

MARY MAGDALENE

Mary Magdalene is a key figure in the history of Christianity. After Mary, the mother of Jesus, she remains the most important female saint in her guise both as primary witness to the resurrection and as ‘apostle of the apostles’. This volume, the first major work on the Magdalene in more than thirty years, focuses on her ‘lives’ as these have been imagined and reimagined within Christian tradition. Philip C. Almond expertly disentangles the numerous narratives that have shaped the story of Mary over the past two millennia. Exploring the ‘idea’ of the Magdalene – her cult, her relics, her legacy – the author deftly peels back complex layers of history and myth to reveal many different Marys, including penitent prostitute; demoniac; miracle worker; wife and lover of Jesus; symbol of the erotic; and New Age goddess. By challenging uniform or homogenized readings of the Magdalene, this absorbing new book brings fascinating insights to its subject.

PHILIP C. ALMOND is Professor Emeritus in the History of Religious Thought at the University of Queensland and a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His recent books include *The Antichrist: A New Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), *God: A New Biography* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), and *Afterlife: A History of Life after Death* (Cornell University Press, 2016).

‘If, as the author notes, there is a Magdalene for all seasons, this just might be the Magdalene for ours.’

– Katherine Ludwig Jansen, Professor of History,
Catholic University of America, author of *The Making of
the Magdalene: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the
Later Middle Ages*

‘Timely, engaging and full of fascinating detail on the history of the Mary Magdalene cult.’

– Chris Maunder, Senior Lecturer Emeritus in
Theology & Religious Studies, York St John University,
author of *Our Lady of the Nations: Apparitions of Mary in
20th-Century Catholic Europe*

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MARY
MAGDALENE
A CULTURAL HISTORY

PHILIP C. ALMOND
The University of Queensland



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For George Clayton Agostini

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