

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

A STUDY OF THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY WITHIN ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN THE WRITINGS OF ROSEMARY RADFORD RUE'THER

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The issue of the exercise of authority within church structure in the writings of Ruether, particularly with regard to the impact of patriarchy on church life and thought, as well as their global ecological and socio-political repercussions, has received only limited treatment. The intent of the present dissertation is to study both Ruether's critique of patriarchal hierarchy as the institutionalized model of authority within Roman Catholicism as well as her own alternate feminist ecclesiological construct. The dissertation therefore examines Ruether's understanding of church governance as it unfolds first in its preliminary critique of patriarchal institutionalization and, second, in its constructive undertaking of an alternate model of church government.

The dissertation investigates, describes, analyzes and evaluates the reasons, presuppositions, and theological principles foundational to Rosemary Radford Ruether's critique of patriarchal hierarchy as an institutionalized model within Roman Catholicism. The presentation of Ruether's thought is based on an examination of her published sources and involves the evaluation of Ruether's views in terms of their internal consistency. Also, because of Ruether's holistic understanding of church and world, which integrates the socio-political, economic, and ecological impact of god-talk on the world, these constitute an important part of the study and reflect the uniqueness of Ruether's approach to her understanding of the range and impact of the exercise of authority within the church.

The dissertation first analyzes Ruether's critique of patriarchal authority within Roman Catholic theology, followed by her critique of patriarchal institutionalization within Roman Catholic church structures. Ruether's foundational assumptions towards a feminist construct of ecclesial governance are then analyzed followed by a presentation of her radical vision of global feminist eco-justice in the principles of governance for the church in the world. Finally the dissertation concludes with a critical evaluation of Ruether's reform beyond Roman Catholic patriarchal authority in theology, church life, and the larger contexts of global ecopolitical realities.