

In Quest of the Jewish Mary

*The Mother of Jesus
in History, Theology, and Spirituality*

Mary Christine Athans, BVM

ORBIS  BOOKS
Maryknoll, New York 10545

Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknollsociety.org.

Copyright © 2013 by Mary Christine Athans.

Published by Orbis Books, Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302.

Manufactured in the United States of America.

Manuscript editing and typesetting by Joan Weber.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Athans, Mary Christine.

In quest of the Jewish Mary : the mother of Jesus in history, theology and spirituality / Mary Christine Athans.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-62698-004-4 (pbk.)

1. Mary, Blessed Virgin, Saint. 2. Catholic Church—Doctrines. I. Title.

BT603.A84 2013

232.91—dc23

2012038593

Contents

Foreword	xi
Prologue	xv
Acknowledgments	xix
Introduction: Mapping the Quest	xxiii

PART I

SEARCHING FOR MARY OVER THE CENTURIES

1. Initiating the Search	
<i>Obstacles, Detours, and New Pathways</i>	3
An Obstacle for Some Catholic Women: “The Perfect Mary”	4
Detours over the Centuries	6
New Pathways: History and Scripture	6
Questions for Further Exploration	9
Jewish-Christian Relations and the Feminist Dialogue	10
Feminists in Faith and Mary	10
Taking the First Steps in Our Quest	11
2. Mary in History, Doctrine, and Devotionalism	
<i>From the Early Church Through the Renaissance</i>	13
The Early Church	13
The Virginity of Mary and the Virgin Birth	18
Mary in Early Christian Art	19

Goddess Imagery	21
Prayer to Mary	23
Mary and the Early Ecumenical Councils	24
Mary in the Middle Ages	28
Mary in the Protestant Reformation	33
Mary in the Catholic Reform	35
Conclusion	39
3. Mary in History, Doctrine, and Devotionalism	
<i>From the Enlightenment Through Vatican II</i>	41
Mary in an Age of Absolutism	41
The Enlightenment	43
Disparaging Mary: The French Revolution and Napoleon	44
Mary in the Nineteenth Century: Devotion and Doctrine	45
Mary in the Neo-Thomistic Revival: 1920–1960	55
Mary and Vatican II	59
Conclusion	61

PART II
DISCOVERING THE JEWISH MARY

4. Will the Real Mary Please Stand Up?	
<i>Multidisciplinary Approaches to a New Question</i>	65
Mary in Historical Studies	66
Biblical Scholarship Regarding Mary	71
New Theological Interpretations	78
Mary in Recent Catholic Feminist Theology	85
Mary in Spirituality and Culture	87
Conclusion	91
5. Searching for the Jewish Jesus to Find the Jewish Mary	93
Introduction	93

The Suppression of the Jewish Jesus	94
Christian Quests for the Historical Jesus	100
The Jewish Search for Jesus	103
Jesus and the Pharisees	105
The Pharisees, Jesus, and the Early Christians	110
Conclusion	131
6. Jewish Spirituality and Hebrew Prayer	
<i>Praying as Mary Prayed</i>	133
Jewish Spirituality	134
Mary and Jewish Prayer	135
Ignatian Contemplation	137
Contemplations	140
Annunciation and the Visitation	141
The Birth of Jesus	146
Jesus' Early Public Ministry and Cana	148
Crucifixion and Resurrection	153
Epilogue	159
Notes	163
Bibliography	185