on a new humanity which is renewed ... after the image of its creator, in which there is neither male nor female.\(^8\)

This passage is striking for its development of Paul's strictures for women who prophesy (I Cor. 11:5), quoted earlier by Aquinas, into the recognition that prophecy, at least, transcends sexual distinctions. It is also striking that Aquinas has instinctively appended the phrase 'neither male nor female', in fact from Galatians 3:28, to his quotation of Colossians 3:10 which by itself is not inclusive in this respect.\(^9\) The grace of speech, however, he has relegated to a lesser status,\(^10\) and since it 'pertains to the instruction of humankind, amongst whom differences of sex are found', he argues that 'the case is different'.\(^11\) The pronouncement as to the relative precedence of prophecy over teaching is

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\(^7\) Hoc autem testimonium ferebant publice praedicando. Quod quidem non convenit mulieribus ... Ergo videtur quod inconvenienter resurrectio Christi manifestata fuerit primo mulieribus quam omnibus communiter. *Summa Theologiae* 3a.55.1; vol. 55, 36-41.

\(^8\) ... gratia prophetiae attenditur secundum mentem illuminatam a Deo; ex qua parte non est in hominibus sexuum differentia, secundum illud ad Coloss., *Induentes novum hominem, qui renouavatur ... secundum imaginem eius, qui creavit eum, ubi non est masculus neque foemina. Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.177.2.

\(^9\) In this he is copied directly by Henry of Ghent (see below), whose dependence on Aquinas seems to be thus demonstrated; cf. Blamires, 'Women and preaching', 141. I hope to pursue this curious appending of the phrase 'non est masculus neque femina' to other quotations and contexts as a possible angle for future research.

\(^10\) Praeterea, maior est gratia prophetiae quam gratia sermonis.... *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.177.2.

presumably derived from I Cor. 12:28, 'God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...', yet Aquinas ignores the practical consideration that teaching may be performed by both prophets and apostles (like the Magdalen) for whom he allows that distinctions of sex do not apply if the mind is 'enlightened by God'.

Similarly inconsistent are Aquinas' three specific limitations on women employing the grace of speech. He states that 'to teach and persuade publicly in the church does not pertain to subjects (subditi) but to prelates', yet claims that 'men who are subject (viri subditi) ... can perform better'. Here Aquinas chooses to ignore the whole debate about the legitimacy of preachers, based on Romans 10:15 'How shall they preach unless they are sent?', which argued the necessity of a commission from a higher authority and hence implied that all preachers must inherently be 'subject'. Also he uses the disclaimer that women may not teach publicly 'lest men's minds be enticed to lust' while he allows women to teach men privately (privatim ad unum vel paucos), as if the risk did not pertain in this situation. Indeed he uses the same vocabulary for both: quoting Ecclesiasticus on the inflammatory property of a woman's colloquium, while defining as acceptable her familiariter colloquendo. Thirdly, he claims that 'women are not perfected in wisdom' although the entire discussion is prompted by considering the charism of the Holy Spirit who, as Aquinas has admitted, bestows 'the grace of wisdom and knowledge' even on women, and they

12 Henry of Ghent, by contrast, allows that grace does not respect sexual distinctions with regard to preaching as well as to prophecy; see below.
13 See Buc, 'Vox clamantis', and the earlier discussion in Chapter Three. Aquinas, in his Commentary on the Sentences 25.2.1, admits that abbesses and prophetesses do exercise praetatio, even while he argues that women's 'subject state' renders them incapable of ordination; Cardman, 'The medieval question of women and orders', 586-87.
'cannot use this for others except through the grace of speech'.

Humbert of Romans, as has been seen, gives four reasons why women may not be preachers which overlap to a great extent with those of Aquinas. His first reason, 'lack of understanding' (defectus sensus), parallels Aquinas' reference to women being 'imperfect in wisdom', and like Aquinas he makes no allowance for the grace of the Holy Spirit, although he had stated earlier in his treatise that the 'grace of preaching is had only by God's special gift' and 'it is by God's gift that a person is empowered to preach'. Humbert's second reason, women's 'inferior status', matches Aquinas' 'subject condition', and yet he goes on in a later passage to suggest that a preacher has 'some superiority (alia praerogativa) over the people present by virtue of position or education or religious life or some other quality', implying that status is not to be determined merely by sex. His third reason imitates Aquinas in alluding to women's seductiveness, but he cites the marginal Gloss on I Tim. 2:11 for his authority, and specifies the seductiveness of woman's appearance as well as her speech. Humbert's fourth reason makes explicit the example of Eve, implicit perhaps in Aquinas' arguments, but it ignores the wealth of Patristic evidence which credited women with a positive 'speaking role' in the economy of salvation following the Incarnation.

Henry of Ghent prefaces his reasons why women may not be teachers ex officio by proposing four key qualities thought necessary for such teaching:

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14 Sed quaedam mulieres accipiunt gratiam sapientiae et scientiae, quam non possunt aliis administrare nisi per gratiam sermonis. Summa Theologiae 2a2ae.177.2.
15 De eruditione praedicatorum, tr. Simon Tugwell, in Early Dominicans, 204.
16 Ibid., 223-4.
The first is constancy in teaching, lest the teacher be diverted easily from known truth; the second is effectiveness in performance, lest (s)he desist from the task through infirmity; the third is authority in teaching, so that the hearers might believe and obey; the fourth is vivacity of speech, so that by eroding sin (s)he might encourage them to virtue.  

He introduces four novel analogies for these four qualities, based on Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:13-16):

On account of the first, Christ compares the first teachers to light which does not grow dark; on account of the second, to a city which does not fail; on account of the third, to lamps which are placed on a lampstand; on account of the fourth, to salt which preserves flesh from decay.

Then Henry asserts that the inverse of these four qualities are found in women, who are thus 'not able to teach ex officio':

Concerning the first two (qualities) the Gloss on the last chapter of Luke says, Since the weaker sex does not have constancy in preaching and is weaker in performance, the office of evangelising is entrusted to men. Indeed woman does not have constancy in preaching or teaching, since she is seduced easily from the truth. Thus after the apostle said (I Tim. 2), I do not permit a woman to teach, he later added as if in explanation, Adam was not seduced, but the woman was seduced into transgression. Secondly, woman does not have effectiveness in carrying out the office of a teacher, as is evident from the fragility of her sex which is not sufficient for public discourse and labour. Thirdly, woman is not able to have the authority of a teacher because of the condition of her sex which does not have freedom of performance because she must be under the power of another: (Genesis 3:16) you will be under the power of the man and he will rule over you. And therefore when he prohibited the office of teaching to women, saying, I do not permit a woman to teach, he immediately added, nor shall she have authority over man. Here the Gloss says: Hence he even denies them the authority for teaching. And after he said (I Cor. 14), It is not allowed
that they should speak, he immediately added but they must be submissive as the law says. Hence if a woman assumes the authority of one who presides, it is indecent for her and truly shameful, and so the apostle adds, Indeed it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Here the Gloss says because it is contrary to church discipline. Fourthly, woman does not have the vigour of speech to mortify sins but rather provokes them, and so after I do not permit a woman to teach, the Gloss says for if she speaks she rather excites to lust and is stimulated, and so on Ecclesiasticus 9, Her conversation burns like fire, the Gloss says in the hearts of those who hear.22

In these arguments against woman's ability to teach in public, Henry repeats the commonplaces found in Aquinas and Humbert about women's lack of authority due to their subject status and their seductiveness of speech. With regard to the latter, Henry does show more consistency of argument than Aquinas, for he goes on to say that if women do teach ex beneficio, as a privilege when they have sound doctrine, they should especially teach other women and girls in private, 'but not men, as much because their speech will inflame men to lust, as was said,

22 Quantum ergo ad istam quaestionem dicendum, quod contraria his quatuor inveniuntur in mulieribus, propter quod mulier ex officio docere non potest: et ideo nec doctor esse huius scientiae. De primis duobus dicit Glossa Luc. ulti. Quia constantia praedicandi non habet infirmior sexus: et ad exequendum infirmior est: mandatur viris officium evangelizandi. Mulier vero praedicandi seu docendi constantia non habet: quia de facili a veritate seducitur. Et ideo postquam dixit Apostolus (I Tim. 2) Docere mulierem non permitto: post modicum subiunxit quasi pro causa: Adam non est seductus: mulier autem seducta in prevaricatione fuit. Mulier secundo exequendi officium doctoris non habet efficaciam: quia sexus fragilitatem patitur, qui non sufficit in publico discurrere et laborare. Et ideo ibidem etiam cum dixisset: Docere mulierem non permitto: statim addidit: Sed esse in silentio. Mulier tertio doctoris auctoritatem habere non possit propter sexus conditionem qui non habet exequendi libertatem: quia sub alterius debet esse potestate (Gen 3) sub potestate viri eris, et ipse dominabitur tui. Et ideo cum mulieri officium docendi inhibuisset, dicendo Docere mulierem non permitto, immediate adiunxit: Neque dominari in virum; ubi dicit Glos. Unde etiam auctoritatem docendi ei negavit. Et postquam dixit I Cor. 14 Non permittur eis loqui: immediate adiunxit: Sed subditas esse sicut lex dicit; unde quod sumeret auctoritate praesidentis, indecens esset ei et verecum valde, et ideo addit Apostolus Turpe est autem mulieri in ecclesia loqui; ubi dicit Glos. Quia contra disciplinam ecclesiasticum est. Mulier quarto vivacitatem sermonis non habet ad mortificandum: sed magis provocandum peccata, et ideo super illud Docere mulierem non permitto, dicit Glos. Si enim loquitur magis incitat ad luxuriam et irritatur, et ideo dicit Ecclesiastici 9, Colloquium illius quasi ignis exardescit Glos. in corda auditorum. Summae quaestionum, 1.11.2, f. 77v-78.
and because this is shameful and dishonourable for men’.23 Similarly Henry improves on Aquinas’ argument concerning the teaching role inherent in prophecy, and concedes that women may teach men through prophecy in private since this special grace does not respect sexual distinctions:

It must be said that prophecy is given to women not for instruction in public but in private, and if by it she teaches men, this is from the special grace which does not respect the distinction of the sexes, according to Colossians 3:10, Put on the new humanity which is renewed after the image of its creator in which there is neither male nor female (sic).24

Henry also echoes to Humbert’s reasoning from the example of Eve when he asserts women’s lack of constancy and the ease of seducing men from the truth. He elaborates on this in his second argument about the fragility of the ‘weaker sex’, which he lists as a separate point in addition to the question of women’s inferior status. Yet he does not treat women’s supposed lack of intelligence as one of his arguments here, like Aquinas and Humbert had done. Although he implicitly allows that women are capable of having ‘sound doctrine’ to teach in private, in a later quaestio, he maintains that ‘on account of the weakness of a woman’s reason it is not possible for her to reach sufficient proficiency in this science (of theology)’ so as to be able to teach it publicly.25

Each of these three writers, then, formally refutes in theory women’s ability to

23 Nihilominus tamen alibi in privato eis permittitur docere ea quae licet eas discere: et hoc maxime mulieres alias et puellulas: viros autem non tum quia sermo earum viros ad libidinem inflammaret, ut dictum est, tum quia hoc est turpe et inhonestum viris…. Ibid.

24 Dicendum quod prophetia data est mulieribus non ad publicam instructionem sed privatam, et si ut per eam viros doceat hoc est ex gratia speciali, quae non respicit sexuum distinctionem, secundum quod dicitur Col. 3, Induite novum hominem qui renovatur secundum imaginem eius qui creavit illum ubi non est masculus neque foemina. Ibid. Like Aquinas, Henry appends the crucial phrase from Galatians 3:28 to his quote from Colossians.

25 ... immo propter debilitatem ingenii muliebris non est possibile eam ad tantam perfectionem huius scientiae pervenire…. Summae quaestionum, 1.12.1.
teach or preach in public. If their treatment of the preaching of Mary Magdalen is examined, however, an increasing readiness to admit the traditional view of her as a preacher becomes apparent. Although Aquinas, as was seen, denies the public witness of the women at the tomb on Easter morning and he does not mention the developed preaching legend, he still uses the traditional title *apostolorum apostola* of the Magdalen in his *Readings on the Gospel of John*. He even attributes 'apostolic office' to her as one of the three privileges conferred on her when she was sent to witness to Christ's resurrection:

Hence the triple privilege which was conferred on the Magdalen must be noted. The first, a prophetic one, in that she merited seeing the angels, for a prophet is mediator between angels and the people. Second, her position above the angels, in that she saw Christ whom the angels long to behold. Third, her apostolic office for indeed she was made apostle of apostles, in that it was entrusted to her to announce the Lord's resurrection to the disciples; so that as woman first announced the words of death to man, so also woman might first announce the words of life.26

Humbert, while not admitting any exceptions in the course of his formal argument why a preacher must be male, explicitly describes the Magdalen's legendary preaching career in his model sermon later in the treatise, as quoted above. He ends this account by reiterating the point:

... among women she was most devoted to Christ, to whom among all women Christ displayed special kindness and gave singular graces, and honoured with the privilege of preaching .... All of these things add to the height of her praise.27

Endnotes:


27 ... inter mulieres devotissima Christo, cui Christus specialem benignitatem inter omnes mulieres exhibuit et singulares gratias fecit, et predicationis privilegio insignivit.... Que omnia faciunt ad cumulum laudis eius. Humbert of Romans, *Liber de eruditione praedicatorum*, ed. Tugwell.
Finally, Henry of Ghent, as was shown in the previous chapter, broadens Aquinas' admission that grace does not respect differences of sex, not merely with regard to prophesy but also to authority for preaching. He alludes to Deborah and Huldah, not merely as having been prophets, but as having 'ruled publicly over men', implying that women might also be recipients of a 'grace of authority' to counter their supposed inferior status. 28 Also, he actually cites the case of Mary Magdalen and Martha preaching as one of his initial propositions in support of women's capability as teachers of the 'science' of theology, 29 and in his reprise of the argument allows that women like the Magdalen have been preachers, and even preachers on a par with the other apostles, after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Mary Magdalen's qualities as a preacher

So it was allowed that Mary Magdalen, a woman, had been a preacher, even by those who propounded arguments why women were not capable of preaching. It is therefore necessary to examine how her preaching was described to determine fully whether she was held to have met the criteria proposed for a true preacher. As has been shown, only Henry of Ghent of the three authorities studied above specifically sets out the positive qualities he considered necessary for preaching before setting out reasons why he thought most women were not

28 Unde etsi ex speciali gratia detur mulieri ut publice praedicet: hoc tunc licet ei quia gratia, ut dictum est, distinctionem sexuum non respicit; tali enim gratia concessum est mulieribus publice prophetare in veterum testamentum in virorum contumeliam, quia effeminati facti erunt; sicut et foeminis concessum est publica regimina super viros gerere.... Henry of Ghent, *Summae quaestionum* 1.11.2.3.

29 Throughout the *quaestio* Henry uses *scientia* to mean (the science of) theology. Thus his argument in this article is more pointed than that of Aquinas who had used the term merely for (speech with) knowledge.
capable of achieving them. In the passages from Aquinas and Humbert of Romans examined above, the positive qualities needed for preaching are only more or less implicit from the inverse of the negative attributes they give to women.\textsuperscript{30}

Taking Henry's criteria as an explicit guide, then, it was clearly thought that any true preacher should demonstrate four main qualities:

i) Constancy in preaching, and should not be diverted from the truth;

ii) Effectiveness in performance, and should not be deterred by fragility or weakness;

iii) Authority in preaching so as to inspire belief and obedience, and should not be restricted by status;

iv) Vivacity of speech so as to promote virtue rather than vice.

A fifth quality of intelligence and understanding so as to propound true doctrine may be inferred from Henry's later comments on the \textit{debilitas ingenii} he attributes to women.\textsuperscript{31}

If the various versions of the Magdalen legend set out in Chapter Two are studied from this angle, it is clear that the Magdalen had long been thought to qualify as a preacher according to Henry's criteria. The early Vézélian \textit{Vita apostolica} demonstrates her constancy and effectiveness in describing how she and Maximin, 'persisting night and day in preaching ... drew the unbelievers of that region ... to the acknowledgment and worship of almighty God.' Geoffrey

\textsuperscript{30} Although much of the rest of Humbert's treatise is concerned with the positive attributes a preacher should possess or should strive to achieve.

\textsuperscript{31} This is corroborated by Aquinas' \textit{'non sunt in sapientia perfectae} and Humbert's \textit{'defectus sensus'}. 
of Vendôme's sermon on the Magdalen also makes her constancy clear: 'continually preaching that the Lord Jesus Christ was the true God and witnessing to the truth of his resurrection. She remained persevering in the truth of this assertion to the end of her life.' Vincent of Beauvais describes the admiration and the positive effect that the Magdalen's appearance and eloquence promoted, proving her vivacity of speech as she deters the people from sacrificing to idols:

... with calm face and skilful tongue she preached the words of salvation. And all admired her beauty and the sweetness of her eloquence. ... the Magdalen, full of the Holy Spirit preached Christ (to the prince) and dissuaded him from his sacrifices. So everyone flocked to her.

Voragine, as noted before, expands on Vincent's description. In doing so he makes the Magdalen's constancy explicit, and he also gives a cogent reason why the Magdalen's beauty and speech excited admiration and faith rather than lust:

... with calm face and serene appearance and discreet tongue she recalled them from the worship of idols and preached Christ constantly, and everyone admired her beauty, her fluency and the sweetness of her eloquence. Nor is it any wonder that her mouth, which had imposed such reverent and such beautiful kisses on the Saviour's feet, should give out the perfume of the word of God more than others.

Following Voragine and the influence of the *Legenda Aurea*, Mary Magdalen's constancy in preaching becomes such a commonplace of her legend that it is almost surprising that Henry of Ghent tried to make lack of constancy a trait which disqualified women from preaching. It is notable that neither Aquinas nor Humbert of Romans had attempted to employ this argument, although all three had insisted on the seductiveness of women's speech or appearance, another generalisation which the forms of the legend given above would appear to have made untenable.
The *Legenda de Maria Magdalena* of Bertholdus Heyder

There is one unique version of the legend of Mary Magdalen of which discussion has been kept until now. Contained in a manuscript in the British Library, along with the legends of Martha and Lazarus and various sermons, hymns and liturgical 'propers' relating to the Magdalen, its importance seems to have been overlooked not only by the Bollandists but also by recent Magdalen scholars. This is perhaps due to the fact that it opens with Voragine's etymology from the *Legenda Aurea* and so attention has not been paid to the ways in which it later expands on, elaborates, and diverges from this text. It is the work of one Bertholdus Heyder, whose signature appears at the end of the book, about whom nothing is known except that his Latin seems to indicate a Germanic background. The manuscript is described in the British Library catalogue as dating from the fourteenth century, although a note inside the cover of the volume suggests instead the thirteenth century. A dating of the work to the late thirteenth century is perhaps implied by the fact that the Magdalen's remains are still said to rest at Vézelay, and the rival claims of St-Maximin are not mentioned. Even if the manuscript does date from the fourteenth century and

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32 MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 1v-134r. An account of the translation of her relics and various miracles follows (f. 134r-143v); then five sermons on the Magdalen (f. 144v-178r), the 50-stanza hymn, *Ave pia Magdalena*, and a prayer (f. 178r-187r), the legend of St Martha (f. 187r-224v), the legend of Lazarus and prayers commemorating each of the three saints (f. 224v-238v). Finally there are proper antiphons with musical notation and hymns for the Magdalen's feast day (f. 239r-258r).

33 Although Heyder's 'signature' (*Qui me scribhebat Bertholdus Heyder*, f. 258r) implies he was not a professed religious, the illuminated illustration of Martha's deathbed (f. 213v) with the two kneeling white-robed nuns may indicate that he was linked to a house of women religious, possibly as chaplain. The Order of Penitents of St Mary Magdalen would be an obvious candidate for a religious house with an interest in such a manuscript; see A. Simon, *L'ordre des Pénitentes de Sainte-Madeleine en Allemagne au XIIIe siècle* (Fribourg, 1918).

34 Either because they were not known to the author or were deliberately suppressed. On the invention of the Magdalen's relics at St-Maximin in 1279, see Chapter Five.
not earlier, it contains the fifty-stanza hymn, *Ave pia Magdalena*, which is not otherwise attested before the fifteenth century. In addition, the five sermons on the Magdalen are not to be found in Schneyer's *Repertorium der Lateinischen Sermonen*.

Discussion of this unrecognised form of the legend of Mary Magdalen has been left to this point, since its unique elements point to a controversialist purpose behind its composition. It is the longest and most original treatment of the legend since Ps-Rabanus, and in its details about the Magdalen's witness to the resurrection and subsequent apostolic preaching it appears to have a specific target in mind: namely the rebuttal of traditional arguments about a woman's incapacity to preach. One can go even further to suggest that certain elements point to the likelihood that the author knew the arguments of Henry of Ghent's *Summae quaestionum* which sought to demonstrate women's lack of the necessary qualities to teach and preach in public. Hence, given Henry's admission that the Magdalen 'had publicly taught and preached like the apostles', Bertholdus Heyder took his cue to make specific the Magdalen's qualities which qualified her as a preacher. To do this he uses precise details of vocabulary and analogy, not found in other versions of the legend, to indicate that she met Henry's criteria.

At first, in relating Mary Magdalen's visit to the tomb on Easter morning, Heyder expands on the traditional formula, which described the Magdalen as unmindful of any female weakness:

... Mary Magdalen carried such great fire of love in her heart and bore such strong chains of love that, forgetful of female infirmity, neither the

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36 I intend to prepare an edition of the entire manuscript to bring the full importance of this collection to light.
darkness of the shadows nor fear of the soldiers could restrain her from visiting the tomb but rather, standing beside it and wetting the tomb with her tears, even when the disciples went away she did not leave ... 37

Her persistence is praised ('With what great feeling of devotion did this faithful disciple persevere until she found him whom her soul loved'), 38 and when she meets the angels she is said to outdo Abraham and Jacob in singlemindedness. When they encountered angels they worshipped or wrestled with them respectively, whereas the Magdalen turned away, 'for you sought only one thing'. 39 Indeed the author reproaches Christ for his apparent inconsistency, since he had promised Mary that the 'best part' she had chosen would never be taken away:

Truly she chose the best part who chose you. But how is it true that it would not be taken away from her when you had been taken from her? So, O guardian of humanity, either you guarded the part which she had chosen within her or I do not know how it might be true that it was not taken from her, unless it may be understood that ... you had been taken from her eyes but you were not taken from her heart 40

Again, Christ is implicitly reproached for his words, 'Woman why are you weeping?' (Jn. 20:15), when previously he had shown her such favour and had taught her:

For you had bound her with the invisible chain of affection, you poured your love into her heart, you had purged her from uncleanness, you had taught her in words, had provoked her to touch your virgin body ... and

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37 ... Maria Magdalena tanto ferebatur cordis incendio et tam validis trahebatur vinculis caritatis ut feminee infirmitates oblita nec tenebrarum caligine nec militum pavore retrahi potuere in visitacione sepulchrum quin pocius foris et rigans lacrimis monumentum et recedentibus discipulis non recedebat .... MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 66vb-67ra.
38 Quanto devocionis affectu hec fidelis discipula perseveraverat donec inveniret quem diligebat anima eius.... Ibid., f. 67va-b.
39 ...nam tu querebas unum. Ibid., f. 72va.
40 Vere optimam partem elegit que elegit te. Sed quomodo verum est que non auferetur ab ea cum tu sis ablatus ab ea? Ergo o custos hominum aut tu partem quod elegit custodi in ea aut ego nescio quomodo verum sit quod non auferetur ab ea nisi hoc intellig[at]ur quod [haec] licet [...] tu sis ablatus ab oculis eius tamen non es ablatus a corde eius. Ibid.
now you say, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'

Then at the Magdalen's request, when she mistook Jesus for the gardener, 'Tell me where you have put him and I will take him away', Heyder exclaims in direct contradiction of Henry of Ghent's judgement on women: 'O woman, great is your constancy; great is your faith'.

But it is with Christ's commission to Mary Magdalen to take the news of his resurrection to the disciples that Heyder embarks upon his exposition of the Magdalen's specific merits as a preacher. Firstly he incorporates the Patristic argument about women's role in the economy of salvation. Since 'Eve' is now made evangelist of evangelists and apostle of apostles, no distinctions of sex or status obtain under grace:

Behold now the Magdalen among all mortals is established by the Lord as the first messenger of his resurrection, and among all mortals and even spiritual creatures she first announced the ascension of Christ to those who were to proclaim the catholic faith in all the world. And the Lord Jesus with his own mouth set her as the first evangelist of evangelists and apostle of apostles. A wonderful thing! See how that woman who had been cleansed entirely of vice received such privilege and honour so that we might know that the passion, death and resurrection of Christ were celebrated for sinners. Grace will be withheld from no status, no rank, no sex, since such mercy from Christ upholds the weaker yet devoted female sex.

Heyder pursues the implications of the Magdalen's privilege further when he

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41 Tu enim ligaveras eam invisibili kathena dileccionis, tu amorem infudisti cordi eius tu eam a sorde purgaveras; verbis docueras dulci tactu virginei tui corpori provocaveras ... et nunc dicis mulier quid ploras? Ibid., f. 79rb-va.

42 O mulier magna est constancia tua; magna est fides tua. Ibid., f. 84ra.

43 Ecce nunc constituit a domino Magdalena inter omnes homines prima resurrectionis nuncia et inter omnes mortales et eciam spirituales creaturas prima nunciat cristi ascensionem; hiis qui fidem katholicam exclamaturi erant in omnem terram. Et dominus Ihesus ore proprio primam evangelistarum evangelistam et apostolam statuit apostolorum. Mira res. Vide quod illa femina quam primo ab universis viciis mundaverat tanta privilegia honoris accipit ut cognoscamus quo[d] christi passio mors et resurrectio sint pro peccatoribus celebrate. Nullus status nullus gradus nullus sexus secluditura gracia cum infirmiorem feminineum et devotum sexum tanta miseracio Christi fulcit. Ibid., f. 90va-91rb.
describes her, with the other women, proceeding to announce the good news to the disciples, who are said to be gathered together (congregati), in implicit contradiction of the canonists Gratian and Huguccio, who ruled against women presuming to teach men 'at a gathering' (in conventu). The Magdalen is shown not only to have rendered invalid any condemnation of women based on the example of Eve, but also to have won for women the accolade of exceptional dignity to restore their status:

And now they were certain that Jesus was alive; they quickly went to fulfil the Lord's commands and to announce to the apostles his life and resurrection, and their journey to Galilee. And they came and found the eleven disciples gathered. The Magdalen was indeed more fervent than the others and more resolute in the love of Christ; she first announces to the eleven what she had seen and heard from Jesus, saying that 'I have seen the Lord and he said these things to me.' And although the other women had seen Christ, yet they deferred from reverence to Mary Magdalen so that she might first make the announcement, since she was more dearly beloved by Christ, and this love is clearly proved by many signs of the constant conversation she had with the Lord. She is that apostle of apostles, who laudably put to silence the earliest transgression which had arisen due to the first woman and the imprecation of her, so that there might be no further reason (to say) that woman was the origin of damnation while we behold that she is the evangelist of our resurrection: for as by a human being came death, so by a human being came the resurrection of the dead. It ought to be be perceived concerning the resurrection of Christ that it was worthily made manifest to a woman first, so that as the first evil persuasion of the serpent announced to Adam introduced death, so the resurrection of our life in Christ should be pronounced by a woman to the male apostles. For Eve by the guilt of her transgression imposed the renown of misfortune and misery on the female sex: Mary Magdalen with her exceptional merits established for all women the praise and glory of outstanding dignity.

44 Quoted in Chapter 3 above.
45 Et nunc certe erant de vita Ihesu: festine incedunt domini iussa proficere apostolis nunciare vitam et resurrectionem eius, et transitum ipsorum in galyleam. Et venientes invenerunt undecimos apostolos congregatos. Magdalena vero ceteris fervencior et in amore christi prompcior: illa undecim primo nunciat visa et audita de Ihesu dicens: quia vidi dominum et hec dixit michi. Et quamquam alie femine christum viderint deferunt tamen reverenciam marie magdalene ut prima nunciet tamquam christo familiarius dilecta, qu[od/am] dilectionem multis indicis omni tempore conversacionis eadem cum domino probaverant evidenter. Hec est illa apostolorum apostola: que primarie prevaricacioni ex prima femina consurgent et eius inprecationi laudabile silencium inponit, ne cause[...] amplius feminam principium fuisse damnacionis dum hane conspicimus evangelistam esse nostre resurrectionis: quoniam sicut per
Heyder explicitly invalidates Henry of Ghent's criticism that women are easily seduced from the truth, based on the Pauline reasoning that 'Eve was seduced into transgression (praevaticatio)', by underlining how the Magdalen has silenced the 'primarie prevaricacioni'. He carefully makes the serpent's persuasion rather than Eve's words responsible for the Fall, and is the first author to quote Paul correctly in this context, 'as by a human being came death...' (I Cor. 15:21), since Ambrose had led the way on a gender-specific interpretation that imputed guilt to women exclusively.  

Heyder proceeds to outline how Mary Magdalen lived after the resurrection as a colleague of the disciples, and suggests that the risen Christ favoured her particularly before his ascension: 'It should not be doubted that the Saviour himself, having provoked her pious longing, would have appeared to his most faithful lover with joy and honour throughout the forty days ...'. It is said that she was present at the ascension, received Christ's benediction with the assembled company, and was especially glad since she herself had foretold the ascension. Then, expanding on Henry of Ghent's indication that 'Mary and Martha had received (the gift of) different tongues with the apostles', Heyder details the illumination that the Magdalen received from the Holy Spirit,

which even appeared in tongues of fire since it bestowed ardour as words to the mouth and light to the understanding and affections. ... On the
same day and at the same hour, the pious Magdalen, apostle of apostles, being in the assembly of these blessed (disciples), was filled with the gift of the same Holy Spirit; she was honoured by the Lord with such and so great an abundance of grace, just like the other apostles. Therefore, after the chosen disciple of Christ had been enriched with light by the copious gift of the Holy Spirit from the Father, and had been also irradiated by the brilliance of heavenly light and at the same time endowed with an abundance of grace, she began instantly to produce of herself fragrant flowers and also to bring them forth with the mature fruits of perfect justice. For granted that from the beginning of her conversion she had observed the precepts of God with all diligence towards God and her neighbour, yet from this time she was further kindled by the flame of divine love. Counting as slight the eminence of the Old Testament in comparison with the perfection of the Gospel, she strove to swiftly fulfilling the highest admonitions of true salvation and the arduous resolutions of piety which she had heard preached by the Saviour himself and, beside his couch, had stored them up with full concentration of mind. ... So leaving everything behind, this glorious matron conformed herself in every way to apostolic perfection... 49

This motif of light and illumination, so clearly stressed, becomes apparent as highly significant to Heyder’s purpose. The detail was first introduced at the start of his legendary account, when Voragine’s etymology was reproduced, which interpreted the name Mary as meaning ‘she who illuminates’ (illuminatrix). This interpretation derives originally from Jerome, who had allowed that ‘many people interpreted "Mary" as meaning "they who illumine me" or "she who illuminates"’. Jerome disputes this himself although elsewhere he renders ‘Mary’

49 Qui eciam in linguis igneis apparuit pro eo quod ori verbum et intellectu[i] lucem et affectui ministraret ardorem. ... Eodem die et eadem hora pia Magdalenae apostolorum apostola existens in [cetu] horum beatorum repleatur dono eiusdem spiritus sancti; cum tali ac tanta graciae habundancia sicut et ceteri apostoli a domino honorata. Postquam igitur electa cristi discipula largo sancti spiritus munere a patre luminum fuerat ditata: nec non superne lucis fulgere irradiata simulque graciae copia superfusa; ceplit repente flores odoriferas ex se producere eciam cum maturis perfecte iusticie fructibus parturire. Licet enim ab exordio sue coeversionis precepta dei cum omni diligencia servasset erga deum et proximum: ex tun ex tamen divini amoris flamma ul[t]erioris succensa. eminencia testamenti veteris conparazione perfectionis ewangelice parvipendens; summa vere salutis monita et ardua pietatis consilia que ab ipso salvatore predicata audierat atque tota intencione mentis triclinio recondierat, studuit velociter adimplete. Ut autem relictis omnibus hec gloriae matrona apostolici perfectioni se per omnia conformaret.... ibid., f. 101ra-102rb.
as 'enlightened' or 'enlightener'. The sermon attributed to Odo of Cluny had elaborated on the Marian epithet 'maris stella' to describe the Magdalen 'announcing the brightness of the Lord's resurrection to the world'. However in the whole corpus of the Patrologia Latina, the epithet illuminatrix is only used of the Virgin Mary and not of Mary Magdalen until it is revived in the etymology of the Legenda Aurea. It appears, therefore, that the active details of the Magdalen's life provided by the vita apostolica were needed to utilise the term illuminatrix for the Magdalen, so that Voragine could apply it to the way in which she illuminated others by her preaching after she herself had been illumined in contemplation at Christ's feet:

Inasmuch as she chose the best part of internal contemplation, she is called an illuminator, for she drank there avidly that which afterwards she poured forth abundantly: there she received light with which afterwards she enlightened others.

The implication that she illumined others after and through her contemplation seems also to allude to ps-Rabanus' theme that at times she left contemplation in order to preach, and counters the simple sequence of events that Voragine

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50 (De Matthaeo) Mariam plerique aestimant interpretari illuminant me isti, vel illuminatrix, vel smyrna maris, sed mihi nequaquam videtur. Melius autem est, ut dicamus sonare earn stella maris, sive amarum mare: sciendum quod Maria sermone Syro domina nuncupetur. Cf. (De actibus apostolorum) Maria, illuminata vel ut supra; (De epistolis Pauli) Maria, illuminans aut illuminata. Jerome, Liber de nominibus hebraicis (PL 23:842, 848, 851).

51 Above, pages 32-33.

52 Isidore, Etymologiarum 7.10.1 (PL 82:289): Maria, illuminatrix, sive stella maris; genuit enim Lumen mundi. Cf. Bede Hom. 55 (PL 94:418); Druthmarus Exp. in Matt. 1 and 35 (PL 106:1276, 1378). The Virgin Mary is also called illuminatrix apostolorum (see PL 31:92, n. 17).

53 In quantum elegit optimam partem contemplationis internae, dicitur illuminatrix, quia ibi hausit avide, quod postmodum effudit abunde: ibi lumen accepit, quo postmodum caeteros illustravit. Voragine, Legenda Aurea, ed. Graesse, 407. Mycoff, Critical edition of the legend of Mary Magdalena, 153, considers that Voragine's explanation of why this etymology is appropriate for the Magdalen seems to be his own. Marjorie Malvern, Venus in Sackcloth, 90-1, claims that the epithets illuminata and illuminatrix clearly link the Magdalen with the 'enlightened' Pistis of Gnosticism; this etymological link, however, is not established before the Middle Ages.
actually gives in the *Legenda* in which she exchanges the active life for one of contemplation in the wilderness.

In addition to the enlightenment that Mary Magdalen had gained from Christ's teaching during his earthly life, Heyder also underlines the illumination that Mary Magdalen received from the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. He describes this as having immediate effect in illuminating others, as the Magdalen, Martha and Lazarus together win people to Christ by their holy example before their exile from Judea: 'Thus the bright light of their most holy life so shone before people that many pagans, spurred on by their example, were converted to the Lord Jesus Christ.' The Magdalen herself is also said to be illuminated with wisdom through her frequent Eucharistic devotion:

> And since she, with such worthy preparation of mind and body, was often nourished at those royal wedding banquets, she was not only refreshed sacramentally but truly she was even strengthened spiritually by virtue of the bread of angels, and at the same time she was more clearly enlightened with the brightness of heavenly wisdom; instructed by the ray of this light, she stored up for herself the inner treasure of the richest merits of virtue in heaven, which would endure in unapproachable blessedness.

This theme of the Magdalen's role as *illuminatrix* culminates in Heyder's exposition of her preaching ministry in Provence, in the section he entitles, 'How and in what manner she solemnly preached the catholic faith at Marseilles'.

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54 The motif is also, of course, implicit in Heyder's constant stress on the love of Christ which had 'inflamed' the Magdalen since her conversion.

55 Sicque clarum lumen vitae sanctissime illuxit coram hominibus, ut multi infideles eorum exemplo incitati, converterentur ad dominum ihesu cristi. MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 103ra-b. The allusion is to Mt. 5:16.


Here, Henry of Ghent’s allusion to the authority necessary for a teacher, on account of which Christ likened teachers to a light which is placed on a lampstand, is explicitly rehearsed, and the Magdalen is said to have become such a light in the house of God:

The faithful God and the most kindly lover of humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ, said to his disciples in the Gospel, 'No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, but on a lampstand so it gives light to all who are in the house.' (Mt. 5:15) And since he himself first did what he taught us to do, therefore he did not want a shining light and burning torch for our communal benefit to be hidden or concealed, that is blessed Mary Magdalen, in whom the fire of the most fervent love burned so strongly, but he wanted her to be exalted so openly that the radiance of her perfect sanctity might give light to all who are in the house of the holy Church of God.

Hence Heyder proceeds specifically to detail the constancy, effectiveness, authority and divine eloquence with which the Magdalen preaches the doctrine she learned from Christ:

However when blessed Mary saw many people converging from all sides on the temple of this city, which was still blinded by gentile error, in order to sacrifice to idols in their accustomed fashion, at once inflamed by the fire of divine love and with zeal for the salvation of her brothers (and sisters), she stood up in the midst of the people with calm face and serene appearance and skilful tongue she recalled them from the worship of idols with wonderful authority, and preached most constantly the worship of the only son of God, the true God and Saviour of all. And everyone admired her beautiful appearance, the fluency of her speech and also the outstanding sweetness of her words. And since that most fruitful sower of divine eloquence drank the doctrine and water of salvation at those feet whence the living fountain flowed, on which feet she imposed such reverent and such frequent kisses with her mouth, hence her lips and her tongue were mellifluous: it is no wonder that she should give out the salvific perfume of the word of God more than others. For this sweetness the Bridegroom of the Church, the Lord Christ, praised her in the Canticle, saying, 'You are all fair, my love, and there is no flaw in you;

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58 See above, page 150.
59 Fidelis Deus et amator hominum benignissimus dominus ihesus christus dixit discipulis suis in evangelio, Nemo accordit lucernam et ponit eam sub modio sed supra candelabrum ut luceat omnibus qui in domo sunt. Et quia ipse prior fecit quod nos facere docuit, id cuio [sic (?circo)] noluit latere vel occultari nostrae communi utilitati lucentem lucernam et ardentem faculam id est beatam Mariam Magdalenam in qua tam fortiter arsit ignis ferventissimi amoris, sed voluit eam eam [sic (?tam)] apertissime exaltari quatenus splendor eius perfecte sanctitatis luceat omnibus qui sunt in domo ecclesie sancte dei. MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 105va-106ra.
your lips distil nectar, honey and milk are under your tongue' (Cant. 4:7,11). Therefore while blessed Mary remained in the city of Marseilles, with her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus, faithfully sowing the word of the Lord in that place, and gaining more souls for Christ she gathered them together in unity of faith. It happened one day that the noble prince of the province, who was a powerful king in that region as other teachers tell, came with his wife to the aforesaid city, that he might solemnly sacrifice in the manner of the gentiles to the renowned idols there, in order that he might have a child which he lacked. On realising this, the pious Magdalen, anticipating the prince with the doctrine of salvation, dissuaded him from the sacrifice of idolatry and preached effectively to him that Christ was the true God.  

Heyder goes on to relate 'how she converted the prince and his wife and the whole of that region to the Lord.' Again, the Magdalen's constancy in preaching is stressed, together with her ability to defend her faith, the ability which Henry of Ghent did not consider a woman capable of:

Therefore, while blessed Mary Magdalen, the evangelic preacher, reiterated the doctrine of the Christian faith with passionate zeal, behold, one day the aforementioned prince was present and heard her sermon and he reflected especially with what great constancy of mind and sweetness of words she retold the deeds and words of Christ the redeemer whom she had seen in the flesh while he was alive with the own eyes and listened to in good faith. He approached her and said to her,

60 Cum autem beata Maria videret populum multum undique confluere ad fanum huius civitatis, quae adhuc erat gentilitatis errore obsecata, ut ydolis more solito ymolaret, mox igne divine caritatis ac zelo fraterne salutis accensa, surrexit in medio populi, vultu placido, facie serena, lingua diserta, eos ab ydolorum cultura auctoritate mirifica revocabat: et cultum unicum dei filium deum verum et salvatorem omnium constantissime predicabat. Et mirati sunt universi propter speciem pulchritudinis, propter facundiam sermonis nec non propter nimiam dulcedinem verborum illius. Et quia ista fructuosissima seminatrix divini eloqui doctrinam et aquam salvatoris haussit ad pedes ubi fons vivus emanat quibus eiam pedibus tam pia et tam crebra ore suo impressit oscula, unde labia et lingua eius sunt melliflua: mirandum non est si hec ceteris amplius verbi divini spiraret salvificum odorem. De qua dulcedine sponsus ecclesie cristus dominus laudat eam in canticis dicens, Tota pulcra es amica mea et macula non est in te; favus distillans labia tua, mel et lac sub lingua tua. Dum ergo beata Maria in civitate marsilia moraretur cum sorore sua Martha et fratre suo Lazaro verbum Domini ibidem fideliter seminando, plures animas cristo lucrificiens in unitatem fidei congregavit. Accidit quodam die ut princeps magnificus ipsius provincie qui erat rex potens in illa regione sicut aliquis doctores dicunt, cum uxore sua in prefatum civitate veniret, ut pro habenda prole qua carebat ydolis ibidem famosis, ritu gentilitatis sollemniter ymolaret. Quo comperto, pia Magdalena principem doctrina salutari preveniens sacrificia ydolatrie disusit et cristum verum deum sibi efficaciter predicavit. ibid., f. 105va-109va.
'Do you think you are able to defend the faith which you preach openly?'
And she, trusting in the Lord with an undaunted heart, answered him,
'Indeed I am ready to defend it as confirmed with shining truth in every
place and every time...'.

The rest of the legend, about the prince's pilgrimage to Rome under the
Magdalen's miraculous protection, proceeds along the lines established by
Voragine. There is an extra echo from the *Vita apostolica* about the Magdalen's
preaching with divine approbation in that, having left Lazarus as bishop in
Marseilles, the Magdalen and her companions make their way to Aix to continue
their evangelistic work:

... There, persisting in vigils, fastings and prayers day and night, they
converted all the people of that place to God by their continual preaching,
with the Lord assisting and confirming their words with accompanying
signs.

After he has recounted the Magdalen's contemplation in the wilderness and final

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61 Qualiter predictum principem cum coniuge et tota illa regione ad dominum convertit et de
miraculo eius meritis perpetrato. Igitur dum beata Maria Magdalena predicatrix evangelica
doctrinam christiane fidei fervido zelo frequentaret, ecce quadam die predictus princeps assistens
audiebat sermonem illius considerabat insuper quanta mentis constancia quantaque verborum
dulcedine recitabat facta et dicta que a cristo redemptore adhuc in carne vivente oculis propriis
viderat et audierat fide bona. Hic accessit ad eam et dixit ei, Putas to posse defendere fidem
quam predicas manifeste? Et illa confidens in domino intrepidio corde respondit ei, Equidem
illam defendere presto sum utpote lucida veritate omni loco et omni tempore roboratam. Scio
namque quod hec fides domini mei Ihesu Cristi evidenter confirmatur et augmentatur cotidianis
miraculis et predicacionibus magistri nostri Petri qui Rome presidet populis cristianis. Ad quod
princeps nutu Dei tactus intrinsecus dixit ei, Ecce ego et domina mea legit(t)ima dictis tuis per
omnia documenta obtemperare parati sumus, si nobis a Deo quem predicas filium impetrabis. Et
illa respondit, Ob hoc fides vestra nullatenus debet impediri: quia preter hec non remanebit.
Tunc beata Maria interna devocione pro ipsi a dominum exoravit: ut sibi propter gloriam
nominis sui et dilatacionem vere fidei heredem concedere dignaretur. Cuius præces dominus

62 Tandem beata Maria Magdalena cum sorore sua Martha et predicto Maximino vectore earum
aliisque fidelibus christi discipulis sibi comitantibus domino disponente austris spirantibus ad
occidentalem plagam territorium aquense adeunt. Ubi die noctuque vigilis ieiunii et
orationibus insistentes predicacionibus continuis omnem ibidem populum ad deum converterunt
communion, Heyder concludes with a peroration which makes one last reference to her status in comparison with the apostles:

How great (a place) do you think he (Christ) prepared for those who love him as she did, to whose love scripture does not now admit any comparison, nor does experience know any equal. For as she was closer to Christ and his mother on earth, similarly she would be greater in honour than others in her heavenly reward; and as she surpassed the vows of all the apostles, so she would rejoice more greatly in the delight of heaven. To whose glorious and joyful company may the Lord, the king of angels, bring us. Amen.63

Thus, to recapitulate Bertholdus Heyder's specific refutations of Henry of Ghent's arguments about why a woman is not capable of teaching or preaching publicly:

i) Mary Magdalen's constantia is referred to specifically three times, and she defends the faith she preaches as confirmed by 'shining truth'.

ii) The Magdalen's efficacia is mentioned explicitly once and is reinforced by the results of her preaching in making converts, for which she is described as fructuosissima; at the tomb she forgets any infirmitas and then Christ's mercy is said to redress this greater infirmitas of women.

iii) The Magdalen's auctoritas mirifica is specified and is underlined by the allusion to her as a light placed on a lampstand; the prince says he and his wife will obey her in every detail; and distinctions of status and sex are shown no longer to obtain by the Magdalen's commission from Christ, but women are worthy of the highest dignity.

iv) The Magdalen's speech is said to be inspired with divine eloquence, and

63 Quantum putas preparavit taliter diligentibus se cuius dilectioni iam non patitur scriptura similitudinem; nec experciencia novit equalitatem; ut que christo et eius genitrice in terris fuit vicinior in celesti premio esset similiter ceteris honoraciort; et que omnium apostolorum vota transcenderat; in celi leticia superior gaudeat. Ad cuius consorciurn glorioum et iocundum perducat nos dominus rex angelorum. Amen. Ibid., f. 134ra-b.
although the term *vivacitas* is not used, her words deter her hearers from sacrificing to idols and gather them in unity of faith.

v) The Magdalen is said to have learned from Christ's own words and preaching, and she herself propounds the _doctrina_ of salvation and the Christian faith.

Thus Heyder conclusively demonstrates that in her preaching, the Magdalen exhibited all the qualities thought necessary, especially by Henry of Ghent, for a true preacher. The conclusion drawn from this detailed exploration of the way in which the Magdalen's legend could be presented therefore refutes the arguments which make Mary Magdalen an exception to the normal limitations which disqualified women from preaching. It is clearly not the case that she preached even though she was subject to a woman's inferior abilities. Bertholdus Heyder, drawing on earlier tradition, shows specifically that the Magdalen met all the contemporary criteria in her preaching, and that a woman was just as capable as a man at fulfilling the office of a preacher. Hence, medieval devotion to the Magdalen reveals that, for a significant ministerial role in the Church, divine grace could be seen to be effective in redeeming the distinctions between the sexes. In depicting the Magdalen as a preacher, the legend demonstrates a true fulfilment of Paul's words, that in the economy of salvation there is 'neither male nor female'.

Further symbolism: i) The Magdalen and the aureola of preachers

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Franciscan Eustace of Arras admitted that some people

... piously feel in respect of the praise and glory of the saints that holy women like blessed Mary Magdalen and blessed Catherine merited the aureola, since ... prompted by the Holy Spirit and sent by the Holy Spirit they preached, and the sign of this is that they converted many and
important people to faith in Christ....

In Bertholdus Heyder's manuscript the Magdalen is actually represented in one of the illustrations wearing the aureola as she preaches to the prince and his wife and other listeners. Although the standard interpretation, like Eustace's, implied that the aureola was a single crown, awarded either for virginity, martyrdom or preaching, this illumination depicts the Magdalen wearing a triple aureola, shown as a blue and a red halo surmounted by the dove of the Holy Spirit, which is crowned by the third, golden, halo. Thus the Magdalen is portrayed as having merited the reward for special virtue as an ascetic (considered equivalent to martyrdom) who had overcome the world, a virgin (interestingly!) who had overcome the flesh, at least after her conversion, and as a preacher who had overcome the devil. The Magdalen, like Catherine of Alexandria, was thereby ranked in the company of 'contemporary' saints such as Francis, Dominic and Peter Martyr, and these were to be joined by Catherine of Siena in due course.

The Franciscan Francisco de Meyronis, from Digne in Provence († 1325), in a sermon on the Magdalen went one step further and attributed to her the quadruple crown, one layer of which was the golden aureola reserved for doctores. He tells how she 'disseminated the seed of the Word in the whole

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64 Eustace of Arras, *Quodlibet* II q. 5; ed. Jean Leclerg, 'Le magistère du prédicateur', 120.
65 MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 144r.; below, Figure 1.
67 Peter of Poitiers considered the corona aureola for doctors as the highest prize; *Allegoriae super tabernaculum Moysi*: Per coronam aureolam... significatur eorum remuneratio qui in doctoribus excellunt, ut virgines et martires et predicatores...; cited in Volpato, "Corona Aurea" e "Corona aureola", 157. Alan of Lille describes a rather original scheme of four crowns comprised of palm for martyrdom, cedar for preaching, laurel for virginity, and olive for those
realm of Marseilles and, having converted the prince and his wife, she then converted almost all of Provence to the faith of Christ’, and then goes on:

And it is said that she obtained the quadruple crown. ...(this included) the golden crown which is given to teachers since wisdom is noted in gold according to Gregory and she taught wisdom and knowledge of the Christian faith.68

The fifteenth century Dominican Jean Nider, rather more simply, says in one of his *Sermons aurei* that the Magdalen received the aureola of preachers, as the last of the seven privileges that she was granted after Christ’s death:

... She merited being the first to see the Lord rising and hence she became the apostle of apostles. ... She died as it were of love. A fragrance lingered for seven days (after her death) and she wears the aureola of preachers in her (heavenly) homeland.69

ii) The Magdalen as ignifera

Another apparently unique illustration in Bertholdus Heyder’s manuscript shows Mary Magdalen standing beside Christ at Martha’s deathbed, holding a candle in her hand.70 The scene is described by Heyder in his *Life of St Martha*,71 in which

who 'in presenti vita sectati sunt caritatis opera. Caritatem enim significat oliva'; *Sermo in natali Sancti Augustini*, cited in *ibid.*, 155.


70 MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 213; below, Figure 2.

he draws on an episode first found in Ps-Rabanus' *Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae*. Martha, knowing that she is about to die and longing to be reunited with her sister, who has predeceased her, in the enjoyment of Christ's embraces, is visited at night by the Magdalen with a fiery torch in her right hand, and she announces to her sister the coming of Christ:

On the evening of the seventh day following (the Magdalen's death), she (Martha) commanded that seven candles and three lamps be lit [that they might pray]. About the middle of the night, when everyone was in a deep sleep, having been worn out with watching, suddenly the blast of a rushing whirlwind with great vehemence extinguished all the candles and lamps. ... And, behold, a sudden light shone down from heaven and in that light appeared Mary Magdalen, the apostle of Christ, the Lord and Saviour, carrying in her right hand a fiery torch with which she immediately lit the seven candles and three lamps.... [Christ appears and speaks to Martha] Having spoken, he disappeared, and her sister Saint Mary also vanished, but the light in which they had appeared still remained. Then the servants returned and were amazed to find the lights which they had left behind extinguished now throwing out an extraordinary light.\(^{72}\)

The Magdalen is, of course, presented here literally by Ps-Rabanus as an *illuminatrix* in her action of re-kindling the lamps beside Martha's bed.\(^{73}\) In the *Abbreviatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum* by Jean de Mailly, this episode is also


\(^{73}\) Although the verb *illuminare* is not used of the Magdalen 'lighting' the candles in the hagiographical accounts, there is a firm biblical basis for this usage, e.g. Ps. 17:29: Quoniam tu illuminas lucernam meam, Domine; Deus meus, illumina tenebras meas. Ps-Rabanus, however, uses the verb '(cereos et lucernas) accendere'.
related in his *Vita Marthae*, although he differs in some details from Ps-Rabanus.\(^{74}\) It appears, therefore, that Jean de Mailly and Ps-Rabanus were using a common source. Such a source is indicated by Vincent of Beauvais, who includes this scene in his *Speculum historiale* in which he cites a *Gesta Sanctae Marthae*, of which no early version is still extant.\(^{75}\) Voragine recounts the scene in his *Life of St Martha* in the *Legenda Aurea*,\(^{76}\) and it is also reproduced in the *South English Legendary*.\(^{77}\)

The episode can also be seen to contain hints of important analogies which serve to reinforce the Magdalen's authority in linking her typologically to significant biblical figures. There are several verbal allusions to the gospel accounts of the transfiguration of Christ, especially that of Luke: the introductory temporal clause;\(^{78}\) the intention of prayer;\(^{79}\) the nighttime setting and the tiredness of the companions.\(^{80}\) It is, of course, Moses and Elijah who appear with Christ to the disciples, and who in Luke's account talk with him about his approaching death, while in Ps-Rabanus the Magdalen and Christ himself appear to Martha on her deathbed, and her companions marvel at the extraordinary light that remains.

\(^{74}\) The seven candles and three lamps are extinguished by demons; the Magdalen accompanies Christ and the lights are rekindled miraculously; Dondaine, *Abrégé des Gestes et Miracles des Saints*, 252. The legend of St Martha is not included in the earliest manuscripts of the *Abbreviatio*, so it has not been possible to compare the Latin.

\(^{75}\) See Mycoff, *Life of Saint Mary Magdalen*, 10-11. A *Vita Marthae* (BHL 5545-6) is traditionally said to have been written in Hebrew by Marcella, Martha's servant, who accompanied the apostles to Provence, and to have been translated into Latin by one Syntyclus. Besides the 'epitomae' of Vincent and Voragine, the Bollandists only cite a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Florentine manuscript (A. M. Bandini, *Catal. Cod. lat. bibl. Mediceae Laurentianae*, vol. 4, 326, XC VII) and the *Sanctuarium* of Mombritius.

\(^{76}\) *De Sancta Martha*, in *Legenda Aurea* ed. Graesse, 445-6.

\(^{77}\) *The South English Legendary*, ed. d'Evelyn and Mill, vol. 1, 351-2, ll. 77-124.

\(^{78}\) Septima igitur sequenti die; cf. 'factum est autem post haec verba fere dies octo' (Lk. 9:28); 'et post dies sex' (Mt. 17:1, Mk. 9:3).

\(^{79}\) ut ... orarent; cf. 'ut oraret' (Lk. 9:28).

\(^{80}\) sopore gravi vigiles oppressi; cf. 'gravati erant somno et evigilantes' (Lk. 9:32).
The heavenly radiance in which the apostle Mary Magdalen appears also recalls the light which shone around the apostle Paul at his conversion.\textsuperscript{81}

Vincent of Beauvais adds the detail that the 'not insignificant candles' (\textit{non modicos cereos}) and lamps are extinguished by a whirlwind caused by demons. He also renders in direct speech the prayer for consolation that then Martha utters, in which she addresses God as Eli: 'My father, Eli ... my persecutors are gathered around me to devour me ... saying, "God has forsaken her, let us pursue and capture her, for there is no one who can save her" (Ps. 71:11-12). Eli do not forsake me; Eli make speed to save me...' (Ps. 70:1).\textsuperscript{82} Mary appears first in answer to Martha's prayers with a fiery torch in her hand, bringing light as if to cast out the demons herself, and then Christ also appears.\textsuperscript{83} Here it seems that Vincent adapts Ps-Rabanus' scene, and aligns the death of Martha to the scene of the Crucifixion as well as to the transfiguration. The unnatural darkness and the quotation in direct speech of the prayer, 'Eli ... Eli' directly parallel the darkness during the Passion and Christ's prayer on the cross (Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34; cf. Ps. 22:1), and the taunts of the demons imitate those of the bystanders who mocked Jesus, when it appeared that God did not deliver him and save him. Also, after the visitation, Martha has a Hebrew gospel which she brought with her from Jerusalem read to her and she dies at the words \textit{Pater in manus tuas commendo}

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{ecce subito lumen coelitus fusum radiavit}; cf. \textit{et subito circumfulsit eum lux de caelo} (Acts 9:3).

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Mi pater}, inquit, \textit{Hely ... congregati sunt ad devorandum me seductores mei ... dicentes: Deus dereliquit eam, persequamini et comprehendite eam, quia non est, qui liberet eam: Hely, ne elongeris a me: Hely, in adiutorium meum intende...}. Vincent of Beauvais, \textit{Speculum historiale}, book 9, ch. 105, 360.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{... vidit beata Martha sororem suam Mariam Magdalenum occurrentem sibi, facem igneam manu tenentem, ex qua omnes lampades et cerei max accenduntur. Et dum altera proprio nomine vocaret alteram, ecce Dominus Jesus Christus adest ... ille qui nusquam abest .... Ibid.}
Thus Vincent presents the Magdalen appearing to Martha as Elijah was expected to for Christ as he approached death. In the gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark, those who hear Christ's prayer assume that he is calling on Elijah, and they wait to see 'whether Elijah will come to save him' (Mt. 27:49; cf. Mk. 15:36). Like Elijah, the Magdalen in the legendary account is a literal 'forerunner' of Christ whose advent to Martha she announces. Elijah is traditionally associated with fire after his assumption into heaven in a chariot of fire. He is eulogised in Ecclesiasticus: 'Then the prophet Elijah arose like a fire and his word burned like a torch' (Ecclus. 48:1); and in Revelation the two witnesses, described as 'two candlestands placed on the earth in the sight of God ... from whose mouth comes fire' (Rev. 11:3-5), are interpreted as Elijah and Enoch. Like Elijah, the Magdalen is also associated with fire, carrying as she does a burning torch, and re-lighting the seven candles and three lamps. Also like Elijah, the Magdalen was fed by angels while she lived in the wilderness.

The image of the Magdalen carrying a fiery torch must also lie behind the

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84 Here Vincent again uses direct speech to underline the correspondence, in contrast to the reported speech of Ps-Rabanus.
85 This is either due to the Jewish belief that the prophet would aid the righteous person in the hour of need, or to malicious derision that Elijah would still appear as the Messiah's precursor to vindicate Jesus.
86 Et surrexit Elias, propheta, quasi ignis, et verbum ipsius quasi facula ardebat.
87 ... duo candelabra, in conspectu Domini terrae stantes. ... ignis exiet de ore eorum. M. van Uytfanghe, 'Modèles bibliques dans l'hagiographie', in P. Riché and G. Lobrichon (ed.), Le Moyen Age et la Bible (Paris, 1984), 449-487, 460, argues that in general 'physical fire accompanies the life and deeds of the prophet (Elijah) in the Bible and in later legends, especially those collected by Isidore of Seville' (e.g. Isidore, De Ortu et Obitu Patrum 35.61-4 (PL 83:140-1)).
88 While seven and three are both symbolic numbers, there may be a resonance in the former from the seven golden lampstands, among which the one like the Son of Man walks, and the seven flaming torches, which burn before the throne, in Revelation (1:12, 20, 2:1; 4:5).
appellation found in one of the early thirteenth-century pseudo-Augustinian sermons, *Ad frates in eremo*, where she is referred to as 'Magdalena illa ignifera'. No further context is given for this unique epithet however: the sermon is on 'purity of conscience' and the fire-bringing Magdalen is said to have offered Christ precious ointment 'in the heavenly and eternal glory' in which the individual soul is exhorted to rejoice, and there she chose the best part.89 In a later sermon the Magdalen is held up as a source of hope so that none might doubt the greatness of God's mercy:

> 'And lest anyone should despair, take as an example that sinner Mary, mistress of luxury, mother of vain-glory, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who afterwards merited being called the apostle of apostles.'90

While this reference does not specifically allude to the preaching legend nor indicate knowledge of the episode at Martha's deathbed to explain the writer's earlier use of the title *ignifera*, it is difficult to account for his application of the epithet to the Magdalen on any other basis.

The association of the Magdalen with fire and the potential derivation of this from biblical imagery of Elijah finds popular expression in this period, for example in the writings of two thirteenth-century women. Umiltà of Faenza (1226-1310), herself a preacher, in a sermon to the nuns of her Vallombrosan convent,91 pictures the Magdalen, illuminated by Christ, as a light in a

91 A. Simonetti (ed.), *I Sermoni di Umiltà da Faenza* ( Spolet o, 1995), xxxvi. Elizabeth A. Petroff *Medieval women's visionary literature* (New York/Oxford, 1986), 236, argues that some of the sermons may date from the decade she spent earlier as a recluse attached to the church of St Apollinaris and so may have been preached to men. Several of the sermons are addressed to
candlestand, echoing the image of Elijah as a candlestand in Revelation:

O Lord who illumined Mary Magdalen, made by divine grace a light in the candlestand, and gave her so great a drink from that living fountain of your heavenly love, illuminate me, O Christ, in your abundance, that I might come to you by that straight way which the Magdalen forged when she burned with love and mourned beside the tomb. 92

Elsewhere Umiltà describes how the Magdalen was set on fire by Jesus' words, and merited by her tears being the first witness to his resurrection. 93 While there is no direct allusion to her active life, Umiltà mentions that the Magdalen 'was accompanied by angels for thirty years while she was in this world and lived in the flesh.' 94 One suspects that the abbess may have also prayed to be 'illuminated' by Christ like the Magdalen in her preaching, for we know from her vita that Umiltà not only wrote but delivered sermons in Latin and even preached on matters of theological doctrine:

It was a thing marvellous in all respects, to see the blessed Umiltà, who had never learned letters ... even discoursing and speaking in the Latin language, as if she had studied much in it, dictating sermons and lovely tractates on spiritual things, in which there appeared profound doctrine, very skilled verbal expression, even when speaking of the more sublime mysteries of sacred theology. 95

92 Domine qui illuminasti Mariam Magdalenam, lucernam in candelabro gratia divina, tantum potum dedisti de illo fonte vivo, tuo amore supremo; illumina me, Christe, tua dapsilitate, ut ego ad te veniam per illam rectam viam qua(m) fecit Magdalena, quando amore ardebit et iuxta monumentum lugebat. Umiltà, Serm. 11; Simonetti, 141.

93 Martha autem praeparabat et Maria iucundabat, iuxta suos stabat pedes, ad sum verbum audiendum; illud verbum dulce et sanctum, quod eam ungebant, et laetificabant, et inflammabant de suo glorio amore. Umiltà, Serm. 8; Simonetti, 104.

94 Nunc manet cum angelis exaltata a quibus fuit in isto mundo sociata, et per triginta annos sociata, quando viua erat in carne. Ibid.

95 Fuit res omnino admirabilis, videre B. Humilitatem, quae nunquam litteras didicerat ... etiam discurrentem loquentemque Latina lingua, quasi mulsum in ea studii posuisse; dictando sermones et tractatus pulcherrimos de rebus spiritualibus, in quibus apparebat profunda doctrina,
Mechtild of Hackeborn, a contemporary of Umiltà though geographically distant, also associated Mary Magdalen with fire and burning love. On the Magdalen's feast day, she had a vision of the saint standing beside the Lord, and her fiery heart shone with the brightness of the sun and lit up her whole body. And she understood that this heavenly fire was first kindled when she heard Christ say 'Your sins are forgiven; go in peace' (Lk. 7:50). This fire was so powerful in her that henceforth everything that she did or thought was transformed into it. From this she understood that everything done or thought or said or suffered by someone who is consumed by divine love is changed into the fire of love, like wood thrown into a fire, and increases the fire itself. If anything else combustible is thrown on, like venial sins, the fire consumes it completely and reduces it to nothing. And this soul would be completely aflame so that when it left the body no evil spirit would be able to approach it. But those who do not burn with this fire of divine love, whatever they do will not be set alight, and besides the evil they do will weigh them down like a burden when they die.96

iii) The Magdalen and the new covenant

The scene of Mary Magdalen appearing at Martha's deathbed carrying a burning torch in her right hand, with its resonances from the transfiguration, also gives rise to consideration of the typological analogy between the Magdalen and Moses. Moses, like Elijah, was associated with fire: Bede, for example, identifies

aptissimis expressa verbis, etiam circa sublimiora sacrae Theologiae mysteria. Analecta, ch. 1, par. 1; AASS May V; tr. Petroff, Body and Soul, 173.

96 Item in festo eiusdem vidit ipsam coram Domino stantem, cuius cor ignem solari radiabat claritate, ac in omnia eius membra se transfundebat. Intellexitque coelitus hunc ignem in corde eius tunc primitus accensum cum a Christo audivit: Remittuntur tibi peccata tua, vade in pace. Qui ignis ita in ea convaluit, ut omnia quae postmodum ageret seu cogitaret, in ignem illum verterentur. Per hoc quoque intellexit quod quilibet divino successus amore, omnia quae agit, cogitat sive loquitur, aut patitur velut ligna igni ineecta, in amoris ignem commutata augmentat ipsum in eo. Si quid etiam aliud cremabile ingeritur, ut sunt venalia peccata, totum hoc igne absuitur et in nihilum redigitur; eritque anima illa tota ignea, ita ut in exitu eius a corpore maligni spiritus eidem nullatenus [audeant vel] valeant [ap]propinquare. Illi vero qui hoc igne, id est, divino amore non flagrant, quidquid agant, non sic ignitum; insuper mala quae agunt velut onera eos gravant cum decedunt. Mechtild, Liber specialis gratiae Bk 1, ch. 25, in Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechtildianae cura Solemnensium, 2 vols (Paris, 1875-7), vol. 2, 87-8.
him with the 'divine law' that burned the golden calf with fire, and applies to him the text 'I have come to cast fire on the earth' (Lk. 12:49). Moses received the 'fiery law' (ignea lex) from the Lord, and the Benedictine Rupert of Deutz (1075-1129/30), equates the right hand of God which Moses saw holding the fiery law (Dt. 33:2) with the best part that the Magdalen had chosen. This optima pars, he says, is 'to read or hear and commit to memory the word of God'. Thus the fiery torch which Mary Magdalen holds in her right hand recalls Moses' fiery law in the right hand of God. The seven candles which the Magdalen relights also enhance this biblical resonance, recalling the seven lights in the candelabrum which burned before the tabernacle of the Law.

Patristic literature had presented the Magdalen as a second Eve, and her witness to the resurrection had marked the redemption of the Fall as a counterpart or sequel to the incarnation through the Virgin Mary. Medieval writers, it would seem, introduced the theme of the Magdalen as a second Moses to enhance her reputation and authority in her ministry as an apostle. Her presence at Calvary and in the garden on Easter morning made her effectively a minister of the new covenant of the Passion of Christ, and hence it was appropriate that she should have been aligned with Moses, the minister of the old covenant.

97 Hunc ergo vitulum, hoc est omnem societatem gentium, Moyses, id est divina lex, combussit illo igni: de quo dicitur Ignem veni mittere in terram. Bede, In Pentateuchum Commentarii; Exodus ch. 32 (PL 91:330).

98 In dextera eius ignea lex. ... Quanto melior est dextera quam sinistra, tanto felicius bonum est liber iste sive ignea lex, quam divitiae et gloria. ... Ignea vero lex, scilicet iste liber tantummodo electorum bonum et consolatio est; et ista est pars quae semper permanet, testante Domino cum dicit in Evangelio: Maria optimam partem elegit quae non auferetur ab ea. Rupert of Deutz, Comm. in Apoc. 4, on Rev. 5:1, 'Et vidi in dextera sedentis super thronum librum scriptum' (PL 169:924-5). Martha's part is equated with the left hand which holds 'earthly riches and glory' (Pr. 3:16).

99 ... pars optima, quae est Verbum Dei, legere vel audire, et intellecta commendare memoriae, in summa mihi est delectatione. Ibid.

100 Exodus 25:37, 37:23; Num. 8:2; cf. Zech. 4:2 and Rev. 4:5.
Early medieval exegesis had asserted that Mary Magdalen had fulfilled Moses' prophecy: 'They that approach his feet shall receive his doctrine' (Deut. 33:3). The sermon on the Magdalen attributed to Odo of Cluny, perhaps drawing on two Easter homilies of Haymo of Haberstadt,\(^\text{101}\) uses this verse to adumbrate Luke's narrative of Mary sitting at the feet of Christ, listening to his words (10:38-42).\(^\text{102}\) However, the Deuteronomic text is also appropriate for the mediatory role Moses himself played in approaching God on the mountain to receive the Law, and can be seen as foretelling the women meeting Jesus on Easter morning and receiving the 'doctrine' of the resurrection, and Christ's teaching that they are to be his witnesses. Although this sermon concentrates on the Johannine account of the resurrection, saying that Mary was prohibited at that time from touching Jesus, it mentions the Matthaean detail that the holy women did approach and even clasp his feet.\(^\text{103}\)

Abelard's exposition of the text of Luke 10:38-42, the Gospel for the feast of the Assumption, can also be seen as developing the theme of the Magdalen as a second Moses. He demonstrates how the Magdalen, representing the *Ecclesia ex gentibus* in contrast to Martha as *Synagoga* as she listens to Jesus' teaching, perceives that the gospel and Christ's sacrifice will properly replace the law and the old dispensation which came through Moses,

> Sitting at his feet as if clinging to them, she heard the word of Christ rather than Moses, that is following the gospel more than the law: she embraced his humanity with such firm faith that she did not doubt that his one sacrifice was sufficient for salvation, and thought that the

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\(^\text{101}\) Haymo, *Hom. 70* and *77* (PL 118:452 and 479).

\(^\text{102}\) Libet enim audire praecepta coelestia, sicuti haec beatissima faciebat Maria, quae sedens secus pedes Domini verbum illius intenta aure percipebat. Impletum est in ipsa, quod olim per beatum Mysen dictum fuerat: *Et qui approprinquant pedibus eius, accipient de doctrina ipsius. Sermo in veneratione Mariae Magdaleneae* (PL 133:717).

\(^\text{103}\) Ubi non est putandum quod post resurrectionem tactum renuerit feminarum; cum de duobus a monumento illius recedentibus dictum sit, quod accesorunt et tuerunt pedes eius. *Ibid.* (PL 133:720-1).
sacrifice of the law would no longer be the one thing necessary. ... for when evangelical perfection comes, what was started by the law will cease.104

Here again the vocabulary of her not merely sitting at Jesus' feet but embracing them foreshadows the way the women embrace the feet of the risen Redeemer, after the 'sufficient sacrifice' has been offered, and receive his command to take the news of the new covenant to the disciples.

Vincent of Beauvais extends these Mosaic themes to establish an explicit parallel between the Magdalen and Moses, which was to become standard in the Magdalen's legendary vitae, that her face shone as a result of her celestial communion. Although the Hebrew word for the way Moses' face 'shone' after his meetings with the Lord (Ex. 34:29, 35) was long misunderstood, Paul's interpretation of the way the new covenant surpassed the old (II Cor. 3:7-18) made the proper sense clear, and several medieval commentators including Aquinas argued against the iconographic representation of Moses wearing horns. In telling of the encounter between Maximin and Mary Magdalen on the occasion of her last communion in his Speculum historiale, Vincent stresses the supernatural light which surrounded her and describes how radiant her face was:

Maximus, giving great thanks to God, entered his oratory before dawn on Easter day and saw blessed Mary amidst a choir of angels who had brought her still standing surrounded by such splendour that light brighter than daylight illumined the whole oratory. And while the man of God remained by the door, he saw the angelic choir ascending, and her standing in the middle praying with outstretched hands, lifted up thus into the air that there seemed to be two cubits between the ground and her little body. And when he feared to draw closer, she, whose face shone more than the rays of the sun from the continual vision of angels,

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104 His pedibus quasi sedendo adhaerens, audit verbum Christi potius quam Moysi, sequendo scilicet Evangelium magis quam legem: quae tam firma fide humanitatem eius amplectitur ut hanc eius unam hostiam ad salutem sufficere non dubitet, nullumque iam legis sacrificium necessarium fore putet. ... supervieniente evangelica perfectione cessabit inchoatio legis. Abelard, Serm. 26 (PL 178:547).
Vincent also brings out the correspondence between Moses and the Magdalen when the prince of Marseilles and his wife return from pilgrimage and confess the truth of the Magdalen's preaching in the words of the first commandment:

'O blessed Mary Magdalen, great is he, your God, whom you preach on earth; we believe and confess that besides him there is no other God. Behold we and all that is ours is in your hand: let it be in all things as you wish.'

The Magdalen's shining face is also described by Voragine, who says that because of her continual and lasting vision of angels, 'one could more easily look at the sun's rays than at her face'. Hence, similarly, the *Northern Homily collection*, the *Gilte Legende*, and Caxton's *Golden Legend*. This image was

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106 O beata Maria Magdalena magnus est ille, quem in terris praedicas, Deus tuus, credimus et confitemur quod praeter ipsum non est alius Deus. Ecce nos et omnia nostra in manu tua sumus: fiat de omnibus sicut vis. *Ibid.*, ch. 98, 357.

107 Appropinquante autem eo, sicut in ipsius beati Maximini legitur libris, ita vultus dominae ex continua et diuturna visione angelorum radiabat, ut facilius solis radios quam faciem suam intueri quis posset. *De Sancta Maria Magdalena*, ed. Graesse, 411.

108 Hir face to luke on was so light / And so schinend vnto his sight
Him thog(ht) he might luke longer space / On je suns beme ãan on hir face.

Horstmann *Altenglische Legende*, 90, II. 867-70.

109 And than, whan he neyghis hir, as it is reddre in the bokys of Maxymien, he sawgh, that bi continuel visyoun of angellis euery daie the visage of this holî lady [was so] shynynge, as it had ben a bright beeme of the sonne. Zupitza, 'Das Leben der heiligen Maria Magdalena', 223.

110 And whan he approched & cam to her, as it is reddre in the bokes of the said Seint Maxymyn, for the customizable vision that she had of angellis euery day, the chyere and visage of her shone as cleer as it had ben the rayes of the sonne. Mycoff, *A Critical Edition of the Legend of Mary Magdalena*, 137, II. 549-54.
also used by preachers like the Augustinian hermit Jordan of Quedlimbourg (d.1380), who though he clearly used the amplified *vita apostolica*, attributes no active life to the Magdalen, but describes how her face shone from her 'contemplation of divine goodness and angelic purity'. The fifteenth century Dominican Jean Nider makes the allusion explicit in the sermon already mentioned above, when he describes among the seven privileges that the Magdalen received after Christ's death that 'she was visited seven times each day by angels (and) her face shone like Moses'.

iv) The Magdalen and the contemplative and active lives combined

By the twelfth century, Moses going to and fro between the mountain and the tabernacle was proposed as an exemplar of the balance that could be achieved between the active and contemplative lives. This image served a useful purpose in countering the problematic twelfth-century trend that saw many abbots, priors and abbesses seeking to lay down their abbatial responsibility in order to choose Mary's best part of contemplation in preference to their active life. Hildebert of Lavardin (1056-1143) writes to reassure a new abbot of St

111 ...sed postquam ad Aquensem territorium pervenit statim abiit et triginta annis ibidem in artissima penitencia ... permansit. ... Ex hac autem contemplatione divine bonitatis et angelice puritatis vultus eius tanto fulgore radiabat ut facilius solis radius quam ipsius faciem quis posset intueri p(ro)ut beatus maximinus in suis libris p(ro)testatur. Jordan of Quedlimbourg, Serm. 104 De sancta Maria Magdalena, in Opus Postillarum et Sermonum Iordani de Tempore (Strasburg, 1483), unpaginated.


113 On this balance, see Giles Constable, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', 3-141.

114 See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: studies in the spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1982). Hildegard of Bingen, while she is addressed as having chosen the best part, gives short shrift to those in authority who write to her about
Vincent at Le Mans who would have preferred Mary’s ‘bread of angels’ to Martha’s ‘human bread’. He describes how Moses, like Jacob, Peter, Paul, and Christ himself, exemplified both lives: ‘Thus Moses spoke in the tent with the people and for the people on the heights with God’.\(^\text{115}\) Adam of Dryburgh, a canon regular in the later twelfth century, compares a combination of the two lives to the way Moses went to and from the tabernacle:

> Often Moses entered the tabernacle and went out from it. He entered in order to consult with the Lord, and he went out in order to instruct the people. ... So since there are two lives, active and contemplative that is, the contemplative is implied by entering the tabernacle, the active by leaving it. And since there are two commandments about caritas, love of God and love of one’s neighbour that is, the love of God leads us to enter in for contemplation, and love of our neighbour leads us to leave for active service.\(^\text{116}\)

Innocent III twice uses the example of Moses returning from the mountain to the camp to encourage monks who had been called to be bishops when they themselves wished for the best part of Mary.\(^\text{117}\) The parallel with Moses was also said to have been demonstrated by a woman. Jutta of Huy (1158-1228) is

\[^{115}\text{Talis Moyses in tabernaculo cum populo, pro populo in excelsis cum Domino loquebatur. Hildebert, Ep. 1.22 (PL 171:199).}\]

\[^{116}\text{Multoties tabernaculum Moyses ingreditur et de eo egreditur. Ingreditur ut consultat Dominum; egreditur ut erudiat populum. ... Cum itaque duae vitae sint, activa scilicet et contemplativa: contemplativa per ingressum tabernaculi, activa inuissetur per egressum. Et cum duo caritatis praecipita sint, amor videlicet Dei et proximi: amor Dei ad ingressum nos ducit contemplationis; proximi vero ad egressum actionis. Adam of Dryburgh, De Tripartito Tabernaculo 3.13.168 (PL 198:774). Adam does, however, describe clerics as having chosen the best part of a spiritual, heavenly and contemplative life, in comparison to that of laymen.}\]

\[^{117}\text{Proinde licet sedes ad pedes Domini cum Maria circa uram necessarium meditante, Marthae tamen erga plurima satagentis non debes ministerium asperrimum, quia Dominus et Mariam diligebat et Martham. ... quemadmodum Moyses ibat in montem ut loqueretur cum Domino, et confestim revertetur ad castra ut intenderet necessitatis populorum. Christus quoque cum ascendisset in montem solus orare, descendit illico ad discipulas periclitantes in mari. Innocent III, Regesta 12.15 (PL 216:25-7), a letter of 1209. Also idem, De renuntiatione (MGH Script. 32:326), a letter incorporated into the Decretals and Salimbene’s Chronicle.}\]
described by Hugh of Floreffe, who says that 'like Moses who served people at one time and listened to God at another, she persevered internally in whatever she did externally'; but then at the end of her life she gave up the work of Martha and devoted herself entirely to the best part of Mary.\footnote{Hugh of Floreffe, \textit{Vita b. Juttae} 11.37 and 14.42; \textit{AASS} Jan. II, 152, 153.}

This development, it can be argued, was in part made possible with the help of the influence of the developing legends about Mary Magdalen's active life from the late eleventh century, which meant that she was no longer exclusively seen as a model of contemplation, and the Mosaic typology was found to suit this well. Sometimes Mary is said to rise and help Martha or to minister to Jesus herself, with examples taken from the gospel episodes where she does not merely sit at Christ's feet\footnote{In scriptural terms, the Magdalen's activity in anointing Jesus came to be seen as her engaging in active ministry, and Christ's feet at which she sat were interpreted as the poor, who should be served by works of mercy.} and later from the legends. In some cases the Magdalen's ministry, balanced between action and contemplation, is compared to the ideal for preachers and prelates, or else the contemplative life is said to include teaching and preaching in order to accommodate the diverse activities in which the Magdalen engaged.

In contrast to the \textit{vita eremitica}, then, the newly-formed legends presented the Magdalen pursuing a career after the ascension specifically concerned with the care of souls and ministering to the spiritual needs of others, and this implies in allegorical terms that the 'best part' need not necessarily be seen as one of quietistic contemplation. While the earliest active legends do not contain a contemplative episode, elements were soon introduced about the Magdalen's eremitic life to provide the necessary contemporary balance. The \textit{Vita Beatae Mariae Magdalenae} of ps-Rabanus demonstrates immediately the writer's concern.
as to the relative values of action and contemplation as far as Martha and Mary are concerned. Recent commentators have argued that miraculous details about the Magdalen's life and achievements are criticised and suppressed by ps-Rabanus, being less appropriate for Mary as a model of contemplation than for Martha as an exemplar of active works.\(^{120}\) In may be suggested, however, that while the writer presents Mary and Martha nominally as types of the contemplative life and the active life respectively, he actually shows each of them achieving a balance between the two. Though he duly praises the Magdalen's choosing of the best part, he describes how she leaves the joys of contemplation to preach; he criticises the extreme version of the eremitic legend told about the Magdalen retiring to the desert immediately after the Ascension, yet he tells how Martha lived seven years alone in the wilderness of Tarascon. Here, then, we have the most balanced hagiographical account of the two sisters, and the Magdalen in particular, combining action and contemplation.

'But she was also mindful of the wellbeing of her friends who had come to the western ends of the earth, so from time to time she left the joys of contemplation and preached to the unbelievers or confirmed the believers in the faith, pouring into their souls the sweetness of her spirit and the honey of her words. For her lips spoke from the fullness of her heart, and because of this all her preaching was a true exercise of divine contemplation. ... Mary performed miracles with inexpressible ease to establish the truth of her words... Both sisters were reverenced for ... persuasiveness in words. Never or rarely was anyone found who departed from their preaching unbelieving or without weeping...'.\(^{121}\)

This overlap between the two lives depicted by Ps-Rabanus is characteristic of his own Cistercian order. Joachim of Fiore describes how some members preached 'when necessary and at the order of the church and for the salvation of souls' and were active 'in order to increase, acquire and protect its possessions', while others concentrated on silence and were 'for the time being at peace with the

\(^{120}\) E.g. Mycoff, *Life of Saint Mary Magdalen*, esp. 21.

\(^{121}\) Trans. Mycoff, *ibid.*, 97 (PL 112:1495-6).
cares of the world'.

Even in the later eleventh century, Bruno of Segni (1072/89) likens Mary sitting at Jesus' feet to the prophets and apostles who had left all to follow the Lord, and he goes on to say how afterwards, like Rachel, she responds actively in bearing and nourishing children for God:

It was sufficient for her to sit at the Lord's feet; it was sufficient for her always to read and pray and to spend time in the contemplation of God. It was sufficient for her besides always to listen to the word of God and nourish her mind rather than her belly. For such were the prophets, and such the apostles, and such many others who left everything and fled the world, clinging to the Lord, having nothing yet possessing everything. ... However Mary ought sometimes to rise and help her anxious sister ... Thus is comes about that she who before was quiescent, sterile and unfruitful, now begins to labour and bears and nourishes many sons for God.

In his treatise on the Rule of Augustine, Richard of St Victor († 1173) argues that the two lives 'cannot properly be separated, for contemplation of God is required in action, (and) utility of neighbour must be considered in peace'. He claims further, in his Commentary on the Song of Songs, that:

The Magdalen chose the best part, who exercised the grace of contemplation and yet was occupied on her sister's behalf so that she was even crowned with prize of action ... Martha worked with her body about a few things in one place; Mary with charity worked about many things in many places. For in contemplation and love of God she saw everything, extended herself to everything, understood and embraced everything, so that in comparison with her Martha can be said to have been concerned with few things. So truly this one thing is necessary and

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123 Sufficit ei ad pedes Domini sedere; sufficit ei semper legere et orare et in Dei contemplatione vacare. Sufficit ei praeterea verbum Dei semper audire et mentem potius quam ventrem nutrire. Tales enim prophetae fuerunt, tales et apostoli, tales et multi alii, omnia reliquentes mundum fugientes, Domino adhaerentes, tanquam nihil habentes et omnia possidentes. ... Debet autem Maria aliuvando surgere, et sororem sollicitatem adiuvere ... Sic igitur fit, ut illa quae prius quieta, sterilis et infecunda erat, iam laborare incipiatur, multisque Deo filios pariat, et nutriat. Bruno of Segni, Comm. in Luc. 1.10.22 (PL 165:391-2).
124 Cited from The Bridlington Dialogue, by Constable, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', 70.
rightly to be preferred, in which the soul both clings to God through love and displays charity and care to all.\textsuperscript{125}

Richard calls preaching the highest form of action, and yet he says preachers and ministers must strive to attain the 'secret sublimity of internal contemplation' so that Martha becomes Mary.\textsuperscript{126} Conversely, however, 'No one can persist in application of contemplation for a time without the exercise of action, just as action itself without contemplation is equally less agreeable, less discrete, less useful, less pure'.\textsuperscript{127}

By the early thirteenth century, the debate on the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives had become so complex that writers seem less than clear which occupations properly belong to which life. Hence Stephen Langton (c. 1150/55-1228), in a fragment of his Summa dealing with the question of 'Whether the contemplative should be preferred to the active life', lists among the works of contemplation preaching, prayer, reading, meditation, and learning (scientia), while listing preaching also among the works of action, together with almsgiving and martyrdom.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{125} Optimam ergo partem elegit Magdalena, quae gratiam exerceret contemplationis, et tamen occupatur in parte sororis, ut etiam activae vitae praelio coronetur, in qua pari charitate par praeium meretur. Martha in uno loco corpore laborat circa aliqua, Maria in multis locis charitate circa multa. In Dei enim contemplatione et amore videt omnia, dilatatur ad omnia, comprehendit et complectitur omnia, ita ut in eius comparatione Martha sollicita dici possit circa paucia. Valde ergo hoc unum est necessarium, et merito praefendendum, in quo et Deo per amorem anima inhaeret et omnibus charitatem et sollicitudinem exhibet. Richard of St Victor, Expl. in Cant. 8 (PL 196:428).

\textsuperscript{126} ... qui necessitatibus proximi per charitatem ministrat, si se ad internae contemplationis secretam sublimitatem pertingere posse conspicit, ut, secundum vocem prophetica, sedens solitarius et se levans super se ... ex Martha fiat Maria. Richard of St Victor, Serm. 33 (PL 177:972).

\textsuperscript{127} Richard of St Victor, Sermon on Gregory the Great; cited in Constable, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', 71.

\textsuperscript{128} Si contemplativa melior sit activa: ... Opera contemplativa sunt praedicatio, oratio, lectio, meditatio, scientia. Opera activae eleemosina, praedicatio, martyrium. Stephen
The Dominican Hugh of St Cher, in his commentary on Luke (pre 1235), comes to the equable conclusion that the preacher in whom contemplation fertilised action was 'truly the bride of Christ', and argues that a 'preacher or prelate should go out from stillness of contemplation to labour of action' and 'return from the labour of action to the stillness of contemplation'. Of the Magdalen he specifically says that by her conversion when she anointed Jesus' feet, she inaugurated the 'double life, that is, of action and contemplation'.

Conclusions

Canon law and ecclesiastical practice, based on Pauline teaching, denied that a woman was able to preach publicly. Yet the legend of Mary Magdalen challenged this fact. It has been shown how authorities in the thirteenth century increasingly had to recognise the hagiographical conviction that the Magdalen had preached, and to make allowance for it. This argument is reinforced by the evidence that hagiographers presented the Magdalen as capable of meeting the formal requirements thought necessary for a preacher, being constant and effective, and having divinely inspired authority and eloquence. Although these details were sometimes only implicit in the legendary accounts, the *Legenda de Maria Magdalena* by Bertholdus Heyder, a previously unrecognised source, makes them more than explicit. In fact, Heyder seems to be consciously

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129 Ad hoc significandum, scilicet, quod praedicator, sive praelatus de otio contemplationis debet egredi ad laborem actionis ... de labore actionis debet reverti ad otium contemplationis. Hugh of St Cher, *In Evangelium secundum Lucam* 17.7; *Omnia Opera* (Venice, 1732) vol. 6, f. 235r; cited in Constable, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha', 110-111.

130 Vel si vis, potes hoc specialiter referre ad Mariam, quae olim fuerat peccatrix, et publica, sed intrante Jesu domum, idest, conscientiam eius, pravitas vitae eliminata est, et duplex vita introducta, scilicet, actionis et contemplationis .... Idem, *In Ev. sec Luc. 10*; f. 196v.
presenting Mary Magdalen in a way which refutes the theoretical disqualifications that Henry of Ghent maintains women were subject to, and he takes Henry's concession that the Magdalen had indeed preached to its logical conclusion, showing how a woman could exercise an apostolic preaching ministry for which she was duly honoured by the church.

Further, it has been shown that this tendency to attribute to the Magdalen the appropriate authority for preaching made use of the hagiographical device of imitatio, highlighting typological resonances from Old Testament figures. She is presented, like Elijah, as an illuminatrix, bringing light and fire to illumine others, and like a second Moses, she brought word of the new covenant by her preaching and her face shone with celestial glory. This device of enhancing authority by typological allusion is a feature of medieval hagiography, and became especially important in accounts of the vitae of medieval women saints in order to establish their sanctity in a way which was modelled on accepted precedent. Thus the legend of the Magdalen as a preacher both reflected and served the need of the medieval church to assert the value of both the active and contemplative lives. As a contemplative who preached, she could inspire both religious who were called to serve in the world, like the newly-formed Orders of mendicant friars, and those who lived an active life yet aspired to the 'better part' of Mary. Preaching came to be included as a work of both the active life and of the contemplative life as part of this developing perception, and it seems that the role of Mary Magdalen, who had sat at the feet of Christ and also won the celestial golden aureola for her preaching, was seen and used as a significant expression of this.
PART THREE: INFLUENCE

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MAGDALEN AS A MODEL FOR PREACHERS

The reverence for saints (and the theological distinction of latria from dulia) had long since implied that a cult of honour and imitation was appropriate for those whose holiness had brought them close to God. The saints were to be both admired for and imitated in their own obedience to and imitation of Christ.\(^1\) It is this aspect of imitation by faithful devotees that will be considered finally in relation to Mary Magdalen. The evidence will be examined to determine how the Magdalen was held up as a figure to be imitated, especially in her critical role as apostle and preacher.

There is no controversy about some aspects of the composite figure drawn from the gospel accounts. The Magdalen is enjoined as an exemplar by preachers and commentators, who exhort their hearers and readers to follow her actions and her devotion. In lamenting her sins, in turning to Christ in humility for forgiveness, in sitting still at his feet to hear his words, she is urged upon readers and listeners as a model, and her prayers are asked to help those who try to

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follow her.\(^2\) Also Mary Magdalen as specifically named in the Gospel is invoked in her constancy and suffering beside the cross, and her perseverance at the tomb.\(^3\)

Evidence is less prevalent for the Magdalen being recommended directly as an exemplar of preaching and active apostolic ministry in the Middle Ages. This is perhaps not surprising, given the force of canon law and ecclesiastical practice in establishing and upholding normative roles within the church.\(^4\) Although, as has been shown, there is frequent recourse to description of the Magdalen's preaching role, the fact that there is any evidence of her being cited as a model in this raises issues about who could be properly exhorted to imitate the Magdalen as apostle and preacher, and why such exhortation if it was acceptable at all did not gain wider currency. It will be argued that although it was acceptable in certain circumstances for men to be encouraged to imitate the Magdalen specifically in their active preaching and public speaking, women were not so encouraged (insofar as the available evidence shows). However, some women clearly did feel capable of pursuing an active speaking ministry, and it can be demonstrated that in some cases this was associated with their particular

\(^2\) For example, Bonaventure encourages his readers not to scorn being the Magdalen in penitence: Si ergo non potes salvari per innocentiam, studeas salvari per poenitentiam; si non potes esse Catharina vel Caecilia, non contemnas esse Maria Magdalena, vel Aegyptiaca. Bonaventure, *De quinque festivitatibus pueri Iesu*, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. A. C. Peltier, 15 vols (Paris, 1864-71), vol. 14, 141.

\(^3\) Bonaventure, similarly, prays to experience the Magdalen's compassion for Christ's suffering: Deus meus, bone Iesu, concede mihi ... illum ad te Deum meum pro me crucifixum et mortuum compassionis affectum experiar, quem innocens Mater tua et poenitens Magdalena in ipsa passionis tuae hora sensorunt. Bonaventure, *Lignum Vitae*, in *ibid.*, vol. 12, 79. The sermon attributed to Odo of Cluny says that the Magdalen provides an 'imitable example to all the faithful' (*PL* 133:718-9): imitabile exemplum omnibus praebens fidelibus, ut per viam Dei ambulantem, nec propter tentationem daemonum, vel metum hominum aut curam parentum a coepto initere deviemus, quia inchoantibus praemium promittitur, sed perseverantibus datur.

\(^4\) On the dilemma for jurists of sacred precedent, see Brassington, *Non imitanda set veneranda*. 
devotion to and reverence for Mary Magdalen. In a significant number of instances, however, medieval women are seen to have evolved an 'intermediate' style of ministry, whereby they exert a personal and specific influence over male preachers and clerics. This too can be shown to have drawn on imitation of the Magdalen, namely in her more precise role as *apostola apostolorum*. Hence women addressed themselves to men as the Magdalen had to the apostles, and while they did not thus infringe clerical authority directly, yet they still found for themselves a valid active function in influencing and even directing the ministry and preaching of others.

The Magdalen as an exemplar of preaching for men

One early example of male devotees being encouraged to imitate Mary Magdalen in her great resurrection commission to go and tell the disciples is given by Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria (c. 1050/60-after 1125). In his commentary on John, he follows patristic tradition and praises the Magdalen's perseverance in remaining at the tomb. He regards her devotion as a necessary prerequisite to her encounter and commission from the risen Lord and adds that those who imitate her in this could be thus qualified like her to teach others:

So great a good is perseverance and assiduousness. Therefore be you also assiduous, and perhaps you will learn something, and will be the teacher of the Word to the disciples.

The Magdalen by implication is recognised as *doctor* (or at least *doctrhis*) *verbi* and Theophylact presents the Magdalen, teaching what she has learned of the

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5 His writings are known to have influenced Erasmus, among others.

resurrection, as a model for those who teach the good news to others. Although it is unlikely that he knew of the recently evolved preaching legends, his commentary on the Letter to the Romans demonstrates that Theophylact allowed women the potential for active ministry: he accepts that the woman Junia had been an apostle, and describes another woman Mary as having 'fulfilled the office of an apostle'.? That Theophylact considered himself to be addressing a male readership is shown in this example by the masculine adjective assiduus and participle futurus.

A male audience is also explicitly exhorted to imitate the Magdalen, in a different period and context, by Thomas Brinton, a Benedictine monk and scholar from Norwich who was Bishop of Rochester from 1373 until 1389. Among Brinton's extant sermons there are six which he preached to the clerics of the chantry dedicated to St Mary the Virgin and St Mary Magdalen at Cobham, about three miles from Rochester, on their patronal festival of the Magdalen's feast day. The chantry had been established in 1362 by Brinton's friend John de Cobham, the Earl of Kent, with five chaplains, and by 1389 their number had increased to eleven.8

In the first of these sermons, which may be dated 1374, Thomas Brinton demonstrates that his Magdalen is the familiar composite character, and he draws on patristic tradition in interpreting her part in the Gospel narrative. Like Theophylact, Brinton praises the Magdalen's devotion to Christ as manifested in her perseverance in following him even at the tomb, which leads him to relate five of the traditional reasons why Christ appeared first to her:

That the Magdalen loved Christ 'passionately' is evident because not only in the time of his life and prosperity did she with the other holy women

7 See above, Chapter One, page 35.
minister to him from her resources, but also in the time of adversity, passion and death she did not desert him but saw him suffer, die and be buried in the sepulchre, and the Magdalen loved Christ even after his burial so fervently that when the disciples left the tomb she did not leave until Christ rising from the dead appeared first to the same Magdalen for manifold reasons. First since she loved more ardently, so in turn Christ first repaid her fittingly for her love, saying of himself: *I love those who love me and those who watch for me in the morning will find me* (Prov. 8:17). Second, he appeared to her, a repentant sinner, to show that he had endured death for the sake of sinners, saying of himself: *I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance* (Mt. 9:13b). Third, according to the Glossa, in order that as woman had been the cause of death for the human race, it was thus fitting that woman might be the messenger of life. Fourth, because the female sex was more devoted to Christ than the male sex proved to be. When men blasphemed Christ, a woman praised him saying, *Blessed is the womb that bore you, et cetera* (Lk. 11:27). When men led Christ to the cross, women lamented (Lk. 23:27f.). When men crucified Christ and the apostles fled, the faith of the church stood fast in women. It was said truly of the Magdalen, *Your faith has saved you. Go in peace*. Fifth, that he might show clearly that where sin abounded grace also abounded (Rom. 5:20).9

Hence the Magdalen is said to be a model of penitence who can give hope to sinners, since she was so honoured by Christ at his resurrection:

> And thus the Magdalen is an exemplar of penitence to other sinners that they should not despair, since the argument can be summed up that the Magdalen said of Christ, *I have sought and found him whom my soul loves*

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Having rehearsed these mainly patristic arguments for why the Magdalen was privileged with Christ’s first resurrection appearance, Thomas goes on to outline the legendary account of her subsequent apostolic activity, and he alludes to the *Legenda Aurea* in his depiction of her preaching ministry and contemplative life:

... I have said that the Magdalen loved Christ with perseverance to the end, not like many who pretend to be lovers of God for a while, who in Lent or during bodily infirmity cease from their sins with the intention of later returning to such things, for the Magdalen from the time when she began to do penance always persisted in the love of God and in silent penitence. Indeed fourteen years after the Lord’s ascension the Magdalen, with Lazarus, Martha, Maximin and many others, was exposed on the sea by infidels without a helmsman so that they should perish. Yet they were all saved by God’s care and reached Marseille where the Magdalen, when she had converted countless people by her preaching, eagerly sought the wilderness of heavenly contemplation where there was neither running water nor the solace of trees or plants, where while she remained unknown for thirty-eight years she was lifted up into the aether by angels at the seven hours each day and heard the singing of the heavenly host. 

In his second sermon to the clerics at Chobham on the Magdalen’s feast day, probably in 1375, Thomas Brinton this time enjoins Mary Magdalen specifically as an exemplar for them to imitate. First she is cited as an exemplar of penitence and the contemplative life, and again the eremitic part of her legend is referred to:

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10 Et sic est Magdalena exemplar penitencie ceteris peccatoribus ne desperent ut premissa concludendo possit Magdalena dicere de Christo illud *Canticorum 3, Quesivi et invenio quem* *diligit anima mea. Ibid.*

11 Tercio dixi quod Magdalena dilexit Christum perseveranter usque in finem non sicut fingunt multi se dilectores esse Dei ad tempus ut qui in quadragesima vel infirmitate corporali cessant a peccatis cum intencione postea ad consimilia redeundi, quia Magdalena a tempore quo penitere cepit semper in dilectione Dei et penitencia inaudibili persistebat. Cum verum Magdalena anno quattuordecimo post ascensionem Domini cum Lazaro, Martha, Maximino et aliiis multis pelago exposita esset sine gubernatore per infideles ut submergerentur. Tandem nuti Dei omnes isti salvi Marsiliam adverterunt ubi cum Magdalena predicando populum innumerum convertisset, aviditate superne contemplacionis heremum ille querit ubi nec aquarum fluenta nec arborum vel herbarum solacia adinvenit, ubi cum triginta octo annis incognita permanisset, qualibet die septem horis in ethera per angelos elevata celestium agminum concentus audiebat. *Ibid.*, 188-9.
The Magdalen obtained this heavenly peace [which tends towards God] when she performed her penitence in the deep wilderness where she found neither running water nor the solace of plants or trees, and she was unknown to humans for thirty years and spent her time in such contemplation that she was lifted up into the aether by angels at the seven hours each day and heard in the flesh the voices of angels, giving to us an example of true penitence for sins, so that if we wish to taste the sweetness of the contemplative life, the angels may descend to console us and our prayers may ascend to be offered before God, to the extent that if on account of the sweetness of contemplation we may pour forth our tears, we would not give one tear for all the gold in the world. Note that the Magdalen by her tears merited the remission of sins (Lk 7); by her tears she merited the raising of her brother after four days; by her tears she merited the vision of the angels and of Christ before the other apostles.\textsuperscript{12}

However, Brinton then goes on to warn his clerical audience, who he says occupy the place of Christ's apostles and disciples, about the dangers of corruption and injustice in the church:

The peace of sinners is coloured and supported by false excuses and adulation, to the extent that we prelates, curates and confessors, who ought freely to speak the truth and to give our souls to safeguard the law of the church, although we see that the kingdom is led wretchedly and the church is in greater servitude that it was under Pharaoh, who did not have warning of divine law; although we hear and know of notorious fornication, incest and adultery, that usury and simony pollutes and dreadfully defames the kingdom and the church, yet we who occupy the places of the apostles and disciples of Christ do not dare to open our mouths once to arrest or even correct such things.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Hanc pacem supernam quo ad Deum habuit Magdalena quando in profundo heremo ubi nec aquarum fluenta nec herbarum vel arborum solacia adinvenit, penitenciam suam egit, triginta annis hominibus incognita fuit, tanteque contemplacioni vacabat quod qualibet die septima hora in ethera per angelos elevata, angelorum voces corporaliter audiebat, dans nobis exemplum vere penitencie pro peccatis ut si contemplative vite velimus dulcedinem degustare, angeli descendunt ad nos consolandum, ascendunt oraciones nostras coram Deo ad offerendum, in tantum quod si pri dulcedine contemplacionis poterimus in lacrimas prosilire pro toto auro mundi unam lacrimam non daremus.Nota quod Magdalena lacrimis remissionem meruit peccatorum, Luce 7; lacrimis meruit suscicionem fratris sui quadriduani; lacrimis meruit visionem angelorum supernam et Christi pre ceteris apostolis. Ioannis 20. Ibid., 276-7.

\textsuperscript{13} Item pax peccatoris est colorata et supportata falsis excusacionibus et adulationibus in tantum quos nos prelati, curati, et confessores, qui debemus libere dicere veritates et pro tuendis iuribus ecclesie animas nostras dare, quamvis videamus regnum pessime ducatum esse et ecclesiam in maiori servitute quam fuit sub Pharaone, qui legis divine noticiam non habebat, quamvis audiamus et sciarmus notorias fornicaciones, incestus, et adulteria, usuras et simoniae ecclesiam et regnum polluere et viliter diffamare, non tamen qui loca occupamus apostolorum et
By contrast, he praises the exemplary preaching activity of Mary Magdalen:

... the Magdalen, the apostle of Christ, did not act thus, but when she realised the people of Marseilles were adoring idols, and there was no one who would give hospitality to her, with Martha, Lazarus and the others, or minister to their wants, she was led by zeal for justice and preached Christ constantly so that she might call them back from error. At length when the prince of the province with his wife sacrificed to the idols to ask for a child, the Magdalen confronted them face to face, preaching that Christ must be adored. And since they did not wish to receive the word of God in this, the Magdalen appeared in a vision to the prince's wife speaking thus: 'With so great an abundance of riches, why do you tolerate that the saints of God die of hunger and cold?' And she added threats lest she did not bring her husband to relieve the needs of the saints. ... Therefore when morning had come they rose and gave hospitality to the saints and ministered to their wants. At length the Magdalen by robust preaching of the truth converted the people of Marseilles together with the whole province to peace and the truth of faith.  

And finally he enjoins Mary Magdalen as an active example for his listeners of zeal in speaking out to promote both justice and peace:

... if we prelates and confessors, following the Magdalen's example, are holy in conversation, bold in correction, of one mind in our undertakings, we can pacify and correct with effect all evil [intent]... 

In his next sermon on Mary Magdalen, Thomas Brinton urges the clerics of Chobham to imitate her by the performance of good works in a spirit of

discipulorum Christi, semel ora aperire non audemus ut talis corripiamus vel eciam corrigamus. 


14 ... Non sic fecit Magdalena Christi apostola, sed cum perpenderet Marsilienses ydola adorare, nec erat qui eam cum Martha, Lazaro, et alii voluit in hospicium recipere vel eis necessaria ministrare, illa iusticie zelo ducta Christum constanter predicavit ut eos ab erroribus revocaret. Tandum cum princeps provincie cum uxore pro habenda prole ydolis immolaret, Magdalena eis in faciem restitit, Christum predicans adorandum. Et quia noluerunt pro tunc recipere verbum Dei, apparuit Magdalena in visu uxorici principcis dicens ita: 'Cum tot diviciis habundatis, cur sanctos Dei mori fame et frigore toleratis?' Addiditque minas nisi marito suggeret ut sanctorum inopiam relevaret. ... Igitur mane facto surgentes sanctos in hospicium receperunt et eis necessaria ministrant. Tandum Magdalena per solidam predicacionem veritatis Marsilienses cum tota provincia convertit ad pacem et fidei veritatem. Ibid.

15 ... si nos prelati et confessores exemplo Magdalene essemus sancti in conversacione, audaces in correctione, unanimes in operacione, omnia mala pretacta possemus pacificare et corrigere cum effectu..... Ibid.
contemplation. He interprets her anointing of Christ's feet as an allegory of caring for the poor, in which he assumes his hearers will model themselves on her: 

In a mystical sense the feet of Christ are the poor, since as the feet being lowest among the members are more often injured, so the poor are more often struck by hunger, thirst, nakedness, and other worldly adversities. Therefore as often as we with the Magdalen devotedly kiss the feet of Christ, so often do we deal kindly and mercifully with the poor. 16

Hence he alludes to the way in which the Magdalen rebuked the prince of Marseille and his wife, who by implication represent those temporal lords who allow injustice to continue:

... As often as we with the Magdalen anoint and dry the feet, so often do we defend the poor against their malefactors and oppressors through justice, on account of which according to the apostle Peter, temporal lords are appointed by God 'to punish malefactors and to praise those who do good' (I Pet. 2:14), so that the unjust with their patrons might be checked from their evildoing and the just encouraged in their just dealing. But I see in these days that temporal lords encourage the wicked in their wicked deeds and do not rebuke them however corrupt; to the extent that they say he is fair whom they know to be foul; they say he is bold whom they know to be cowardly; they preach that he is wise whom they know to be a fool, indeed they say he is just whom they know to be most unjust. 17

Finally Brinton reinforces his exhortation of the clerics by extolling the exemplary way the Magdalen combined acts of charity with the ministry of a

16 Mystice pedes Christi sunt pauperes, quia sicut pedes infimi inter membra sepius offenduntur, sicut pauperes fame, siti, nuditate, et ceteris mundi adversitatibus sepius colliduntur. Tociens igitur Christi pedes cum Magdalena devote osculamur quociens pauperes familiariter et misericorditer attrectamus. Ibid., 351.

17 ... Tociens pedes cum Magdalena ungimus et tergimus quociens pauperes contra malefactores et eorum oppressores per iusticitam defensamus, eo quod secundum apostolum Petrum, domini temporales sunt a Deo ordinati ad vindictam malefactorum, laudem vero bonorum, ut inusti cum suis fatoribus a suis maleficiis compescantur et iusti in suis iusticiis foveantur. Sed video hiis diebus quod si domini temporales malos in malis peribus foveant nec castigant illos quantumcumque viciosos; in tantum quod quem sciunt turpem dicunt pulcherum; quem sciunt pusillanimum dicunt audacem; quem sciunt stultum predicant sapientem, immo quem sciunt iniustissimum dicunt iustum. Ibid.
preacher and teacher. Interestingly, he categorises her preaching and teaching among the 'works' of the contemplative life, compared with four of the traditional active 'corporal works of mercy':

Secondly and thirdly I have said that the Magdalen rendered praiseworthy work by holy occupation and perfect continuation. ... The Magdalen was occupied not only in the works of the active life like feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and burying the dead, but in the works of the contemplative life such as reading, praying, keeping watch, preaching and teaching. Thus she continually occupied herself so that it is sung of her in church 'Mary has chosen the best part which will not be taken from her'....

Thus Brinton demonstrates the sort of ambiguity about which activities were properly thought appropriate to the active life and which to the contemplative life that was discussed in the previous chapter. In so doing, however, he comes to the by now accepted conclusion that the Magdalen exemplified both lives, for her legend represents her pursuing both action and contemplation. By drawing on the preaching legend, he makes Mary Magdalen a model specifically for the male clerics he was addressing, and encourages them to imitate her, 'the apostle of Christ', in her preaching since they now occupy the place of Christ's apostles and disciples, and should be 'holy in conversation, bold in correction' as she was.

The Magdalen as Patron of the Order of Preachers

The Magdalen is also known to have been held in special reverence as a preacher by those male preachers who belonged to the Order of Preachers. There is little direct information about whether there was any particular Dominican reverence

18 Secundo dixi et tercio quod Magdalena reddit laudabile opus sancte occupacionis et perfecte continuacionis. ... Magdalena non solum fuit occupata in operibus active vite sicut famelicos pascere, sicientes potare, nudos vestire, et mortuos sepelire, sed in operibus vite contemplative qualiter sunt legere, orare, vigilare, predicare et docere. Ita se continue occupavit quod de ipsa canitur in ecclesia Maria optimam partem elegit que non auferetur ab ea.... Ibid., 352.
towards Mary Magdalen at the beginning of the Order's history, beyond the fact that she (and Lazarus) had been celebrated early on in Dominican liturgy.19 Some definite but inconclusive Magdalen elements in the history of St Dominic include a chapel of St Mary Magdalen in Siena which was received by brothers Frogier and Benedict on 16th February 1221 (in their name and that of the order and that of prior Dominic) to be a hospice for the poor and for pilgrims.20 Dominic rid a woman of seven devils and subsequently gave her the name Amata - beloved.21 A nun of the monastery of St Mary Magdalen at Tripoli in Syria was healed by a vision of Dominic 'with a phial of rare and fragrant ointment' during Lent in 1254.22 Some caution must be shown with references which appear to attribute devotion towards Mary Magdalen to Dominic himself, such as the claim that he received visions of the Magdalen beside the Blessed Virgin, as these seem to have been constructed by pious fantasy at a later stage.23 There is little enough direct evidence of Dominic's devotion to Our Lady herself, though this formed a strong strand in the subsequent development of the Order, and it seems that any later references to the Magdalen were modelled on those to the Virgin Mary.24

Yet, as is clear from Chapter Two, Dominicans were highly influential in the evolution and dissemination of the developed Magdalen legend in the thirteenth

22 Ibid., 61-2.
century. Jean de Mailly was the first to include this in his early legendary, the *Abbreviation gesta et miraculorum sanctorum*, and both Vincent of Beauvais and Jacobus de Voragine were significant in furthering this Dominican interest. Vincent, while at Royaumont, near Paris, came into close contact with St Louis IX, who out of devotion to Mary Magdalen visited St-Maximin in 1254 on pilgrimage (and was to visit Vézelay in 1267), and this royal connection might have contributed to Vincent's own concern with the Magdalen.

The most significant historical impetus for Dominican devotion to Mary Magdalen was the 'invention' of her relics at Saint-Maximin in 1279 and the establishment of Dominican friars as guardians of the shrine in the *Couvent Royal* on the site in 1295. This was also probably due in part to St Louis' reverence for the Magdalen, as it was Louis' nephew Charles, prince of Salerno, later to be Charles II of Anjou, King of Sicily and Count of Provence, who sought to imitate his uncle's piety and was responsible for these events. The Dominican influence on Charles' devotion is implicit in a picturesque but historically impossible account which describes the events that led to his pious discovery.

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25 Bartholomew of Trent OP also included the Magdalen in his compendium of saints' legends for preachers, the *Epilogus in Gesta Sanctorum* (c. 1244), which in the main consists specifically of Italian and Dominican saints; Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 71.

26 For the nearest contemporary accounts of this 'invention', see Victor Saxer, 'Les ossemens dits de sainte Marie-Madeleine conservés à Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume', *Provençal Historique*, 27 (1977): 257-311. I gave a paper to the Ecclesiastical History Society Summer Conference, St Andrews 1987, on the significance of this 'invention' of the Magdalen's relics for the Dominican Order, entitled 'The Dominican Office of St Mary Magdalen: innovation, plagiarism or heresy?'

27 I am grateful to Dr. Raymond Clemens for confirming this point.

28 This account was only circulating in the later fifteenth century and is found in an appendix to the fourteenth-century collection of miracles said to have been performed by the Magdalen at Saint-Maximin. This collection, the *Liber miraculorum*, was compiled by Jean Gobi the Elder, prior of the monastery in 1315. It, together with the appendix, was read there in 1497 by the Dominican Silvestre de Prierio who used the legend of Charles' deliverance in a sermon on the Magdalen for the Thursday of Easter Week. On the *Liber miraculorum*, see Bernard Montagnes,
According to this story, Charles had been taken prisoner by the king of Aragon, but as he was fasting and keeping vigil on the eve of the Magdalen's feast day, attended by his Dominican confessor, Guillaume de Tonneins, the Magdalen appeared to him in response to his devotion, liberated him from his chains and delivered him safely to the region of Narbonne. Hence, after arranging that a chapel in the archbishop's palace be dedicated to the Magdalen, he led a solemn procession back to St-Maximin to uncover the Magdalen's relics just as she had instructed him in his vision. The drama of this account is not a little undermined by the historical fact that Charles was not captured by the Aragonese until June 1284, whereas he had already discovered the Magdalen's tomb in 1279. In addition his supposed confessor at this time, Guillaume de Tonneins, was resident in Rome until 1295 when he was appointed prior of Charles' new foundation at St-Maximin, but he died before ever taking up this new appointment.

Charles' real confessor at the time of the invention of the Magdalen's relics was one Pierre de Lamanon, and it seems likely that he may have strongly influenced Charles' zealous promotion of the Magdalen's cult at St-Maximin and the inextricable way this was linked with the Dominican order. Ironically, it seems to have been the legends circulated from Vézelay themselves which allowed Charles and his confessor to ultimately claim the Magdalen for the Dominican order by casting doubt on the success of the furtum sacrum perpetrated by Vézelay, and claiming that, as the wrong remains had been removed, the Magdalen's relics had remained to be discovered at St-Maximin. It


29 Bernard Montagnes, Marie Madeleine et l'ordre des prêcheurs (Marseilles, 1984), 3.
has been brilliantly demonstrated by Victor Saxer that the prince in this enterprise drew on the authority of one specific manuscript tradition for the legend which held that the Magdalen had been buried at St-Maximin, for a parallel tradition cited Aix-en-Provence as her first resting-place.\textsuperscript{30} The \textit{Liber miraculorum} includes a miracle to the direct discredit of Vézelay, in which the Devil refuses to be exorcised from a possessed man when confronted by a relic from Vézelay, because it was not part of the true Magdalen.\textsuperscript{31}

Another highly significant innovation attributable to Charles and his confessor Pierre is that of arguing the appropriateness of the Magdalen, a preacher, to be a patron for the Order of Preachers, a link not made by any Dominican writer earlier, familiar though they were with the legendary account of the Magdalen preaching. The near-contemporary descriptions of the invention tell how the identity of her relics was confirmed by a proof which attested to her career as a preacher. Bernard Gui says that ’from her most holy tongue, which then still cleaved to her head and throat, a certain root with a little branch of fennel was growing...’;\textsuperscript{32} and Philippe de Cabassole interpreted this living branch (of palm, in his version) as sign of the Magdalen's apostolic ministry:

> They found, then, the immense aforementioned treasure of her most holy body, and a most sure sign with it, namely a flourishing little palm branch, issuing from her most holy tongue, with which the apostle of apostles anounced to the apostles and preached to the gentiles that Christ had risen from the dead.\textsuperscript{33}

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\textsuperscript{30} Saxer, ‘La croix’.  
\textsuperscript{31} Sclafer, \textit{Johannes Gobi senior “Liber miraculorum b. Mariae Magdalenae”}, 201-3.  
\textsuperscript{32} Ex eius lingua sacratissima, adhuc tunc suo capiti et gutturi inhaerente, radix quaedam aam ramusculo fennicli exibat.... Bernard Gui, \textit{Flores chronicorum seu catalogus pontificum Romanorum} (c. 1311-1331; \textit{BHL} 5506), quoted in Faillon, \textit{Monuments inedits}, vol. 2, 777-78:  
\textsuperscript{33} Repertis, igitur, sacratissimi corporis immenso praelibato thesauro et signo tutissimo in eodem, videlicet virente ramusculo palmitis, progrediente de sacratissima lingua eius, qua apostolorum apostola, Christum resurexisse a mortuis, apostolis nunciatit et gentibus praedicavit. Philippe de Cabassole, \textit{Libellus hystorialis Mariae beatissimae Magdalenae} (1355; \textit{BHL} 5509), quoted in Faillon, \textit{Monuments inedits}, vol. 2, 792.
The later Dominican legend of Charles' discovery of the relics is unequivocal about the Magdalen's particular predilection for the order. When she appears to Charles to release him from his captivity, she orders him to

'command that a monastery and church in my honour be built and erected, and endow and enhance it, for my brothers of the Order of Preachers, for I myself was an apostle ... and command that the feast of my translation be celebrated and solemnised, and establish a statute that my Office be recited by the same my brothers.'34

Although this legendary account of the Magdalen's patronage of the Dominican Order dates only from the fifteenth century, the Order clearly had taken its cue rapidly from Charles' foundation of the Couvent Royal in 1295. Only two years after this event, the general chapter in Venice sought that, for the whole Order, 'the feast of the Magdalen be elevated to the rank of a Double with octave and a sequence, between the epistle and Gospel, be approved for her liturgy; and that at Mattins on the feast, the end of the sixth reading be suppressed', for this last described the now discredited translation of the Magdalen's relics to Vezelay.35 These requests were confirmed in 1298 by the chapter at Metz and definitively adopted in 1300 by the general chapter at Marseille. It was not until 1323, though, that the calendar was adjusted by the general chapter at Barcelona to show the new date for the feast of the translation of the Magdalen's relics. There is no record of a formal measure proclaiming the saint as a patron of the Dominican order,36 but in their liturgical calendar her feast day is designated:

34 ... conventum et etiam ecclesiam, ob mei reverentiam, fratrum de ordine predicatorum (cum fuerim apostola) construi et edificari facies atque dotabis et magnificabis ... festum mee translationis celebrari et solennisari facies, officiumque meum per eosdem fratres dicendum ordinarii statues. Liber miraculorum beate Marie Magdalene, ed. Montagnes, Marie Madeleine et l'ordre des prêcheurs, 31.
35 Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica 3.283.
Sanctae Mariae Magdalenae Protectricis Ordinis Nostri, and by the sixteenth century she is regularly cited in the litanies addressed to her as Praedicatorum Ordinis specialis Patrona.

According to the legendary tradition of the fifteenth century, Charles himself composed the Little Office that the Dominicans were to recite in the Magdalen’s honour, as she had instructed him:

... the holy king himself established, for present and future brothers, that this office of saint Mary Magdalen, drawn up by himself and approved by the pope, should be recited night and day, both in the dormitory as well as in choir, devoutly and piously, to the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the honour of saint Mary Magdalen ....

This new Little Office of Mary Magdalen is commemorated in hymns, such as that in a breviary from Aix of the fifteenth century which begins:

The new Office provides for us holy joys,
and the Magdalen's greatness is spoken by every tongue.

Much of the Little Office is drawn from the propers of the usual Divine Office for the Magdalen's feast so had, in effect, been plagiarised from Vézelien devotion. One extraordinary feature of this Office is the parodic form of the Te Deum appointed for Matins, which seems startling in the audacity of language it uses in veneration of Mary Magdalen as patron of her Dominican 'sons':

We praise Thee, Saint Mary Magdalen:

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39 ... fratribus presentibus et futuris, ipse sanctus rex imponens quathinus officium sancte Marie Magdalene per ipsam ordinatum, et per summum pontificem approbatum, tam in dormitorio quam in choro, nocte dieque, devote et pie dicetur, ad laudem et gloriam domini nostri Iesu Christi et honorem sancte Marie Magdalene .... Liber miraculorum beate Marie Magdalene, ed. Montagnes in Marie Madeleine et l'ordre des prêcheurs, 32.
40 Beata nobis gaudia
Novum parat officium
Magdalenae magnalia
We acknowledge Thee to be our Lady.
Thee kings and people, old and young, do worship:
To Thee devoted penitents cry aloud and those who mourn their sins.
To Thee Thy servants and sons, the Preachers, continually do cry:
Holy Holy Holy: Mary Magdalen pray for us.
Thou art the Bride of the King of Glory,
Thou art an example of penitence:
Thou camest sorrowful and weeping to Jesus
And with Thy tears didst wash his feet.
We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants:
whom Thou hast chosen for Thy service.
O Magdalen, who was filled with love for Christ:
Save Thy servants, Lady, and protect them for ever.
Day by day we magnify Thee:
And we worship thy name, blessed, holy and glorious.
O Lady, let Thy mercy lighten upon us: as our trust in in Thee.
O Lady, in Thee have we trusted: let us never be confounded.41

Thus devotion to Mary Magdalen came to be promoted throughout the Dominican Order.42 It is clear, therefore, that the Friar Preachers were pleased to invoke a woman preacher as their patron and protector and to envisage her care for them as her servants, sons and brothers. While no evidence has been discovered that a male Dominican saw himself explicitly imitating the Magdalen by his preaching, the significance of her apostolic career was such that the Order of Preachers came, almost inevitably it seems, to venerate and commemorate her ministry.


42 Today, however, some still think of the Magdalen as one of the patrons of the whole Order from the first. Damien Byrne, formerly Master of the Order comments, 'The first followers of Dominic the preacher were women. It is significant that the first brothers took as patrons of the Order Mary Magdalen, the apostle to the apostles, and Catherine of Alexandria, the student and professor of philosophy'; A Pilgrimage of Faith (Dublin, 1991), 105.
The Magdalen and women religious

Humbert of Romans, in an *ad status* sermon for canonesses, assumes that they will be familiar with the Magdalen's antiphon *O apostolorum apostola*. He points out that 'it should be noted that as there were once not only prophets but prophetesses ... also there were not only (male) apostles but also female apostles, as is sung of the Magdalen.'

This antiphon was also sung each day after Matins, Mass and Vespers at the convent in Avignon for repentant prostitutes dedicated to the Magdalen, according to the statutes of 1367.

Although there are few positive indications, apart from details like this, that women religious were expected to be familiar with the legend of Mary Magdalen, there is conversely no evidence that the legend was thought inappropriate for them to hear, or that it was modified by preachers in any way to suit a female audience.

Even though medieval writers and preachers may not explicitly commend the Magdalen's preaching and apostolic life as something for women to imitate, contemporary historical and literary evidence does seem to show that some women were able to see her as a model for their active ministry. This evidence can be found in two (theoretically distinct but overlapping) areas: from instances where women did preach openly and espouse an active life and there is some indication that they would have known the legends of the Magdalen's career; and from instances where women clearly had opportunity to hear or in some

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43 ... notandum quod sicut olim fuerunt non solum prophetae, sed etiam prophetissa ... et non solum Apostoli, sed et Apostolae, ut cantatur de Magdalena. Humbert of Romans, *De Eruditione Praedicatorum* bk. 2, in *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, ed. de la Bigne, (Lyons, 1677), vol. 25, 484; cited in Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 75.

cases read the legends, and there is some sign that they tried to act upon them.

In Chapter Three, the influence of the Magdalen legend was explored in relation to the heterodox evangelistic activity of Waldensian, Cathar and Lollard sects. There the evidence seems sadly circumstantial as to whether the women knew of the legendary, as opposed to the biblical, figure of Mary Magdalen at all, let alone whether they used her as a model. Now the evidence will be considered for women in both traditional religious communities, like the Dominican and Franciscan Second and Third Orders (although obviously the latter did not form a community in the strict sense), and also those less formal communities such as those established by women influenced by the beguine movement. Here it will be necessary, due to lack of evidence about the religious and social practices of these communities in general, to look at the examples of particular women associated with them. While these individuals, since they were worthy of record, may be considered exceptional, yet they demonstrate what some women could achieve in terms of public ministry and influence after the example of the Magdalen.

i) The Dominicans and Catherine of Siena

Women had a special place in the Dominican Order from its inception. Even before Dominic had obtained papal approval for his 'Order of Preachers' in 1216, he had become the custodian in 1206 of a community established by Diego of Osma at Prouille near Carcassone for women converted from heresy, and this became one of the first convents of Dominican nuns. By the time of his death in 1221, there were also women's communities at San Sisto in Rome, in Madrid

and St Stephen of Gormaz in Spain. Second order foundations numbered 58 by 1277, 141 by 1303, and 157 by 1358.46

By this latter date, Catherine of Siena had joined the Dominican Third Order, and it is known that she was familiar with the works of Dominican writers and preachers on the Magdalen. In an early letter to one of her female disciples, Monna Agnese, and the Mantellate community in Siena, Catherine praises that loving apostle Magdalen. So great was her blazing love that she cared for nothing created. ... See, dearest daughters, how the Magdalen knew herself, and humbled herself. With what great love she sat at our gentle Saviour's feet! And speaking of showing him love, we surely see it at the holy cross. She wasn't afraid of the Jews, nor did she fear it for herself. No, like a passionate lover she ran and embraced the cross. Indeed, in order to see her Master she was bathed in blood. Surely you were drunk with love, O Magdalen! As a sign that she was drunk with love for her Master she showed it in her actions towards his creatures, when after his holy resurrection she preached in the city of Marseilles.47

There are no explicit allusions to the sources from which Catherine knew of the preaching legend for, as Suzanne Noffke points out, she seldom quotes directly, but 'echoes of near-contemporaries whose works were the favourites of so many preachers of the day: Ubertino da Casale, Jacopo da Vorazze, Domenico Cavalca' have been absorbed and become 'part of her vocabulary.'48 Cavalca (+1342) is credited with the authorship of an extensive Life of Mary Magdalen49 in which her apostolic career in France is described in a résumé at the end.50 He

48 Ibid., 8.
49 Carlo DelCorno attributes this vita to Cavalca or at least to his bottega; see the entry 'Cavalca, Domenico' in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, 36 vols (Rome, 1960-), vol. 22, 577-586; cited in Jansen, 'Maria Magdalena', 89 n. 70.
50 Maria Maddalena vedendo il lor errore, con gran fervore di Spirito Sancto si levò dinanzi a tutto il popolo, e incominciò a predicare il nome di Gesù Cristo. Allora s'incominciarono a maravigliare della sua bellezza e delle sue parole. Non era da maravigliare, se quella bocca favellave dolci parole, la quale aveva baciati i dolci piedi e santi di Gesù Cristo.
also tells how she even preached in Palestine during Christ’s lifetime. To the servants on her estates, when she and her siblings had decided to renounce their worldly possessions,

she began to preach (Christ’s) doctrine so sweetly, and with such fervour, that these people all wept for devotion, and they began to cry with one voice, saying: "Magdalen, do not leave us, for now we will be more faithful and better servants than ever before". ... and she preached to them and taught them so sweetly that their hearts were inflamed with the love of Messer Jesus.... And I think she stayed yet a little longer amongst them, preaching the doctrine of Christ with humility and gentleness, recounting His miracles, and preparing them for the faith. And I think that all the people of that country-side were drawn to her, some for alms, and some to see the great change God had wrought in her, and to hear her sweet speech; so that all those people were converted....51

Again, in a sermon which dates from the second half of the fourteenth century by the Dominican Franco Sacchetti, the Magdalen’s career is outlined succinctly:

The Magdalen was a disciple and apostle of Christ. No other woman listened to the saviour’s teaching as she did. She went to preach in Marseilles, where she converted the duke and the duchess and other people. She was always to be found with Christ, she was always at his holy feet.52

Such writers would perhaps have been among the sources from which Catherine drew.

Catherine’s special devotion to the Magdalen is demonstrated by other letters. Early in 1376, when travelling to Avignon to speak with Pope Gregory IX, she writes to Monna Melina, wife of Bartolomeo Barbani of Lucca, that she is to be found like the Magdalen at the foot of the cross:

' Cavalca', Vita di Santa Maria Maddalena, in Bartolommeo Sorio and A. Racheli (ed.), Vita de’ Santi Padri (Milan, n.d.), 385. This version is closely modelled on Vincent of Beauvais.
52 Fu la Maddalena discepola e apostola di cristo, perocche nulla femmina ascoltò la dottrina del Salvatore, se non ella; e andò a predicare a Marsilia, e là convertiò il Duca e la Duchessa e altra gente; sempre dove si ritrovò con Cristo, sempre era a' suoi santi piedi. Sachetti, Serm. 37, De amore Dei, Magdalenae.
If you still want me as an intermediary, I want to show you where to find me without being separated from this true love. Go with the dear loving Magdalen to the most sweet venerable cross. There you will find the Lamb and me and there you can graze and fulfil your desires.⁵³

Yet for Catherine it seems that the Magdalen is more than a simple model of selfless devotion. As Karen Scott has demonstrated, Catherine portrays the Magdalen as a woman 'who was so much in love with Christ that she forgot about social conventions, and did not care about the gossip caused by her presence alone and her freedom of movement in a man's world'.⁵⁴ Catherine exhorts Monna Bartolomea di Salvatico of Lucca, a recent convert, to look to the Magdalen as an example of selflessness:

It is perseverance that is crowned. Turn in affectionate love with the dear loving Magdalen, and embrace the sweet and venerable cross. There you will find all the sweet solid virtues, since it is there we find the God-Man .... There will be no blow, from the devil or anyone else, that can harm you if you have this shield of (self-)hatred, love and true patience. For these are the three sturdy pillars that free the soul from weakness and keep it strong. The dear Magdalen took up this shield in such a way that she thought no more of herself but with true heart clothed herself in Christ crucified. She no longer turned to prestige or grandeur or her own vanities. She took no more pleasure or delight in the world. She didn't think or worry about anything but how she could follow Christ. No sooner had she set her affection on him and come to know herself than she embraced him and took the path of lowliness. For God's sake she despised herself, for she saw that there is no other way to follow or to please him. She realised that she was the lowliest of all people. She was no more self-conscious than a drunken women, whether alone or with others. Otherwise she would never have been among those soldiers of Pilate, nor would she have gone and stayed alone at the tomb. Love kept her from thinking 'What will it look like? Will people speak ill of me because I am rich and beautiful?' Her thoughts weren't here, but only on how she might find and follow her Master. She then is the companion I am giving you. I want you to follow her because she knew the way so well that she has been made our teacher [Maestra].⁵⁵

In another early letter, Catherine writes to the Abbess and Sister Niccolosa of the monastery of Santa Marta in Siena: 'of the gentle Magdalen, so in love, we will

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⁵⁵ Noffke, Letter 59, 185-6. Catherine here seems to be aware of the traditions praising the Magdalen's constancy which led her to follow Jesus to Pilate's court and throughout his trial.
ask the self-contempt she had; so ... the Magdalen [gives us] (self-) hatred and love'.

This emphasis on Mary Magdalen's lack of concern for social convention is evident in the first of Catherine's letters cited above, where it is specifically related to the Magdalen's preaching ministry. Thus, Karen Scott argues, a key justification by Catherine of her own 'unusually outspoken and dynamic role' is demonstrated. Like the Magdalen, Catherine's inspiration and authority for her mission is Christ himself; her apostolate is justifiable as an expression of the spiritual life, and any criticism she receives is seen as a type of ascetic 'verbal martyrdom'; and Catherine sees herself imitating the Magdalen and the other apostles to emphasise the sanctity of her public preaching. Yet it is interesting, as Karen Scott points out, that Catherine does not defend herself by referring to any miraculous gifts or to the papal support she had received, nor does she stress her gender as either irrelevant, since there is 'neither male nor female', or transcended by God's power 'made perfect in weakness'. All of these arguments, however, are used by Catherine's contemporary male biographers, especially Raymond of Capua, as he sought her canonisation.

Raymond describes Catherine's early devotion to the Dominican Order, and ascribes to her an inclination towards the active life herself after she had made a vow of virginity at the age of seven:

She was made aware and the Lord revealed to her that the most blessed Father Dominic, out of zeal for the faith and for the salvation of souls, had founded the Order of Friar Preachers. Because of this she began to revere this Order so greatly that whenever she saw Friars of this Order going along the road past her house she would notice where they had trodden and after they had passed would humbly and devotedly kiss their footprints. Hence there grew in her mind the greatest longing to enter the Order, so that she might further the salvation of souls with the other

56 Noffke, The Letters of St Catherine of Siena, Letter 1, 40-1.
57 Scott, 'St Catherine of Siena, "Apostola"', 40-44.
58 Ibid., 44-45.
Friars. But when she saw that her sex was an obstacle to this, she many times, as she confessed to me, thought of imitating St Euphrosyne, whose name by chance she had once been given, who pretended to be a man and entered a monastery; like her, (Catherine) might go to distant parts where she was not known, pretend to be a man, enter the Order of Friars Preachers and help souls that were perishing. 59

Then, alluding to the types of Mary and Martha, Raymond tells of Christ appearing to Catherine in a vision to call her to the active life. First Jesus reminds her of her early longing to follow the Dominican friars:

'You must remember that zeal for the salvation of souls that from your infancy I planted and watered, which grew in your heart to such an extent that you planned to pretend to be a man and enter the Order of Preachers in foreign parts, to be made useful for souls? Since then, the habit you now possess you desired with such fervour on account of the extraordinary love which you conceived for my faithful servant Dominic, who on account of his extreme zeal for souls founded the Order. Why wonder and grieve if I lead you to do what from infancy you have desired?' 60

When Catherine tries to protest the traditional limitations of her sex, Christ at first reassures her that in him there is neither male nor female:


60 Memor esse debes, quomodo ab infantia zelus salutis animarum, me seminante simul et irrigante, crevit in corde tuo, in tantum quod proponestas te fingere masculum, et ignotis in partibus Ordinem Praedicatorum intrare, ut possis utilis animabus effici: et ex hoc, quem nunc habes, habitum tanto cum fervore desiderasti, propter singularem amorem, quem ad servum meum fidelem Dominicum concepisti, qui propter animarum zelum praeipue suum instituit Ordinem. Quid ergo miraris et doles, si te duco ad id, quod ab infantia concupivisti? Ibid., 2.1.121, 883.
But she, a little comforted by the Lord's answer, replied like Blessed Mary, 'How shall this be? ... what use can I, wretched and altogether frail, be to souls? My sex as you know is against it in many ways, both because it is held in contempt by men, and also because it is not fitting, for decency's sake, for this sex to mix with the other'. ... He said, 'Shall not I, who created the human race and divided it into male and female, also pour out the grace of my spirit where I will? With me there is no male and female.\textsuperscript{61}

However, Raymond's account goes on to make Catherine's wisdom and doctrinal skill part of Christ's plan to confound male arrogance:

I wish you to know that in these days pride has abounded so greatly especially among those who imagine themselves to be learned and wise, that my justice cannot endure it any longer, without confounding them with a just judgement. But since my mercy is over all my works, I shall first give them a salutary and useful lesson ... as I did with the Jews and the Gentiles, when I sent among them idiots whom I had filled with divine wisdom. To confound their arrogance, I will give them women ignorant and frail by nature but endowed with strength and divine wisdom. Then if they realise and humble themselves, I will be more merciful towards those who, according to the grace given them, receive and follow with due reverence my doctrine, brought to them in fragile but chosen vessels. ... So you are to obey at once without delay, when I decide to send you in public: for wherever you are I will not desert you, nor will I dismiss you because of this in future, but I will visit you as I am accustomed to do and I will direct you in everything that you must carry out'.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61} At illa, reponsione Dominica paulisper confortata, quasi cum Beata Maria respondit: Quomodo fiet istud? ... quod possum ego, misella et omni ex parte fragilis, esse utilis animabus? Sexus enim contradicit, ut nosti, ex pluribus causis: tum quia contemptibilis est coram hominibus, tum etiam quia honestate cogente, non decet talem sexum cum sexu alio conversari. ... Inquit enim: Nonne sum ille ego, qui humanum creavi genus, sexumque utrumque formavi; ac gratiam spiritus mei, ubi volo, effundo? Non est apud me masculus et femina .... Ibid., 2.1.122, 883.

\textsuperscript{62} ... volo te scire, quod isto in tempore tantum abundavit superbia, et potissime illorum, qui litteratos et sapientes se reputant; quod iustitia mea non potest amplius suffere, quin eos iusto iudicio confundat. Sed quia misericordi mea est super omnia opera mea, primo dabo eis confusionem salubrem et utilem ... sicut feci Iudaeis et gentibus, quando misi eis idiotas, per me sapientia divina repletos. Dabo, inquit, feminas, de sui natura ignorantes et fragiles, sed a me virtute et sapientia divina dotatas, in confusionem temeritatis eorum. Quod si per hoc recogoverint se ac humiliaverint, faciam misericordiam meam pleniorem cum eis, id est, cum illis, qui doctrinanam meam, per vasa fragilia sed electa delatam ad ipsos, cum reverentia qua decet, suscipient et sequentur, iuxta gratiam sibi datam. ... Te igitur absque cunctatione obedias amodo, cum te ad publicum decrevero mittere: quia nec, te ubicumque fueris dereliquam, nec etiam propter hoc in futuro dimitam, quin te solito more visitem, et dirigam te in omnibus quae te oportuerit exercere. Ibid., 2.1.122, 883.
Later, after he has encouraged her to drink from his wounded side, Jesus tells Catherine that she is not to worry about her active role causing scandal:

Your heart will burn so strongly for the salvation of your neighbours that forgetful of your sex, you will change completely your former way of life, and you will not avoid the company of men and of women as you used; indeed for the salvation of men and women you will put yourself to every labour with men. By this many people will be scandalised and oppose you, so that the thoughts of their hearts may be revealed. But do not be disturbed or afraid, for I will always be with you, and I will always save your soul from the deceitful tongue and from lying lips.63

Raymond’s biography also confirms the importance of Mary Magdalen’s patronage to Catherine, and describes the Magdalen as her ‘teacher’ as she herself had done. He dates the origin of Catherine’s devotion to the Magdalen to the time of the death of Catherine’s sister Bonaventura in August 1362:

After her sister’s death, the holy virgin, realising more clearly the vanity of the world, began to turn to the embrace of the eternal Bridegroom more fervently and eagerly, and bewailing her guilt and accusing herself, prostrate with Mary Magdalen ‘behind the Lord at his feet’ (Lk. 7:38), she poured forth tears more abundantly, and implored his mercy, praying without ceasing and reflecting on her sin, so that she might merit to hear with Mary Magdalen, ‘Your sins are forgiven you’. And thus she began to be particularly devoted towards the Magdalen, for from that time she tried with all her strength to conform herself to her to obtain forgiveness of her sins. From this growing devotion to her, it later followed that the Bridegroom of all holy souls and his glorious Mother gave the Magdalen to the holy virgin as her own teacher and mother, as will be revealed with the Lord’s help more fully later.64

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63 Insuper erga salutem proximorum tam vehementer accendetur cor tuum, quod proprii sexus obita, quasi ex toto conversationem praeteritam omnino immutabis, hominumque et feminarum consortium, prout assoles, non vitabis: imo pro salute animarum ipsorum et ipsarum, te ipsam expones pro viribus ad omnes labores. Ex his scandalizabuntur quampluri, a quibus contradicetur, ut revelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes. Tu autem in nullo turberis aut timesas, quia ego semper tecum ero, et liberabo semper animam tuam a lingua dolosa, et a labiis loquentium mendacium. Ibid., 2.5.165, 894.

64 Porro defuncta sorore, coepit sacra virgo, clarius seculi vanitate percepta, ferventius et avidius ad aeterni Sponsi reverti amplexus: seque ream clamitans et accusans, cum Maria Magdalena prostrata retro secur pedes Domini, lacrymas abundantius effundebat; eiusque misericordiam implorabat, absque intermissione orans et cogitans pro peccato suo, ut mereretur audire cum Maria Magdalena, Dimittuntur tibi peccata tua. Et sic coepit singulariter ad Magdalenam affici, quia tunc temporis totis viribus conabatur se ei pro suorum obtinenda
Like Catherine, Raymond clearly knew of the legendary tradition about the Magdalen, yet he never refers to the Magdalen as a preacher, and he describes Catherine imitating her solely in her ascetic life and penitence. He recounts how Catherine outdid Moses and Elijah in fasting, since she reached that level of perfection in abstinence which none of the (biblical) saints had reached. ... Holy Scripture records that Moses twice and Elijah once completed a fast of forty days from food and drink; and this the Saviour himself accomplished, as the Gospel bears witness: but no one is said to have fasted for several years. I have found only the Magdalen (not in holy Scripture but in the story of her life and the local traditions which are still current) completed a fast of thirty-three years, placed in a rock. Because of this, I believe, the Lord and his glorious Mother gave the Magdalen to the virgin as her teacher and mother.  

He describes the ecstasies she experienced, which seem to mirror the Magdalen’s being lifted up by angels in the wilderness, 'ecstasies of mind in which the holy virgin was frequently carried away like another Mary Magdalen, her body often raised up off the ground along with her spirit, so it was evident how great a power was attracting her spirit'. Raymond also refers to the writings of Fra Tommaso, her first confessor, who recorded that 'Mary Magdalen, conversing intimately and frequently with her as an equal, told her of the ecstasies of mind

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65 ... ilium attigisse perfectionis gradum in abstinentia, quem nullus illorum attingere potuit. ... Moysen bis et Eliam semel quadragenarium perfecisse ieiunium absque cibo et potu, Scriptura sancta commemorat; quod et Salvator ipse complevit, Evangelio testante: sed adhuc plurium annorum non habemus ieiunium. ... Solam Magdalenam reperio (non in Scripturis sacris, sed in eius historia et in loci dispositione, quae apparet adhuc) triginta annis in rupe positam hoc ieiunium perfecisse. Propter quod existimo, quod Dominus ipse, ac eius Genetrix gloriosa, prout infra Domino donante patebit, Magdalenam huic virgini dederunt pro magistra et matre. Ibid., 1.3.64, 868-9.

66 Talibus igitur mentis excessibus dum sacra virgo frequenter raperetur in altum, sicut altera Maria Magdalena, saepe corpus eius cum spiritu elevabatur a terra, ut quanta esset virtus spiritum attrahens cerneretur .... Ibid., 2.1.126, 884.
she had in the desert seven times a day'.

These parallels with the Magdalen's experience in the wilderness are brought out in Raymond's account of Catherine being entrusted to the Magdalen's special patronage, which possibly took place on the saint's feast day in 1370:

First the King of kings with the Queen of heaven his mother and Mary Magdalen appeared to her together, to comfort and strengthen her in her holy intention. Then the Lord said to her 'What do you wish from me?' And she, weeping, humbly replied as Peter had done, 'Lord you know what I want; you know, because I have no will but yours and no heart but yours'. Then she remembered how Mary Magdalen had given herself wholly to Christ when she wept at his feet; and she began to feel the sweetness of pleasure and love that the Magdalen then felt; so she turned her gaze towards her. The Lord, as though to satisfy Catherine's desire, said to her, 'Sweetest daughter, for your greater comfort I give you Mary Magdalen for your mother, to whom you may turn in complete confidence; I entrust her with a special care of you'. The virgin gratefully accepted this action, devotedly commended herself with great humility and reverence to the Magdalen, and begged her humbly and urgently to deign to take diligent care of her salvation as she had been entrusted to her by the Son of God. From that moment the virgin accepted the Magdalen as her own and always referred to her as her mother. In my view this event was not without significance. For as Mary Magdalen spent thirty-three years on a rock without corporeal food in continual contemplation - a period of time which itself equals the Saviour's own age - so, from the time of these events until she was thirty-three years old when she died, Catherine spent her time in such fervent contemplation of the Most High that, feeling no need of food, she nourished her mind on the abundance of graces she received. And as the Magdalen was taken up by angels seven times a day into the air where she listened to the mysteries of God, so Catherine was for most of the time taken out of her bodily senses by the power of the Spirit, to contemplate heavenly things and praise the Lord with angel spirits so that her body was frequently lifted into the air, as many people, men and women, together and separately, claim to have seen.... It was therefore highly fitting that almighty God should in his providence have given this virgin to Mary Magdalen as her daughter, and Mary Magdalen to the virgin as her mother; for it was most proper, as it were, for one who fasted to be united with one who fasts, lover with lover, contemplative with contemplative. The virgin herself, when she was describing these things, secretly added, or said as much as that a sinner had been given as daughter to another who had also once been a sinner, so that the mother, mindful of human frailty, and of the generous mercy shown her by the Son of God, might have compassion on the daughter's frailty and win

67 ... Maria Magdalena, cum ipsa familiarissime conversans pariter et assidue, excessum mentis, quem in deserto septies in die habuerat, ei communicabat. Ibid., 2.7.199, 902.

68 In the narrative the episode takes place after an event on the feast of St Margaret on July 20th, so July 22nd, two days later, would be appropriate chronologically.
These biographical details attributed to Catherine by Raymond, while being uncertain historically, are yet clearly based on the devotion that Catherine herself felt towards Mary Magdalen which is demonstrated by her own letters. What is not certain, however, is how far the Magdalen's patronage was something that Catherine adopted personally for herself, in view of her apostolic

69 Et primo quidem ei Rex regum, cum Regina caeli eius genetrice, ac Maria Magdalena semel apparuere, consolantes et confortantes eam in sancto proposito. Tunc dixit ei Dominus: Quid vis a me velle? Cui illa plorans, humiliter respondebat cum Petro: Domine, tu scis quid volo, tu scis quia nec voluntatem habeo nisi tuam, nec cor habeo nisi tuum. Tunc venit ad memoriam eius, quomodo Maria Magdalena se dederat totam Christo, quando fleuit ad pedes eius; et coepit sentire suavitatis et amoris dulcedinem, quam Maria Magdalena tunc sensit: qua de causa respiciebat in eam. Unde Dominus desiderio eius quasi satisfaciens, intulit: Ecce, dulcissima filia, pro ampliori tuo solatio, trado tibi Mariam Magdalenam in matrem, ad quam cum omni fiducia possis recurrere; ei specialem tui curam committo. Quod virgo cum omni gratiarum actione accepts, cum magna humilitate ac reverentia ipsi Mariae Magdalenae se devote recommendabat, supplicans humiliter ac instanter, quatenus diligentem curam de ipsius salute dignaretur habere, postquam per Dei filium fuerat sibi recommendata; et ex illa hora virgo accepit Magdalenam in suam, semperque matrem suam suam ipsam vocabat. Quod tamen absque mysterio, mea sententia, factum non est. Sicut enim Maria Magdalena triginta tribus annis stetit in rupe absque corporeo cibo, sed in contemplatione assidua, quod tempus plenitudinem aetatis Salvatoris in se ipso demonstrat: sic haec virgo sacra ab illo tempore quo haec acciderunt, usque ad tricesimum tertium annum aetatis, in quo ex hac luce migravit, tam ferventer contemplationi vacabat Altissimi, quod cibi corporalis auxilio non egens, mentem reficiebat abundantia gratiarum. Et sicut illa rapiebatur in aera septies in die ab angelis, ubi audiebat arcana Dei: sic ista pro maiori parte temporis, ex vi spiritus caelestia contemplantis, rapiebatur a corporeis sensibus, ac cum angelicis spiritibus Dominum collaudabant, ita ut frequenter corpus in aera levaretur; sicut multi et multae, conjunctim et divisim, perhibent se oculata fide vidisse, de quibus latius infra dicetur. Insuperque mirabilia Dei cernens in ipso raptu, loquebatur quandoque subisse miranda notabilia et nimis altas sententias, de quibus quaedam fuerunt scriptae, prouis infra loco suo patebit. ... Igitur congrue nimirum omnipotentis Domini providentia hanc virginem Mariae Magdalenae deputavit in filiam, illamque dedit ipsi in matrem, ut scilicet ieunatrix ieunatrix, amatrici amatricii, contemplatrix contemplatricii convenientissime iungeretur. Verum ipsa virgo dum haec recitabat, secrete superaddebat, vel potius hoc tantum dicebat, quod peccatrix peccatrici olim fuerat data in filiam, ut mater memor naturae fragilis ac largitatis misericordiae sibi factae a filio Dei, compariter filiae fragili, eique largitatem misericordiae impetraret. Raymond, Vita 2.6.183-5, 899.
ministry especially, or whether it was accepted by other Second and Third Order women religious as part of their Dominican tradition. As has been seen, Catherine encourages others to take the Magdalen as a model: 'I want you to follow her because she knew the way so well that she has been made our teacher'. Here the 'our' may indicate that the Magdalen was held up as a pattern of devotion for Dominican sisters and tertiaries, rather than referring simply to Catherine's own close relation with the saint. Catherine exhorted at least one other woman to imitate her own apostolic activity, but no other Dominican woman found herself able to imitate the Magdalen in a preaching ministry as Catherine did.

ii) The Franciscans and Margaret of Cortona

Retracing our steps a little, chronologically, another saint who illustrates the ways in which the Magdalen was imitated is Margaret of Cortona (c. 1247-97) who, after her lover of nine years was killed, embarked on a life of penitence, sent her son into the Franciscan novitiate and herself joined the Franciscan Order of Penance which was soon to become the Third Order. In Margaret's biography, written by her confessor Fra Guinta Bevignati between 1297 and 1307, she is described as a 'new' or 'second Magdalen'. It is said that when she was received into the Franciscan Order, 'she chose to unite herself to the King of the ages like a new Magdalen, in meditation, prayer, weeping and fasting without moderation.' One Holy Week, after her meditation on Christ's passion was so vivid that she enacted his sufferings herself, she is said to have imitated the Magdalen in her despair at finding the tomb empty:

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So when it was late, Margaret with my permission returned to her cell and, like a new Magdalen, who had seen in her mind Christ on the cross, thinking he had been taken away, drunk with grief she incessantly demanded of all she saw in a loud voice with tears her crucified Lord, so piously that she provoked all who were present or who met her to tears.\textsuperscript{72}

Despite her dramatic public penance and extreme personal austerity, concern is still ascribed to Margaret about whether it was possible for her to win salvation because of her former sinful life. This question is answered by Christ himself whom Margaret sees in a vision on the feast of Catherine of Alexandria, who tells her that like the Magdalen she will be restored to virginal status:

On the feast of the royal virgin Catherine, she beheld Christ at the altar and heard him say to her: Daughter, I will set you among the seraphim, where the virgins aflame with love are. Dazed at this saying, Margaret replied: Lord, how can this be, since I am so stained with sin? Jesus ... said: Daughter, the variety of your sufferings shall so cleanse your soul from the contagion of vice, that your contrition and suffering will restore you to virgin purity. More fearful at this, she asked her master Christ, if he had set the Magdalen among the virgin choir in heavenly glory. Her true master told her: Except for the Virgin Mary and Catherine the martyr there is none among the virgin choir greater than the Magdalen.\textsuperscript{73}

When she still thinks herself unworthy, Jesus says 'Remember I can bestow gifts on whom I will. Have you forgotten the Magdalen, or the woman of Samaria, or the Canaanite, or Matthew who became an apostle, or the thief to whom I

\textsuperscript{72} Sero itaque facto Margarita licentiata per me suam remeavit ad cellam: et veluti nova Magdalena, quae Christum in cruce mentaliter viderat, credens eum sublatum, ebiata doloribus incessanter cum fletibus alta voce ab omnibus quod videbat, suum crucifixum Dominum requirebat, tam pie quod omnes adstantes vel sibi obviantes provocabant ad fletum. \textit{Ibid.}, 5.86, 316

\textsuperscript{73} In festo igitur regiae Virginis Catharinae, ad altare Christi suspiciens, audivit cum dicentem sibi: Filia, ego te collocabo inter seraphin, ubi sunt ardentibus virgines caritate. Ad quod verbum cum mentis stupore Margarita respondens ait: Domine, quomodo posset hoc fieri, cum fuerim tot maculata peccatis? Ille vero ... ait: Filia, tuum poenarum varietas sic animam tuam defaecabit a viiiorum contagio, quod tuae contritiones et poenae conormabunt te munditiae virginali. Super quo verbo amplius timens, interrogavit Christum magistrum si inter virinum choros in caelesti gloria collocaverat Magdalenam. Cui verus magister dixit: Excepta Maria Virgine ac Martyre Catharina, nulla inter virginum choros maior est Magdalenam. \textit{Ibid.}, 4.73, 313.
promised paradise?\textsuperscript{74}

Margaret was active in ministering to the needy, and founded the \textit{Spedale di Santa Maria della Misericordia} for nursing the sick poor, before she retired to an isolated cell high up on the citadel of Cortona where she spent the last nine years of her life as a contemplative recluse. After Margaret died, a citizen of nearby Città del Castello saw her spirit being lifted up into heaven surrounded by souls freed from purgatory by her intercession. The visual parallel between this scene and iconographic depictions of the Magdalen being raised to heaven surrounded by angels seems clear, but to reinforce the point the woman who witnessed this is said to have referred to Margaret as the Magdalen from then on:

\begin{quote}
... she saw Margaret's most joyful spirit assumed into heaven with inexpressible happiness and with a great multitude of souls released from purgatory, and from that day she called her the Magdalen, the bride and servant of Christ.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

While these details, and the shape of Margaret's life in general, indicate her affinity with the Magdalen, it is not clear how far this interest was fostered by devotions practised by the Franciscans in general, or was personal to Margaret, or was emphasised by her biographer. There are obvious allusions to the tradition about the Magdalen's penance in the wilderness, but Margaret's \textit{Vita} also describes the Magdalen appearing to her as 'the most blessed apostle of Christ':

\begin{quote}
On the eve of (the feast of) the most blessed Magdalen, she who earlier had not been able to get up because of illness, rising in fervour of spirit and praise was suddenly so fully strengthened that all present were amazed, and in that joy she sang the divine praises all evening. After
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{75} ... vidit spiritum felicissimum Margaritae cum laetitia ineffabili in caelum assumi et cum magnno multitudine animarum de purgatorio eductarum: quam ex illa die vocavit Magdalenam, Christi sponsam et servam. \textit{Ibid.}, 11.283, 356.
this, her soul uplifted in rapture of mind, she saw the most blessed apostle of Christ, the Magdalen, in silvery robes, wearing a crown set with precious stones and surrounded by blessed angels. In this vision she heard Christ saying to her: As my Father said of me to John the Baptist, This is my son; so I say to you that this is my beloved daughter. And since you wonder at her shining raiment, know that she was rewarded in her desert cave, in which she merited obtaining the crown, which you see, of precious gems in her victories over the temptations which she suffered in that penitence. 76

Although the crown the Magdalen wears is said to have been merited by her penitence rather than by her preaching, it seems impossible that Margaret did not know the legend of the Magdalen's preaching ministry. Early in 1279, she had offered fervent intercessions for a solution to the clash between two rival claimants of sovereignty over Tuscany, Charles of Anjou, the king of Sicily, and Rudolph of Hapsburg, the German emperor. The dispute was resolved by Pope Nicholas III in June and the loser Charles, who had been the preferred choice of the Tuscans, was recognised as Count of Provence by Rudolph in compensation. 77 In Provence, in December of the same year, Charles' son, the prince of Salerno, announced his discovery of the Magdalen's relics at St-Maximin. Margaret's personal investment in this political situation, together with her devotion to the Magdalen, inevitably suggest that she must have been aware of the preaching apostolate which was said to have bought the Magdalen

76 In vigilia beatissimae Magdalenae, quae prius surgere propter infirmitatem non poterat, in fervorem animarum ascendens et laudum, subito roborata est ita plenissime quod omnes adstantes mirati Bunt: fecitque in illa iocunditate sera illo divinas cantare laudes. Post haec anima eius in excessu levata mentis, vidit beatissimam Christi apostolam Magdalenam in vestitu deargentato, ferentem coronam intextam de lapidibus pretiosis et earn beatos angelos circumdantes. In qua visione audivit Christum dicentem sibi: Sicut Pater meus dixit loanni Baptistae de me, Hic est filius meus; sic dico, quod haec est filia mea dilecta. Et quia miraris de ipsius tam fulgido vestimento, scias quod ipsam lucrata est in antro deserti, in quo etiam coronam, quam vides, de lapidibus pretiosis in victoriis suarum tentationum, quas in illa poenitentia passa est meruit obtinere. Ibid., 6.146, 328.

77 François René Rohrbacher, Histoire universelle de l'Eglise catholique, 29 vols (Paris, 1842-61) vol. 19, 76.218-220. See also Léopold de Chérancé, St Margaret of Cortona, the Magdalen of the Seraphic Order, tr. R.F. O'Connor (Dublin, 1903), 82-84; Fr Cuthbert, A Tuscan Penitent: the life and legend of St Margaret of Cortona (London, 1907), 49-50;
to Provence.

There are clear indications that Margaret herself was active as a preacher and teacher. It is said that in one vision, Jesus tells her that, 'your angel will teach you the people whom you ought not to speak to, and whom you ought to honour and whom to teach'. In another vision, Jesus promises that she will receive grace for her preaching:

Daughter, sow and I will give you seed, and I will pour grace into the words of your mouth. And even though I speak with you less often, yet without speaking will I increase your light so that your words will preach truth.

Like Catherine of Siena, Margaret was consulted by eminent churchmen, such as Ubertino of Casals and Conrad of Offida, and she intervened in political and ecclesiastical affairs, for example mediating between the local Bishop Guglielmino of Arezzo and the Cortonese and bringing about a reconciliation in 1277. Yet like Catherine, Margaret attracted criticism for her activities, as well as for her former life, and Bevignati relates how Jesus reassured her that the Magdalen likewise suffered contempt:

... I have called you to penance, like Matthew and the Magdalen. For as they followed me faithfully after their conversion, so you come to me after many tribulations, vilified and complained about. ... And as there was complaint about the Magdalen because she despised her finery and ardently followed me, so many will mock you for associating with me. But do not worry, for you are my daughter, my beloved, my sister, whom

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78 ... tuus angelus te docebit personas cum quibus loqui non debeas, et quas honorare debeas et doceas. AASS Feb. III, 2.35, 306.

79 Filia, semina et ego dabo tibi semen, et infundam gratiam verbis oris tui. Et si rarius loquar tecum et sine locutione largiar tibi lumina, ut verba tua praedicere vera possint. Ibid., 8.211, 341.

I love more than all women alive today.\textsuperscript{81}

Christ also tells Margaret that she is to speak out now about his redeeming work, just as her former life spoke out against him, and he will be displeased if anyone criticises her in this:

... for as your vain life once cried out against me through the tongues of those who complained in the camps, the woods, the fields and villages, so you shall not cease to cry out through my order of sinners: that always in this life I lived in travail and pain for love of the human race. Whoever dares to complain against you shall offend me greatly, and you shall please me. So cry out, daughter, that held by love for you (pl.) I descended from the bosom of my Father in to the womb of my Virgin Mother. Cry out ... [about various episodes of his life]. Cry out how, with publicans and sinners, I ate with the pharisees, at whose banquet I spared the weeping Magdalen, to give hope of pardon to sinners.\textsuperscript{82}

Like the Magdalen, Margaret is described as bringing light and illumination others. In her visions, Christ repeatedly says that she is a light both for the Fransiscan Order and for people who are still living in the darkness of sin. In terms which recall the sermon attributed to Odo of Cluny where the Magdalen is called 'maris stella',\textsuperscript{83} Jesus tells Margaret: 'Prepare yourself, o star, for the sun of justice wishes to descend to make his dwelling place in you and wishes to spread

\textsuperscript{81} ... ad poenitentiam te vocavi sicut Matthaeam et Magdalenam. Nam sicut illi me fideliter post suam conversionem securi sunt, ita tu venies ad me post multas tribulationes vilificata et murmurata. ... Et sicut de Magdalena murmurationum fuit, quod ornamenta contemposerat et ardenter sequatur me, ita te multi deridebunt frequentem me. Sed non cures, quia tu es filia mea, dilecta mea, soror mea, quam prae omnibus foeminis quae hodie sunt in terra diligo. Bevignati, \textit{Vita} 5.102, 320.

\textsuperscript{82} Sicut enim vita tua vana olim contra me per linguas murmuratorum clamavit in castris, in silvis, pratis et villis, ita tu clamare non cesses meam per ordinem peccatorum: et quod semper in hac vita vixi in laboribus et poenis pro amore humani generis. Qui autem super hoc praesumpserit contra me murmura, offendet me graviter et tu mihi placebis. Clama igitur, filia, quod amore vestri captus e sinu Patris descendit in uterum Virginis Matris ... Clama quando cum publicanis et peccatoribus, Pharisaesque comedi et in eius convivio, ut spem de venia peccatoribus darem, fienti Magdalenae peperci. \textit{Ibid.}, 5.97, 318-9.

\textsuperscript{83} Above, pages 32-33.
his rays of piety and justice abroad.'84 After Francis and Clare, Jesus says she is the third light in the Franciscan order,85 and he describes her as a 'light drawing those who dwell in darkness'.86

As well as preaching herself, Margaret is said to have other Franciscans as her own apostles. Christ tells her, 'I have given you my apostles, the Friars Minor, to preach what has happened to you, as the apostles preached my gospel to the nations.'87 Christ frequently commisions her to pass on his instructions to the Friars, and since Friars means literally 'brothers', Margaret's commission evokes that of the Magdalen sent by Jesus to go and 'tell my brothers' (Jn. 20:17).88 Much of what Margaret is told to tell the Friars is concerned with preaching, and this suggests that she found ways of influencing the preaching ministries of others, as a means of extending her own apostolic activity in a less public manner. She is told to 'tell the Friars they must preach my word frequently',89 and is given instructions on what and how they are to preach:

Also tell my sons, the Friars, that they should not make sermons about foolish things but about the words of the gospel and the epistles of blessed Paul, my chosen one. Nor are they to care if people complain for there was always complaint about me, the Lord. Again, tell the said Friars that they have a net from me of greater authority for the holy gospel than all who preach my word in the world and in the holy church; I command them that they have my death commended to them, so that as

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84 Praepara te, o stella, quia sol iustitiae descendere vult ad faciendum in te sedem suam et suos vult radios extendere pietatis atque iustitiae. Bevignati, Vita 7.193, 337.
85 ... tu es tertia lux in ordine dilecti mei Fransisci concessa. Ibid., 11.267, 353.
86 Tu lux trahens illos qui sedent in tenebris. Ibid., 9.240, 346. Cf. Filia, tu eris in mundo lux, ibid., 4.64, 311; Tu es, filia mea, lux in tenebris posita, ibid., 5.102, 320.
87 Dabo autem tibi meos apostolos Fratres Minores, qui praedicabunt quae in te fient, sicut apostoli gentibus praedicaverunt evangelium meum. Ibid., 4.74, 311.
88 Dic etiam Fratribus Minoribus quod ..., ibid., 9.240, 346; ... dicas Fratribus Minoribus ..., ibid., 8.209, 340; ... dicas Fratribus Minoribus ex parte mea ..., ibid., 8.213, 341, etc..
89 Dicas ergo Fratribus quod frequenter praedicent verbum meum, et aperiant doctrina sua surdorum aures, et suis exemplis illuminent caecos. Ibid., 5.109, 321.
they preach, they may bear in their heart the order of my torments.\textsuperscript{90}

Other preachers are criticised by Christ for not observing these principles and he observes that 'for this reason the world lacks preaching more than is usual'.\textsuperscript{91}
The lack of preachers was an important argument for why the Magdalen's preaching activity was acceptable, and there is a suggestion in its use here that Margaret's own active ministry could thus be justified.

Margaret is also given specific instructions for Guinta Bevignati himself, about how he should preach and administer the sacraments (and one may suppose a certain amount of self-interest on Margaret's part in this):

\begin{quote}
My daughter, tell Brother Guinta on whose behalf you invoke me, that he should preach attentively, hear confessions fervently, sow concord between those who disagree, not be weak but strong, shun the praises of people and not rush through his Masses.\textsuperscript{92}

Let him not be complex in his preaching, but eager with love and calm with internal peace. Let devoted preparation precede his Masses, let him not rush through Masses, nor speak to the friars before them. .... Let him preach my word attentively with all integrity and vigour, fervently extending the net of preaching....\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

Thus Margaret is not only presented as preaching publicly herself, with divine authority, but is also depicted as an 'apostle of apostles' like the Magdalen,
having literally her own apostles to instruct. Although there is no direct evidence that Margaret used the Magdalen as an exemplar in her activity, it is clear that her biographer framed his interpretation of Margaret's preaching and ministry to preachers as an implicit imitation of the Magdalen's apostolic witness and role as *apostola apostolorum*.

iii) Beguines and Mary of Oignies

The so-called beguine movement which developed in the twelfth century is interesting in the way it illustrates the aspirations of women to live an active life, outside any monastic enclosure. Inevitably perhaps the movement ended up being brought within the bounds of orthodoxy, with many of the women taking confessors (often Dominican) and then becoming tertiaries or even enclosed sisters. Many churchmen at the time, however, were impressed by this spontaneous efflorescence of female piety and several Dominicans in particular were profoundly influenced by individual women.

Although (or perhaps because) the movement was in some ways unorthodox, it is clear that the Magdalen was important for beguines and several individuals received visions on the Magdalen's feast day or its eve. Ida of Louvain, before she entered the Cistercian order was rapt in meditation at midday on the Magdalen's feast and 'merited being visited by the Lord' himself, and his presence 'filled her with heavenly delights'.

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94 In festivitate beatae Mariae Magdalenae in spiritu rapta a Domino visitari meruit: Simili quoque modo in festivitate beatae Mariae Magdalenae meridianis horis ad vacandum otio contemplationis, eo quietius utique quo secretius, ad umbram arboris in solitario quodam loco confugerat, ibique permaxima beneficia quae dudum haec sancta fuerat a Domino consecuta, nunc exercitio meditationis ad memoriam revocabat; ... et ut prius a Christo Domino se visitante conspicitur, ad cujus aspectum illius anima copiosissime iucundata coelestibus iterato deliciis adimpletur; ad se quippe reversa tam in signis, quam in verbis, eo die quasi tota coelestis apparuit. *Vita B. Idae Lovaniensis* (ed. Henriquez), *AASS* April II, ch. 40, 402.
also said to have been caught up in the choir of seraphim, which may perhaps allude to the Magdalen being raised up by angels. 95 Beatrice of Nazareth, similarly, is said to have been caught up by angels, and is even described as ascending to the height of apostolic sanctity in this, since 'she was worthy to enjoy heavenly joys in this world, and before she put off the burden of the flesh due to the human condition, she tasted the reward of eternal beatitude'. 96 The reference to apostolic sanctity may in addition recall the fact that St Paul boasts on behalf of a man who was caught up into paradise (II Cor. 12:2) and is in itself a confirmation that the beguines were seen as truly living out the vita apostolica.

The best-known of all the beguines is probably Mary of Oignies, thanks to the Life written by Jacques de Vitry, which was supplemented by the Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré. Although neither account mentions any specific devotion on her part towards Mary Magdalen, she nevertheless appears to have had a significant ministry concerned with preaching in that she profoundly influenced Jacques de Vitry in his preaching activity. Jacques is presented in Thomas' Supplementum (1226/7) as undertaking his preaching under Mary of Oignies' guidance, and this is supported by the evidence of the Vita itself. This latter evidence is challenged by Philipp Funk as being merely a web of hagiographical devices, 97 but even if this were the case, it would mean that Jacques is attempting something very daring, if not controversial, in presenting a woman as having such authority over his preaching ministry through her gifts and insights. For he describes himself as merely her instrument, preaching what she inspired in him

95 De eo quod quadam vice rapta fuit in chorum Seraphim... . Ibid., ch. 55, 435.
96 De eo quod rapta fuit in choro seraphim ... Attendete lector, magna esse valde quae dicimus: quid enim nisi ad Apostolicae sanctitatis culmen Beatricem nostram ascendisse dixerimus, quae caelestibus gaudiis in hoc saeculo constituta recreari pro tempore meruit, et priusquam deposito carnis onere debitum humanae conditionis exsolueret, illius aeternae beatitudinis praemia degustavit? Henriquez, Vita Beatricis, ch. 37, 113, 116.
through her prayers, that she herself might fulfill the office of a preacher through an intermediary:

For she frequently listened to holy sermons ... Besides she loved preachers and faithful shepherds of souls so greatly, that she embraced their feet with wonderful affection after their preaching labours, and even when they were unwilling, she either sought to kiss their feet for a long time or she cried out in alarm when they tried to extricate themselves. ... With many tears and sighs and prayers and fasts, begging the Lord most insistently, she obtained that though she could not exercise the merit and office of preaching actually in herself, the Lord would recompense her in some other person(a), and would give to her a preacher as a great gift. Having given (him), the Lord allowed her to utter the words of preaching through him as through an instrument; (God) prepared his heart through the holy woman's prayers, he conferred strength (lit. virtue) of body for the task, he supplied words, he directed his steps, he prepared grace and fruitfulness among the listeners through the merits of his handmaid. For every day while he laboured at preaching, she entreated the Lord and the Virgin Mary on his behalf, saying the Ave Maria a hundred times over, as Martin prayed for Hilary when he preached. She truly commended her own preacher, whom she left corporeally at her death, most devotedly to the Lord; for since she loved her own, she loved them to the end.98

Mary's effectiveness in inspiring Jacques seems to be borne out by remarks of near-contemporaries. His successor to the see of Tusculum, Odo of Chateauroux, describes his preaching and use of exempla as stirring France as never in living memory and, interestingly, he emphasises the appeal to women

98 ... nam frequenter divinos sermones audiebat... Adeo autem Praedicatorum et fideles animarum Pastores diligebat, quod pedes eorum post praedicationis laborem mira affectione constringens, etiam ipsis invitis vel diu osculari oportebat, vel prae anxietate cum se substraherent, clamabat. ... Multis autem lacrymosis suspiriis, multis orationibus et ieiuniis a Domino instantissime postulando obtinuit, ut meritum et officium praedicationis quod in se actualiter exercere non poterat, in aliqua alia persona Dominus ei recompensaret: et quod sibi Dominus pro magno munere urum Praedicatorem daret. Quo dato, licet per eum Dominus, tamquam per instrumentum verba praedicationis emitteret; sanctae mulieris precibus et ieiuniis a Domino praeparabat, virtutem corporis in labore conferebat, verbum ministrabat, gressus dirigebat, gratiam et fructum in auditoribus meritis ancillae suae praeparabat. Nam pro ipso singulis diebus, dum esset in labore praedicandi, Domino et beatae Virginis dicendo Ave Maria centies supplicabat, sicut praedicante Hilario Martinus orabat. Suum vero Praedicatorum, quem in morte praesentialiter reliquit, Domino devotissime commendavat. Cum enim dilexit suos in finem dilexit eos. *Vita Mariae Oigeniacis* bk. 2, ch. 68, 69 (AASS June V, 562-3).
that Jacques' preaching held. Vincent of Beauvais also describes how

... Mary ... begged special grace in preaching from the Lord by her prayers and merits for master Jaques de Vitry ... (who) by his preaching sent many from France against the Albigensians, when the sign of the cross had been made (i.e. the crusade called). 100

Jacques de Vitry's own acknowledgement of his debt to Mary in his preaching is remarkable, and his quotation from John 13:1 which parallels her with Jesus before the Passion in her love for her 'disciple' seems to ascribe an extraordinary authority to her. Although the model he cites for their relationship is of Martin and Hilary, again there seems to be here an implicit representation of Mary as Mary Magdalen, who embraced and kissed Christ's feet and was sent as his messenger to the apostles. In a similar way the Dominican preacher Peter of Dacia was said to have found a mentor in the beguine Christine of Stommeln in the mid-thirteenth century. 101 This sort of indirect preaching ministry, then, seems to have been exercised by those beguine women who did not feel themselves to have the necessary legitimate authority to pursue the active life in person, but took on a role as apostle of apostles like the Magdalen.

Conclusions

The diverse examples drawn from Theophylact and Thomas Brinton have shown that Mary Magdalen could be perceived and enjoined upon men as a model for

100 ... virtutibus et miraculis floruit sancta Maria in Oegnies, que magistro Iacobo de Vitriaco ... specialem praedicandi gratiam a Domino precibus suis ac meritis impetravit. Qui ... melliflua sua predicatione multos de Francie regno contra Albigenses dato signo crucis transmisit. Vincent of Beauvais, Memoriale omnium temporum, MGH Script. 24:160.
101 MacDonnell, The Beguines, 27; Acta Christinae Stumbelensis, AASS 25 (Jan 22.5) 236-367; Vita 367-387.
teaching and preaching. Thomas shows no hesitancy at holding up a woman preacher as an example to the clerics at Chobham to whom he preached, and clearly assumes that his audience would not have been surprised at this. Unsurprisingly, the case for women appears different. There are no attested examples of preaching to a female or mixed congregation where the Magdalen is said to be an exemplar for preaching. However, evidence has been adduced which shows that women were familiar with Mary Magdalen's apostolic role and felt themselves to be similarly capable of exercising a public preaching ministry. While only notable individuals like Catherine of Siena are known specifically to have preached, and that with papal approval, it is significant in this case that Catherine especially shows that she knew of the legend that the Magdalen had preached, and took her as 'teacher' as she tried to follow her apostolic calling.

In other instances the evidence is less clear-cut. Nevertheless, a pattern clearly emerges that women felt drawn to 'the merit and office of preaching', like Mary of Oignies, but some chose not to attempt to exercise this directly but rather through an intermediary, becoming highly influential in the inspiration and active ministry of male preachers. Others, like Margaret of Cortona, appear to have done both, preaching themselves about God's redemptive grace and directing others to preach as 'apostles'. In this, the impact of the legend of Mary Magdalen can also be discerned. The Magdalen's first act of witness, as recorded in the Gospel, was to take the news of the resurrection to the disciples, and she was credited with being the 'apostle of apostles'. Medieval women, it seems, did not fail to perceive the significance of her role, and even though they did not necessarily choose to risk infringing clerical authority and convention, yet forged for themselves a distinctive ministry, within the limits of what was acceptable practice, in encouraging and inspiring male preachers in their public office. The influence of Mary Magdalen, apostola apostolorum, is directly discernible.

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CONCLUSION

The encyclical Mulieris Dignitatem, published by Pope John Paul II in 1988, acknowledges the importance of the role played by Mary Magdalen in witnessing to the resurrection:

... she is the first to meet the risen Christ .... Hence she came to be called the apostle to the apostles .... This event, in a sense, crowns all that has been said previously about Christ entrusting truths to women as well as men.

However, the encyclical ends by stressing that 'in calling only men as his apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner'. At the Last Supper had taken place the 'calling of the Twelve'; these and these 'alone receive[d] the sacramental charge, "do this in remembrance of me"'.

Medieval interpretations of the significance of the Magdalen's apostolic role did not reach the same conclusion. That the Magdalen had been truly an apostle is repeated again and again in the legendaries, sermons, liturgy and iconography of the Middle Ages. Also, in contrast to the argument that only the male disciples had been present at the Last Supper to hear the charge, 'do this in remembrance of me', Mary Magdalen was even understood to have been present as well. In the fifteenth-century Corpus Christi play from Coventry, the Magdalen anoints Christ's feet at the Last Supper then remains for Christ's institution of the Eucharist. The directions say 'here cryst restyth and etyth A lytyl and seyth syttyng to his disciplis and mary mawdelyn'. The original scribe

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1 Mulieris Dignitatem. Apostolic Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year, published by the Catholic Truth Society (London, 1988). It is notable that the Pope's argument depends on a fundamental distinction between 'the Twelve' in the gospel accounts and those called apostles (who would include, for example, St Paul himself).
had added the words 'goth here outh', but these have been crossed out by two different hands (in both red and black ink), indicating that in public performances the Magdalen was made to stay on to witness the sacramental charge. Again, a fifteenth-century verse rendering of the story of the passion, the Last Supper takes place in the house of 'Symon lepros' after the Magdalen has anointed Christ.

It has been shown in this thesis how the Gospel evidence, that Mary Magdalen had been commissioned by the risen Christ to 'go ... and tell', prevailed over the Pauline injunctions on women speaking in church, teaching and having authority over men. The earliest extant discussion of the women's witness to the resurrection, by Hippolytus, describes the women as apostles, and says that Jesus later appeared to the male disciples in order to remove any doubt that the women had indeed been sent by him as apostles. Hippolytus' positive interpretation of the women's role is continued by Hilary, who says that 'to the female sex first was the glory and vision and reward and announcement of the resurrection restored'. Hilary even suggests that it was Jesus' commission to the women that reversed the consequences of sin and, by speaking with Christ's voice, they brought salvation to the world. Augustine likewise accepts that 'humanity was restored by the female sex', and that 'through a woman came life'.

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2 Ludus Coventriae or The Plaie called Corpus Christi, ed. K. S. Block (London, 1922), Passion Play I, The Last Supper, 249.

3 Carleton Brown, Fifteenth-Century Religious Lyrics (Oxford, 1939), 131, no. 91:

In Symon lepros hous of balthany,
Thy feit anoyntit mary magdalen,
With precius balme & nardus-specatyve,
Scho passit fra tyme hir synnes wer forgevin.
Thy flesche and blude in breid and wyne betuen
Gaif thy disciplis, & Lawlie wosche air feit. (from MS London BL Arundel 285).
After the time of Gregory the Great, the standard conflation of Mary Magdalen with Mary of Bethany and Luke's sinner did not diminish the significance of the Magdalen's witness to the resurrection. Rather, it was taken as an illustration of Paul's interpretation of Law and Gospel, that 'where sin abounded, grace superabounded'. Thus, in Bede's words, 'she who was once subject to so many and so great sins was promoted to such a peak of faith and love that she was the first to evangelise Christ's evangelists and apostles'. The conflation effectively enhances the positive significance of the Magdalen's role if even a prostitute can be worthy of such privilege. Any tendency that can be discerned to limit the impact of the Magdalen's witness after the time of Gregory lies in the fact that it is more often said that her actions 'dissolve the curse of Eve for women' rather than specifically restore humanity, both male and female. This may attest to the increasing limitation of women, both doctrinally and practically, in the church, but it is not in itself a consequence of the identification of the Magdalen with Luke's prostitute sinner. It could rather be suggested that the identification of Mary Magdalen with Mary of Bethany was more deleterious to the importance of her role as messenger of the resurrection, for this made it possible to emphasise that she was a type of the contemplative life and play down her active witness. The early eremitic legend demonstrates this, when she is described as retiring into the wilderness to pursue a life of contemplation. It is only later when the active preaching legend had developed that the Magdalen's retreat into the wilderness was ascribed to her desire to do penitence for her former life. Such a coincidence appears to confirm the suggestion made above that the Magdalen's previous sinfulness actually enhances her resurrection privilege. The effect of the conflation of the Magdalen with Mary of Bethany has not been made the point of criticism by those recent scholars who have argued that the figure of the Magdalen has been the subject of 'exegetical distortion' or deliberate constraint by the early church. Criticism seems to have been voiced only about the attribution to her of a career as a prostitute, whereas it seems that
if anything it was the Magdalen's association with the contemplative life that allowed her apostolate to be glossed over and the notion that religious women should not seek to pursue an active ministry to be reinforced.

Patristic and early medieval commentary accepted that St Paul had praised a woman Junia as 'outstanding among the apostles'. It is Jerome who adapts Hippolytus and popularises the epithet which would be so frequently used in the Middle Ages of Mary Magdalen: *apostola apostolorum*. It is Jerome also, notably, who in contradiction of Paul describes the women who had met the risen Jesus preaching and teaching, and alludes to the Magdalen speaking 'in church'. The significance of the figure of the Magdalen is also enhanced by the typological identification of her with the Church, which preaches the resurrection, and with the conversion of gentiles. Her anointing of Jesus is also seen as a type of the Church which preaches Christ's divinity and humanity or as a type of preaching itself, and Gregory suggests that preachers may see themselves imitating her actions. Although the Magdalen is seen as a type of the contemplative life, the gospel gives clear evidence of her activity, and it is interesting that Gregory suggests preachers may be both active and contemplative. Gregory's depiction of the concerns proper to the active and contemplative lives, together with his suggestion that the contemplative life tends to succeed the active, seem to establish the lines along which the legendary tradition would develop.

Thus patristic and early medieval tradition provided both the authority and inspiration for the representation of Mary Magdalen as a 'glorious preacher'. The earliest version of the legend is explicit about her preaching, and it is only subsequently that any concern is shown to reconcile her activity with the Pauline injunctions. But the idea of her apostolate prevails, underpinned by the pre-existing Burgundian tradition of evangelising saints coming from the east, and becomes increasingly elaborate. By the early twelfth century the preaching legend was being disseminated through sermons, and the image of the
Magdalen as *apostola apostolorum* became popular in iconography. By the early thirteenth century she was depicted preaching publicly, and is shown preaching from a pulpit with the hand of God above her in blessing. With the addition of the story of her converting the prince of Marseilles and his wife comes the portrayal of her as able to defend the faith she preaches. The thirteenth century also sees a significant increase in the reproduction of the Magdalen's legend in hagiographical collections, including compendia for the use of preachers, and it is included in the extraordinarily popular *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine. In the continuing tradition of English legendaries, the Magdalen is described as having preached on Christ's authority even in Judea before she confined her apostolate in Provence and other 'countries', and the words of one of her sermons are reported directly. In one version she even claims that St Peter has authorised her preaching.

Although a certain amount of space was devoted in Chapters Three and Four to the prohibitions on preaching and teaching by women put forward by jurists and other ecclesiastical authorities, these pronouncements ultimately seem to have little effect in countering the popularity of the image of Mary Magdalen as a preacher. The issue of lay preaching in the later twelfth century, and the development of the mendicant Orders in the thirteenth, meant that the bounds of authorisation in preaching were being tested even from safely within the established hierarchy of the church. A distinction between preaching and exhortation may have been attempted to ease the situation, but this did not significantly modify the representation of the Magdalen's preaching ministry. Indeed the attempt to rationalise the Magdalen's 'special privilege' was an inherent admission that the legend was true. In accepting that the Magdalen had preached, these authorities conferred on her in the course of their discussions *magisterium*, the 'office of a preacher, the 'office of a doctor', and also the aureola of preachers which she is elsewhere depicted actually wearing.
The reasons attempted for why a woman was incapable of preaching because of her sex are also overthrown by the example of the Magdalen, as shown in Chapter Four. From the earliest version of her legend, her constancy and effectiveness in preaching are made clear. The *Legenda de Maria Magdalena* of Bertholdus Heyder proves to be a key text in this respect since it describes her preaching ministry in terms which seem quite explicitly to allude to and refute the arguments alleged by Henry of Ghent, and hence the Magdalen is represented as meeting all the contemporary criteria for preaching. In addition, further authorising devices are apparent in the indirect details of the legends. The Magdalen is typologically associated with both Elijah and Moses, exemplifying a form of *imitatio* which is becoming increasingly recognised as an important feature of medieval hagiography. Like Elijah, she is the forerunner of Christ, an *illuminatrix* and an *ignifera*. Like Moses, she is a minister of the Covenant, and her face shines from her celestial communion with God. The legendary tradition also meant the Magdalen also proves useful in the medieval debate about the relative value of the active and contemplative lives. She is praised for both winning the 'prize of action' and 'exercising the grace of contemplation', preachers are encouraged to be like her in achieving the 'secret sublimity of internal contemplation', and preaching could be regarded as a work of both the active and contemplative lives. This seems to encapsulate the all-embracing appeal of Mary Magdalen, the prostitute who became an apostle and the contemplative who was a preacher.

As has been shown, the rationalisation of the Magdalen's 'special privilege' as a preacher actually implied admitting that the apostolic legend was true. In addition, the reasons given for her incontrovertable status as a preacher, divinely conferred privilege, the shortage of preachers or the inadequacy of those men who did preach, were then available for women who sought to justify their own inclinations towards preaching. Alcuin Blamires has commented, 'the amount of
preaching activity credited in the Middle Ages to women saints will probably be a surprise to some modern readers." Some notable examples of such women preachers were abbesses, like Hildegard of Bingen, Umiltà of Faenza and Gertrude the Great, who were permitted in canon law to preach to their nuns and even to men in certain circumstances, although Innocent III tried to revoke this privilege. Other cases of women undertaking preaching activity, however, appear to defy the conventions of ecclesiastical acceptability. While there is no outright evidence of a woman claiming to be able to preach on the basis that Mary Magdalen was promoted by the church as a preacher, the popularity and prevalence of the Magdalen legend clearly meant that women must have been conscious that a woman had preached and was celebrated for so doing.

The fact that men could be exhorted to imitate Mary Magdalen in preaching seems crucial. Although not many examples of this have been discovered, that there are any at all indicates that it was possible for the Magdalen to be viewed as an exemplar in her apostolic activity. The clearest example adduced is the sermon of Bishop Thomas Brinton who argues that, 'if we prelates and confessors, following the Magdalen's example, are holy in conversation, bold in correction, of one mind in our undertakings, we can pacify and correct all evil'. The evidence of Dominican devotion to the Magdalen also seems relevant. Her cult at St-Maximin, under Dominican supervision, rapidly eclipses that at Vézelay and she is hailed as Patron and Protector of the Order. In the Dominican legend of the invention of her relics, the Magdalen is said to have declared her partiality for 'my brothers of the Order of Preachers, for I myself was an apostle'. That this Order of Preachers venerated her as an apostle and preacher without regarding her ministry as in any way a pattern for their own seems unthinkable.

It is in the context of preaching by groups regarded as heretical that the nearest 
evidence to a claim that the Magdalen was used as a model for women's 
preaching is found. Admittedly, in one case it is a critic, Moneta of Cremona, 
who describes the Waldensians as making this claim and there is no direct 
evidence in surviving Waldensian writing to prove it. Yet it offends common 
sense less to suppose that this was a genuine argument put forward by the 
Waldensians than that the Dominican inquisitor had supplied those heretics he 
sought to denounce with such an argument, particularly because Bernard of 
Fontcaude also had tried to deny that the Magdalen had preached in his 
refutation of Waldensian practice. In addition, the evidence from the trial of 
Walter Brut records that he put forward the Lollard argument that women could 
validly preach, citing the legend of the Magdalen's preaching as an example.

The importance of Mary Magdalen for some women who preached is 
undeniable. Both Catherine of Siena and Margaret of Cortona were clearly 
devoted to her, the latter to the extent that she could be presented in her 
biography as a 'new' Magdalen. Both refer to the Magdalen as an apostle, and 
Catherine definitely knew of the tradition that she had preached in Provence. 
Both also seem to have found it significant that she was indifferent to complaints 
made about her unconventional behaviour. Interestingly it is Margaret whose 
public ministry is less overt, probably due to the criticism that could be aimed at 
her because of her previous sinful life, a detail which seems almost ironic given 
the Magdalen's precedent. But Margaret is portrayed as having had an 
important ministry in instructing and encouraging male preachers, and this can 
be seen as a way of channelling her apostolic vocation without directly 
challenging convention.

Such a strategy also seems to have been adopted by other women, notably Mary 
of Oignies who is explicitly said to have begged God for a preacher of her own, 
since 'she could not exercise the merit and office of preaching actually in herself'.

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Jacques de Vitry then describes Mary as 'uttering the words of preaching through him', and tells how God prepared his body, his words and even his audience through her prayers. That a male preacher could so readily admit to being influenced to such an extent by a woman both to the appeal and inspiration of female holiness, and suggests again at a personal level that the gospel story of Mary Magdalen instructing the disciples was preferred to the Pauline command that women may not teach men. This strategy seems to have been a recourse particularly where there were reasons to question the woman's 'legitimacy', either for moral reasons like Margaret, or for institutional ones as with the Beguines. Yet in such examples of a woman encouraging and influencing male preachers, the parallel of the woman's role with that of the Magdalen as *apostola apostolorum* can still be traced.

Thus it is has been demonstrated that the medieval legend of Mary Magdalen as apostle and 'glorious preacher', developed on the basis of patristic authority, was not suppressed by the contemporary limitations on women's active ministry. Rather it won such popularity that it became a standard feature in her hagiography, and even those who argued that women were not permitted by the church to preach or teach had to allow that the Magdalen was an exception. Despite this officially endorsed precedent, women were not able to imitate the Magdalen's preaching activity in the same way as men. While some women did pursue a preaching ministry, the Magdalen's exemplary role is never cited as authorisation, although devotion to her is evident in certain cases. More frequently, however, especially among women whose status was felt to be less than orthodox, it appears that a type of ministry was practised in which they preached through an intermediary. This expedient meant that clerical authority was not challenged directly, and it can be seen as a way of imitating Mary Magdalen's most significant role of witnessing to the resurrection as *apostola apostolorum*.
The long-standing and durable tradition that Mary Magdalen was a preacher has met an ambivalent response within western Christianity, a response that continues to be typified within the Roman Catholic Church today. On the one hand, the tradition has been and is a focus for both popular and monastic piety, among men as well as women. On the other hand the teaching authority of the Church continues to maintain that women cannot be permitted to preach. The orders of ministry are barred to women. The reasons given for this bar by Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem* attempt to take seriously the popular pressure for women's gifts to be recognised by the Church. The Pope carefully dissociates the Church from the traditional arguments about women's lack of reasoning ability and general intellectual inferiority to men that medieval scholars had used. There is no hint, however, that the bar to women's ordination could ever be lifted. But to accept the equality of women while continuing to exclude them from orders raises acute theological difficulties for the Church, since the major traditional ground for their exclusion has been precisely their inferiority to men. To maintain the ban, the Pope is forced to put unprecedented weight on the rather weak supposition that Jesus deliberately chose to exclude women from the apostleship and therefore from the orders of ministry.

That this is the strongest argument that can be mustered against women's ordination does not give the impression that the Church's teaching office is particularly confident on this point. Yet the ban remains. In the Roman Catholic Church today, women may not even read the Gospel at Mass because this function is given to ordained deacons and priests only, due to the fact that only they have official authority to preach on the Gospel. It is thought appropriate to limit the proclamation of the Gospel to those who are its authorised interpreters.
There is a consistency admittedly about Roman Catholic practice on this point, which may in the long run benefit those women who aspire to priestly ministry. For there has been no attempt, as there has been for example in the Anglican Communion, to separate the pastoral and liturgical roles of ministers from the preaching office; or to separate the diaconate from the presbyterate (as traditionalist Anglicans continue to do); or both the diaconate and the presbyterate from the episcopate (as the Church of England still does). If and when the Roman Catholic Church allows the tradition of Mary Magdalen as apostle and preacher to inform its understanding of the role of women in the Church there will be no exceptions.
Figure 1: The Magdalen with the aureola of preachers. MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 144r. (See pages 170-72.)
Figure 2: Martha's deathbed: the Magdalen as ignifera.
MS London BL Add. 15682, f. 213. (See pages 172-9.)
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