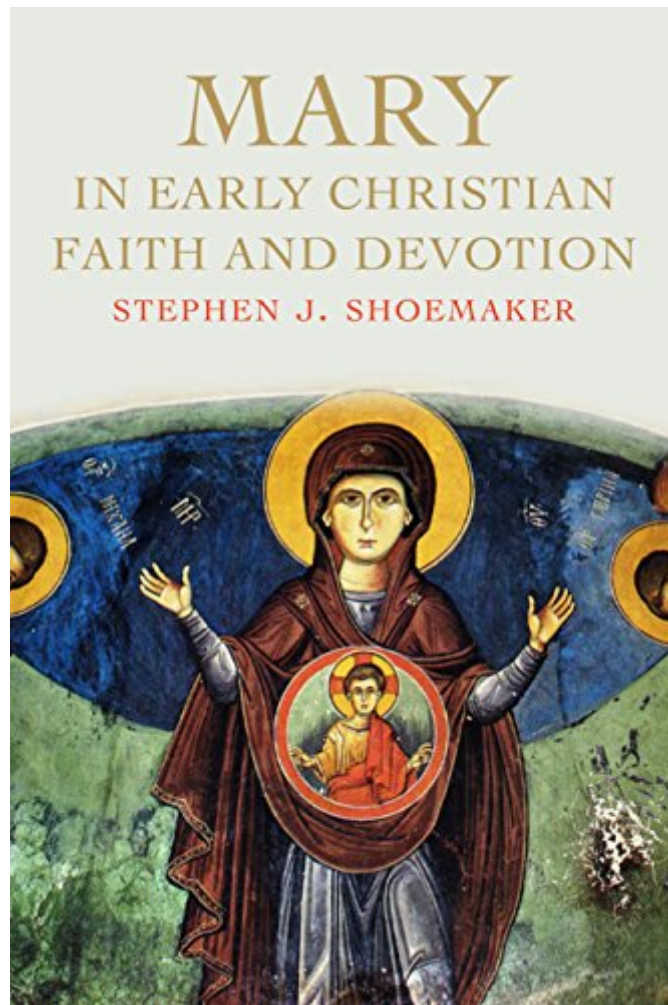


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Mary In Early Christian Faith And Devotion



Synopsis

For the first time a noted historian of Christianity explores the full story of the emergence and development of the Marian cult in the early Christian centuries. The means by which Mary, mother of Jesus, came to prominence have long remained strangely overlooked despite, or perhaps because of, her centrality in Christian devotion. Gathering together fresh information from often neglected sources, including early liturgical texts and Dormition and Assumption apocrypha, Stephen Shoemaker reveals that Marian devotion played a far more vital role in the development of early Christian belief and practice than has been previously recognized, finding evidence that dates back to the latter half of the second century. Through extensive research, the author is able to provide a fascinating background to the hitherto inexplicable "explosion" of Marian devotion that historians and theologians have pondered for decades, offering a wide-ranging study that challenges many conventional beliefs surrounding the subject of Mary, Mother of God.

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Shoemaker has been at the vanguard of early Christian historical studies for the past two

decades, specializing --among a few other things-- in the search for (and ensuing analysis of) evidence pertaining to the cult of Mary the Mother Jesus in Late Antiquity. To that end, he has published a number of insightful and groundbreaking scientific articles elucidating the growth of Marian devotion in the ancient churches, particularly as this devotion was expressed in apocryphal, liturgical, patristic, and even archaeological sources. The findings of his numerous articles all appear in this volume, but, as the author himself emphasizes in his Introduction, this book is not merely a portfolio collection of already-completed papers. On the contrary, in 'Mary in Early Christian Faith and Devotion,' Shoemaker aggregates the very best of his formidable individual studies regarding ancient Marian cult, and transforms them into a brand new work of singular quality and format, adapting the complexities of his scholarly explorations to an ambience more accessible for those interested in a linear, book-length account of the rise of Mary's veneration. Best of all, Shoemaker sacrifices not a shred of the probative excellence found in his various articles, and adds a surprising wealth of "new" information and engaging perspective to the mix. The importance of this book will be a bit hard to overemphasize. We have at our disposal a wealth of publications dealing with the "history" of Marian doctrine (Mariology) as it developed in and among the ancient churches, but not so many which focus solely upon the specific phenomenon of Marian devotion/cult/veneration as it emerged from the mists of the primitive Christian past.

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