

of retribution while reaffirming it at the same time. Perhaps the most creative among all the essays is Kevin Madigan's contribution, which looks at the earliest postcanonical uses of Akedah and includes references to second-century literature; an examination of the homilies and exegesis of some of the work of early Christian interpreters such as Origen, among others; the depiction of Akedah in early Christian catacomb art; and its appropriation in relation to the early Christian monastic movement.

Although scholarly in nature, this volume is written in such a way as to make it accessible for both student and scholar as well as anyone else who is interested in delving deeply into a concept that has become a major topic and cornerstone in biblical studies. The editors of this volume have done well in weaving together this colorful tapestry of essays that are diverse yet interrelated. The volume makes a stunning contribution to the field, is a wonderful tribute to a most talented scholar, and a must-read for everyone else. I highly recommend it.

CAROL J. DEMPSEY, OP
University of Portland

In Quest of the Jewish Mary: The Mother of Jesus in History, Theology, and Spirituality. By Mary Christine Athans. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013. xxviii + 210 pages. \$19.00 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2015.5

Mary Christine Athans' powerful experiences of being in dialogue with and praying alongside Jewish counterparts heightened the author's awareness that traditional images of Mary seldom convey the reality that she was Jewish. This realization motivated a search that Athans compares to the quest for the historical Jesus: an attempt to recover the Jewish Mary.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 looks at the images of Mary over the centuries. Athans first provides an overview of issues that contemporary feminists and those engaged in Jewish/Catholic dialogue have with the Marian tradition. She follows with two chapters on history, doctrine, and devotionism (her term): the first covers the period from the early church to the Renaissance, and the second from the Enlightenment through the Second Vatican Council. Part 2 concentrates on the question of Mary's religion and consists of three chapters. The first reviews what the author terms multidisciplinary approaches to a new question—namely, the Jewishness of Mary. The second considers the contributions that the search for the historical Jesus might make to this quest for what the author considers “the real Mary” (66). A final chapter reconstructs scenes from the Gospel accounts of

Mary based on the author's thirty-day Ignatian retreat experience. There, she projects her knowledge of Jewish prayer and ritual into first-century life, suggesting ways that Mary might have prayed when faced with the joys and sorrows recounted by the Evangelists.

The book is suffused with the author's knowledge of issues stemming from the Jewish/Catholic dialogue, her evident love of Jewish prayer forms and feasts, and her direct experience of preaching in synagogues and participating in Jewish festivals. All of this makes possible the closing chapter in which Athans writes in Mary's voice, using her experience to recreate the Jewish world that the author imagines was Mary's own. This exercise, which the author describes as a kind of midrash (139), will certainly counteract any tendency to forget or to erase the truth of Mary's ethnicity. It will also serve as a fine example of prayer for students of spirituality.

Christians have always employed the imagination to enter into communion with Mary. Difficulties arise in chapter 5, however, with Athans' attempt to reach the Jewish Mary through the quest for the historical Jesus. This section is replete with verbs in the conditional mood: "could have," "might have," and so on. Important as the information is that the author gathers about first-century Judaism and Jesus' possible involvement in some of the movements of that time, the applications to Mary are based on conjecture, not on sources that will stand the test of historical criticism. This means, ultimately, that the Jewish Mary emerging here is a creation of the author's contemplative imagination, informed though it is by historical research.

If Athans' effort does not yield hard evidence for a reconstruction of Mary's Jewish life, however, it does raise important questions. Does such a search leave one with a Mary of history/Mary of faith split? If one thinks that historical research gives access to the "real" Mary, what can be said about the liturgy and doctrine of the church where Mary is concerned? Is there any way to help partners in interfaith dialogue appreciate the faith that informs Marian dogmas? In this way, Athans' work not only invites reverence for the religion that shaped Mary, but prompts readers to think deeply about beliefs that have developed about her in Catholic Christianity.

MARY AQUIN O'NEILL, RSM
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Embodied Words, Spoken Signs: Sacramentality and the Word in Rahner and Chauvet. By Rhodora E. Beaton. Emerging Scholars. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. vii + 213 pages. \$49.00 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2015.6