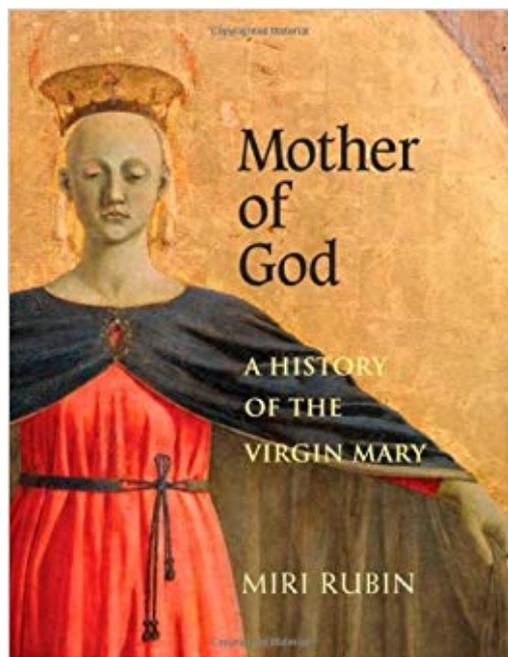


Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary *by* Miri Rubin



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How did the Virgin Mary, about whom very little is said in the Gospels, become one of the most powerful and complex religious figures in the world? To arrive at the answers to this far-reaching question, one of our foremost medieval historians, Miri Rubin, investigates the ideas, practices, and images that have developed around the figure of Mary from the earliest decades of Christianity to around the year 1600. Drawing on an extraordinarily wide range of sources—including music, poetry, theology, art, scripture, and miracle tales—Rubin reveals how Mary became so embedded in our culture that it is impossible to conceive of Western history without her.

In her rise to global prominence, Mary was continually remade and reimagined by wave after wave of devotees. Rubin shows how early Christians endowed Mary with a fine ancestry; why in early medieval Europe her roles as mother, bride, and companion came to the fore; and how the focus later shifted to her humanity and unparalleled purity. She also explores how indigenous people in Central America, Africa, and Asia remade Mary and so fit her into their own cultures.

Beautifully written and finely illustrated, this book is a triumph of sympathy and intelligence. It demonstrates Mary's endless capacity to inspire and her profound presence in Christian cultures and beyond.



Reviews of the **Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary** by Miri Rubin

Na

While it's obvious that Miri Rubin is not Catholic - perhaps not a Christian of any variety - it is refreshing to read so clearly enriching a book about history and the cultural importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Western and Eastern society over the past two millennia.

This is a book about history, with a dip or two into the pool of prose and poetry, with an occasional shower of theology to to make sure everyone is on the same page.

If you want a good grasp at an important sidelight on how devotion to Mary has been a bonus to humanity, be sure to get a copy.

WUNDERKIND

Nice copy, swift delivery

Darkshaper

excellent

Ynonno

Comprehensive. Follows the growth of Mary in the Christian church through art, music, and philosophy.

Connorise

Miri Rubin's "Mother of God" is the only work that I have come across that lays out most of the history of Mary in the Catholic Church. For that reason alone, it is an essential work. Rubin's book presents the facts, is well researched, and readable. I would not be surprised if it becomes the first book researchers go to on the subject of Mary. It is that good. But is it good? To my mind, it is the best that's out there, but that is not saying much. Rubin fails repeatedly to pursue important lines of thought. She notes the absence of Mary in the earliest Church writings, the existence of the Egyptian Isis cult, and the influence of Constantine's mother Helena at Nicea, to give three examples, but never pursues these lines. Likewise, Rubin's book gives the briefest mention to the First Vatican Council and the papal decree on the Immaculate Conception, and so does not examine the politics surrounding those events. Rubin has done a commendable job gathering and presenting the facts. Then she stops.

Muniath

Professor Rubin has earned accolades for her blending of cultural, gender, and historical studies on themes from early to late medieval events in western theatres. In this most recent monograph, *Mother of God* traces the history of Theotokos in the east from varied third-to-fifth century presentations in art, poetry, liturgy, sermons, music, and pseudepigraphal writings all the way to a fragmented veneration of Mary in western sources around 1600 with which Rubin concludes investigation. Mary as pre-Christian female deity extends the laudable scholarship of Marina Warner

(Alone of All Her Sex) and Jaroslav Pelikan (Mary through the Centuries).

Clearly Rubin tries but fails to mix divergent sources extolling the Mother of God as Co-Redemptrix from medieval Cistercian and Franciscan hagiographies, yet orphans ancient traditions concerning the Theotokos. In that way, Rubin confuses Syriac, Greek, Coptic, and Jacobite views of the Dormition with Carolingian tales of the Assumption well grounded as early as the 11-th century in the west. She fancies a singular road to the history of Mary while ignoring Hermetic markers to the contrary. Relying upon secondary sources for hefty topics as Luther's ecclesiology, the author fumbles over at least this one Reformer's record concerning the "Christotokos." Examples of her scholarly blunders make it plausible that Rubin bit off more than she can chew, which heralded a jaundiced conclusion by Rowan Williams's in his review last spring in The Guardian.

Xenophobic encroachments of anti-Semitic sentiment in western medieval poems and hymns to the Mother of God appear in sufficient detail to warrant Rubin's conclusions about late medieval political pogroms against Jews in Spain, France, and German principalities. However, Rubin ignores the ambivalence present in these same hymns. For example, Amadeus's of Lausanne homilies to the Theotokos in the 12th century extol the Virgin's mercy toward her own people, thus providing a standard rationale from Tradition as to why the Mother of God remained in ministry long after Christ's Resurrection.

NiceOne

Thanks to this book, I now have a more solid understanding of how tightly veneration of Mary and antisemitism were linked in Europe. Representations of violence against Jews describe the acts in almost approving terms. Assertions of violence by Jews are never described as the slanders the historical record often proves them to be. Apparently this is required to maintain the respectful tone toward Mary that the book establishes.

The person I bought it for loved it!

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