



Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture

Professor Jaroslav Pelikan

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The Virgin Mary has been an inspiration to more people than any other woman who ever lived. For Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims, for artists, musicians, and writers, and for women and men everywhere she has shown many faces and personified a variety of virtues. In this book, a scholar who is the author of numerous books - including the best-selling "Jesus Through the Centuries" - tells how Mary has been depicted and venerated through the ages. Jaroslav Pelikan examines the biblical portrait of Mary, analysing both the New and Old Testaments to see how the bits of information provided about her were expanded into a full-blown Mariology. He explores the view of Mary in late antiquity, where the differences between Mary, the mother of Christ, and Eve, the "mother of all living", provided positive and negative symbols of women. He discusses how the Eastern church commemorated Mary and how she was portrayed in the Holy Qur'an of Islam. He explains how the paradox of Mary as Virgin Mother shaped the paradoxical Catholic view of sexuality and how Reformation rejection of the worship of Mary allowed her to be a model of faith for Protestants. He considers also her role in political and social history. He analyses the place of Mary in literature - from Dante, Spenser, and Milton to Wordsworth, George Eliot, and Goethe - as well as in music and art, and he describes the miraculous apparitions of Mary that have been experienced by the common people. Was Mary human or divine? Should she be revered for her humility or her strength? What is her place in heaven? Whatever our answers to these questions, Mary remains a symbol of hope and solace, a woman, says Pelikan, for all seasons and all reasons.

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