

person into five constituent parts, is sufficient for liberation. The third path, however, completely dismisses knowledge. It consists in the progression through the four stages of *dhyāna* meditation, followed by the four stages of formless meditation, and the culmination in the cessation of apperceptions and feelings. Vetter's discussion of these various paths is intriguing for he also shows how various Buddhist doctrines grew in parallel fashion to the meditative practices.

This book is an excellent addition to Buddhist scholarship, and may become a classic in the field. It contains valuable information about early Buddhist doctrines and practices, in a style accessible to all. It should make a fine textbook for introductory and intermediate courses on early Buddhism at the university level.

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***Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing.* By Rosemary Radford Ruether. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992. ISBN: 0-06-067022-3. Pp. x + 310.**

By far the most substantial work by a Christian theologian on certain implications of the Gaia hypothesis, Ruether's *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* is a vivid illustration of how the environmental crisis is forcing a major reexamination of the underpinnings of Western culture. From the thought of ancient Babylonian, Mesopotamian, Hebraic, Greco-Roman, early Christian, and native American cultures, Ruether sifts for golden (or "green") cultural nuggets that might help us eschew ecological suicide. Dividing the work into four principle sections—Creation, Destruction, Domination and Deceit, and Healing—Ruether probes the underside of Western civilization's treatment of both women and nature, reiterating the ecofeminist critique of their dual oppression by a patriarchal culture.

While providing a helpful and terse overview of the Gaia hypothesis, a scientific theory first espoused by James Lovelock which claims that the Earth is a self-regulating, living organism, Ruether does not tease out the ethical and theological ramifications of Gaia directly. Speaking of the religious reverberations of Gaia, Ruether notes that it has become an instrument of ecofeminists who see in an earth goddess a way of avoiding a pernicious male deity. She sagely cautions against, however, such an interchangeable approach to God:

The term Gaia has caught on among those seeking a new ecological spirituality as a religious vision. Gaia is seen as a personified being, an immanent divinity. Some see the Jewish and Christian male monotheistic God as a hostile concept that rationalizes alienation from and neglect of the earth. Gaia should replace God as our focus of worship. I agree with much of this critique, yet I believe that merely replacing a male transcendent deity with an immanent female one is an insufficient answer to the 'god-problem'(4).

Dedicated to eco-justice, Ruether is critical of militarism, sexism, consumerism, and systemic poverty and injustice that constitute ominous threats to organic life. She assumes that the Earth forms a living system, thereby accepting

a key premise of the Gaia theory, and avers that we humans are an “inextricable part” of that system. She opposes a Western concept of nature that is both non-human and non-divine (5) and claims that our ethical standards should reflect Gaia’s interdependency. Lynn Margulis and James Lovelock, she notes, have given us a new vision of the Earth through Gaia, in which cooperation is as important as competition:

Human ethics should be a more refined and conscious version of the natural interdependency, mandating humans to imagine and feel the suffering of others, and to find ways in which interrelation becomes cooperative and mutually life-enhancing for both sides (57).

For Ruether, both the Gaia theory of Lovelock and Margulis and the new cosmology of cultural historian Thomas Berry and mathematician Brian Swimme counter the Cartesian mechanistic view of nature, and help dissolve traditional dualisms that have had such a deleterious legacy for both women and nature. (She in fact gives a special thanks to Brian Swimme in her acknowledgments).

In this well-researched, encyclopedic-like study, Ruether, it seems, embraces much of the emerging scientific stories such as Gaia and the universe story, unpacking, however, more of their *ethical* than their *theological* implications. In outlining the human agenda in light of such scientific insights, Ruether rehearses ideas that others in the ecological movement have also advanced: bioregionalism, reduced population, organic farming, an end to militarism and destructive technologies, global economic justice, communities of solidarity and alternative lifestyles, and an ability to listen to nature (a chief feature of Thomas Berry’s thought) (265–272). Somewhat surprisingly, however, the theological questions posed by Gaia are not directly addressed, leaving us to anticipate further contributions.

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God’s Peoples: Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster. By Donald Harman Akenson. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991. ISBN 0-7735-0940-2. Pp. vii+404.

In volume 10 of McGill-Queen’s *Studies in the History of Religion*, Donald Akenson investigates three very different social groups which have much in common. What forces are at work in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster that propel each group to hang tenaciously on to their land? What ideology binds each of these groups together? How has this ideology shaped their individual national histories and their complex historiographies? What ancient paradigm forms the fundamental base metaphor that helps these people understand and deal with their world?

In order to answer these questions, *God’s Peoples* is divided into five parts, each dealing with a different aspect. Part I, “The Adamantine World,” explores the theoretical model upon which Akenson bases his analysis of the cultures of