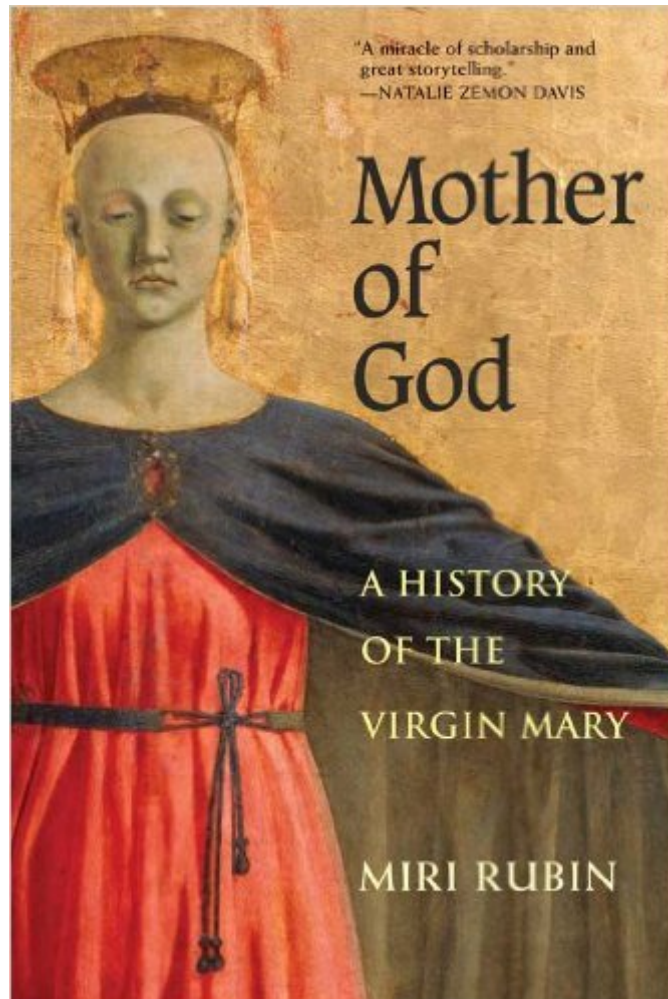


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Mother Of God: A History Of The Virgin Mary



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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.

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