

Miriai (Magdalene), who acts as a feminine counterpoise to the masculine Christ (p. 91), has echoes in the Mary Magdalenes populating modern Internet spirituality (p. 338) and in New Age expressions (p. 390). Another recurrent theme is the pastoral benefit of characterizing the Magdalene as a repentant sinner, which is a major feature of the sixteenth-century “Divided Magdalenes” controversy. This idea was maintained by the earliest Reformers (pp. 269–72) and has echoes in modern ministries to sex workers (pp. 417–18). The question of the Magdalene’s moral function extends to Hoffaker’s examination of paintings from the Baroque period to the present. She identifies varying trends in the intersection of gender ideals, religiosity, and artistic representation in the person of Mary Magdalene. Whether in art, preaching, or biblical interpretation, one wonders whether the age-old fixation on Mary Magdalene’s supposed sinfulness serves primarily to reinforce cultural gender norms, to humanize a saint in order to inspire transformation in fellow sinners, or perhaps merely to titillate audiences. What Saccucci observes regarding contemporary film renditions of Magdalene archetypes applies more broadly: “It may be easier to seek redemption as the prostitute than to lead as the disciple within the current western cultural setting” (p. 331). Locating similar analyses across wildly divergent contexts of study (art history, the preaching of early Protestant Reformers, modern film, and charitable organizations) drives home the importance of L.’s project.

Lupieri and his collaborators have demonstrated effectively the extent to which the reception of the figure of Mary Magdalene has absorbed other female figures from the Gospel narratives. It is possible that the literary, cultural, and historical contexts spanned by these articles are so wide-ranging that, collectively, they may present barriers to the volume’s usefulness. Biblical scholars, for instance, would find relevant resources only in the minority of the included chapters (perhaps most of part 1 and Calpino’s chapter in part 3). Yet, in light of the perpetual interest in Mary Magdalene herself, a fixation to which the volume at once attests and caters, scholarly purchasers of the collection will be guaranteed an expansion and enrichment of their knowledge of the diverse interpretive history of the Magdalene figure. Even if the chapters are used selectively, this volume would make a valuable addition to a specialist’s collection and could prove to be a resource for multiple constituencies within an academic library.

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POPE FRANCIS, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Spiritual and Pastoral Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2020). Pp. xiii + 257. Paper \$22.

This book is not an academic, systematic, and comprehensive commentary for study or a sourcebook for preaching. Rather, it is a “spiritual and pastoral reading” of the Gospel of Matthew, as the subtitle of the book suggests. Following the Gospel’s outline, the book begins with Jesus’s birth and significance through his public teaching and ministry to his death and resurrection. In the section on Jesus’s birth and significance, one finds that God’s self-revelation to the world is historical, and that Jesus is the divine revelation in its fullness. He is God, who strips himself of his glory and empties himself to be in solidarity with humanity in all things but sin. In the section on Jesus’s public teaching and ministry, Jesus

is portrayed as one who cares deeply about the disadvantaged, the marginalized, and the vulnerable. He suffers with and for humanity, and he teaches believers to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable before their own. He is not afraid to ruffle feathers to challenge the status quo to build a more just and fraternal world. In the section on Jesus's death and resurrection section, readers will find the portrayal of Christ as one with humility who remains silent amid mockeries and responds with faith and obedience. In general, the pope stresses the theme of mercy: God is merciful, and believers are to imitate God's mercy by becoming neighbors to others through sensitivity and charitable outreach to the material and spiritual needs of the poor and marginalized, echoing the message in his latest social encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* and papal bull *Misericordiae Vultus* for the extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to mercy. For the pope, "Love of the neighbor reveals the love of God" (p. 202).

The book is aimed at a broad audience, and readers will find the book accessible, relatable, and practical yet inspiring and encouraging. It gives readers insights into the mission and substance of Francis's pontificate: his spirituality and pastoral sensibility, as well as his depiction of the main character, Jesus. From a spiritual perspective, the pope is the man of the Gospel, as reflected in his words and actions. From a pastoral perspective, the book reflects the passion of a spiritual leader who walks his talk about love, mercy, and service. He cares about and reaches out to the unchurched and those marginalized by society and the church. The image of Jesus presented is one who champions the peripheries. References to mercy, whose aspects include compassion and care for those on the margins, are frequently cited. The purpose of the book is to help readers meditate on the word of God and to draw them "closer to Jesus and discover the hidden treasure in the words of the Gospel, words that can make the heart burn again today" (pp. xi–xii).

The book is a compilation of different sources (i.e., homilies, meditations, speeches). The interpretive lenses are multifaceted: moral, theological, spiritual, and social. The approaches too are diverse: character analysis, narrative, catechesis, and evangelization. Due to these diverse interpretive lenses and approaches, as well as the eclectic sources originally tailored for different audiences and contexts, readers will find the transition from one passage to the next disjointed. At times, the writing is somewhat repetitive. Some passages are treated extensively and repeatedly, though varying in scope and depth (e.g., 2:1–12; 5:1–12; 16:13–20). Some are treated minimally or skipped entirely (e.g., 13:1–23; 16:1–12; 23:13–17). Readers might benefit from a list of suggested reflection questions at the end of each Gospel chapter or section.

All in all, the editors effectively weave together a coherent spiritual and pastoral reading of the Gospel of Matthew. The book is intended not for the classroom but rather for interested readers looking to reflect on their encounters with the word of God, to discern their spiritual growth, and to deepen their relationship with God in response to God's wholly unconditional gift, with Pope Francis as the spiritual guide. It is ideal for Gospel reflection groups. The pope has given readers much to contemplate. He writes in a way that encourages readers to read the Bible and to find more time for God. At the same time, the pope challenges readers to be instruments of mercy to their neighbors and to look to the future with hope.