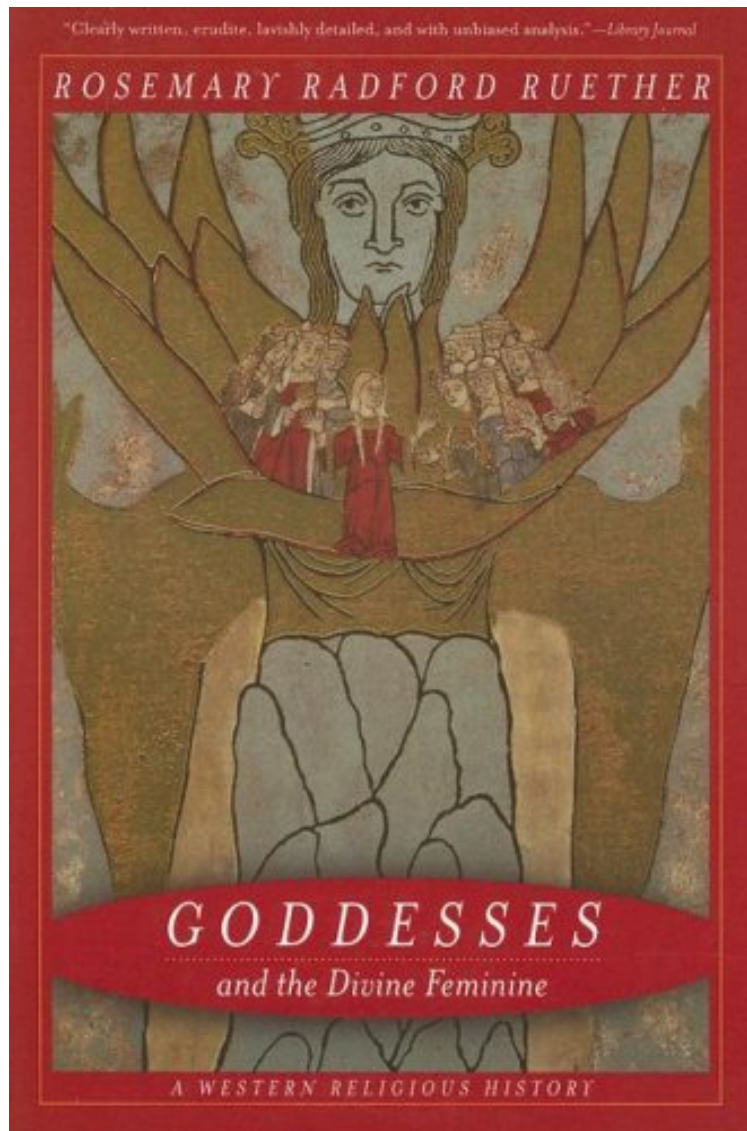


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Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History

Rosemary Ruether

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Rosemary Ruether : Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History:

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complete, well done; just a bit academic. Loved it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars
By CHWorks great 3 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A serious contribution
By Prof. R. Paris This is a remarkable book. Remarkable in every respect, i/e., the amount of information, the clarity of style, the points of view. Certainly, not politically correct, since it dares contradict the excesses of the feminist movement. Everybody interested in the history of the gender war should read it. Kudos.

This landmark work presents the most illuminating portrait we have to date of goddesses and sacred female imagery in Western culture from prehistory to contemporary goddess movements. Beautifully written, lucidly conceived, and far-ranging in its implications, this work will help readers gain a better appreciation of the complexity of the social forces mostly androcentric that have shaped the symbolism of the sacred feminine. At the same time, it charts a new direction for finding a truly egalitarian vision of God and human relations through a feminist-ecological spirituality. Rosemary Radford Ruether begins her exploration of the divine feminine with an analysis of prehistoric archaeology that challenges the popular idea that, until their overthrow by male-dominated monotheism, many ancient societies were matriarchal in structure, governed by a feminine divinity and existing in harmony with nature. For Ruether, the historical evidence suggests the reality about these societies is much more complex. She goes on to consider key myths and rituals from Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Anatolian cultures; to examine the relationships among gender, deity, and nature in the Hebrew religion; and to discuss the development of Mariology and female mysticism in medieval Catholicism, and the continuation of Wisdom mysticism in Protestantism. She also gives a provocative analysis of the meeting of Aztec and Christian female symbols in Mexico and of today's neo-pagan movements in the United States.

From Publishers Weekly Ruether charts a medium between, on the one hand, historically male-centered Western religious traditions and, on the other, the 1970s assertion (courtesy of Marija Gimbutas, Riane Eisler et al) that prehistoric societies were matricentric and matrilinear. It is possible, Ruether says, to support ecofeminism and beliefs in the divine feminine "without embracing theories about gender in human social evolution that are not historically tenable. One can affirm the validity of alternative Goddess spirituality in the contemporary context without insisting that everyone accept the thesis of a literal 'feminist Eden' in prehistoric human existence." Ruether adopts a roughly chronological approach, opening with an anthropological and archaeological look at what we know about gender in prehistory (which, it turns out, is not a lot), and about goddesses in the ancient Mediterranean world. She then examines gender and the divine feminine in Hebrew scriptures, ancient mystery cults, the New Testament and medieval Christianity before turning her attention to a particular case study of gender in the cultural contact between Aztec religion and Christianity in Mexico. The final chapters explore possible reasons for the popularity of the idea of matriarchy, with Ruether raising the overarching question: Do we need a myth of matriarchal prehistory today? Scholars and educated lay readers who are looking for a fair, comprehensive assessment of what is at stake in the debates about the divine feminine will read this with great interest. Ruether is an informed and lively guide, and her book (complete with nearly four dozen illustrations) manages to be both opinionated and balanced. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Clearly written, erudite, lavishly detailed, and with unbiased analysis." - Library Journal "The scholarship in this book is superior, revealing a depth of insight and a scope of knowledge possible only from a scholar who has lived with the concerns of feminist theology for decades. Ruether is a gifted storyteller, and lucidly translates complex ideas and debates. This work is of the highest importance, and Ruether asks the right questions at the right time. The text is groundbreaking." - Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Saint Mary's College of California "Ruether has provided a valuable introduction to an important feminist topic: what can we know about sacred female imagery in Western culture? She guides us through contemporary feminist scholarship, providing engaging narrative, and venturing her own interpretations. Ruether calls for feminists to move beyond divisions created by our different interpretations of prehistory and work together towards our common project of a more peaceful, just, and ecological world." - Carol Hepokoski, Meadville Lombard Theological School "From the Inside Flap" "The scholarship in this book is superior, revealing a depth of insight and a scope of knowledge possible only from a scholar who has lived with the concerns of feminist theology for decades. Ruether is a gifted storyteller, and lucidly translates complex ideas and debates. This work is of the highest importance, and Ruether asks the right questions at the right time. The text is groundbreaking." Nancy Pineda-Madrid, Saint Mary's College of California "Ruether has provided a valuable introduction to an important feminist topic: what can we know about sacred female imagery in Western culture? She guides us through contemporary feminist scholarship, providing engaging narrative, and venturing her own interpretations. Ruether calls for feminists to move beyond divisions created by our different interpretations of prehistory and work together towards our common project of a more peaceful, just, and ecological world." Carol Hepokoski, Meadville Lombard Theological School