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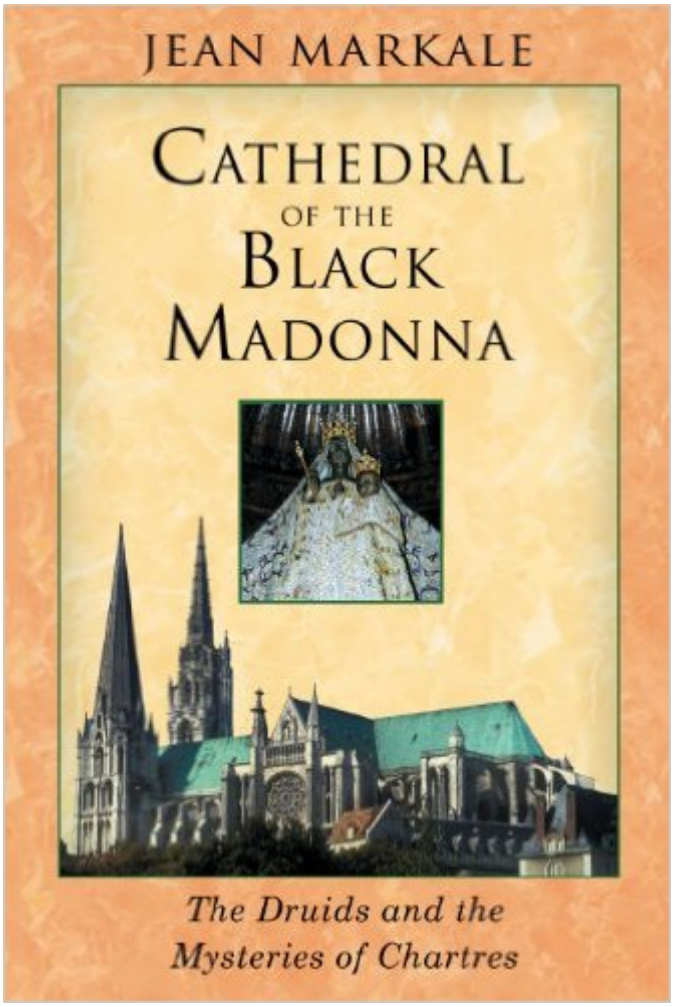
Cathedral Of The Black Madonna: The Druids And The Mysteries Of Chartres



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Synopsis

Explores the connection between ancient druidic worship of a virgin at Chartres and the veneration of the Black Madonnaâ ¢ Examines the Virgin Maryâ ™s origins in the pagan worship of the Mother Goddessâ ¢ Identifies Mary with the dominant solar goddess of matriarchal societiesThe great cathedral of Chartres is renowned the world over as a masterpiece of High Gothic architecture and for its remarkable stained glass, considered alchemical glass, and its mystical labyrinth. But the sacred foundations of this sanctuary go back to a time long before Christianity when this site was a clearing where druids worshiped a Virgo Paritura: a virgin about to give birth. This ancient meeting place, where all the druids in Gaul gathered once a year, now houses the magnificent Chartres cathedral dedicated both to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and to one of the most venerated Black Madonnas in Europe: Our Lady of the Pillar. Coincidence? Hardly, says Jean Markale, whose exhaustive examination of the site traces Chartresâ ™ roots back to prehistoric times and the appeal of the Black Madonna back to the ancient widespread worship of Mother Goddesses such as Cybele and Isis.Markale contends that the mother and child depicted by the Black Madonna are descended from the image worshipped by the druids of the Virgin forever giving birth. This image is not merely a representation of maternal love--albeit of a spiritual nature. It is a theological notion of great refinement: the Virgin gives birth ceaselessly to a world, a God, and a humanity in perpetual becoming.

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Customer Reviews

Jean Markale’s books are an amazing journey of discovery through philosophy, gnosis, and the wonderful world of esoterica. He is a mystic and a scholar, he is a teacher and a guide. Markale will never force his conclusions upon you, rather he leads you to them and makes you think and feel for yourself. There is no dogma in his work, only wisdom. While he researches with the thorough tenacity of the most intrepid academic, he is never pendantic or stodgy in his conclusions.There are layers of fascinating historical information within, the kind of detail that isn’t found in a library, but that comes from Markale’s lifelong love of his French homeland and the folklore and cultures that he was raised in. This is wisdom firsthand. It is experiential and real.If you have an interest in ancient cultures, goddess worship, the sacred nature of the cathedrals and those who built them, and the path of Gnosis, there is much to love in this book. But don’t expect a linear, typical journey. Markale is a genius, and he would never do anything that obvious.Read it, put it away and read it a few months later. You will see something within it that you did not see before.

The title of this work is a bit misleading. Rather than being about Chartres Cathedral itself, it focuses upon the development of the cult of the Virgin Mary, from the Roman and Celtic eras to early modern times. Author Markale has skilfully presented and examined the available historical evidence that pertains to the enigmatic Black Madonna statues and paintings that exist by the dozens throughout Europe, particularly in France. This is an engrossing and valuable study, but readers looking for specific information about the iconography contained within and without this most mystical of Christian cathedrals would do better to look elsewhere.

Recommended if you are into Black Madonnas -- he goes beyond vague New Agey ramblings that attempt to connect Madonnas and various Pagan goddesses, and makes a connection between the Black Madonnas and Sun Goddesses which I thought was absolutely, well, brilliant.

I love this man and wish more of his books were translated into English. His insight is phenonemal as well as his research. A must read ’before’ your trip to Chartres. It arrived after I returned last year, but encouraged me to go again this year.

Jean Markale (1928-2008) was the pen name of Jean Bertrand, a French writer, poet, radio show host, lecturer, and Paris high school French teacher.Here are some quotations from this 1988 book:"But there is no proof that this first statue was in fact a Black Madonna. Comparative studies on the different representations of the Virgin with Child on the cathedral’s windows can give only an

idea of the general appearance of the statue of 1220." (Pg. 53)"Some ecclesiastics currently deny that this statute is a Black Madonna, claiming her dark color is merely accidental due to the color of the wood. That is easy enough to say. In any event, Chartres tradition has clearly spoken for centuries about a Black Madonna, and this is obviously not the sole example of a statue on which the Virgin and Child are thus depicted, either carved from dark wood or covered by a coating that emphasizes the black color." (Pg. 170)"There are many Black Madonnas throughout Western Europe. These objects of worship and even pilgrimage have been a source of much fascination, both for their black color and for the mystery of their origins. If a list were made of all the statues and statuettes in this category, the number would be staggering." (Pg. 171)"Why should the Virgin Mary be given this black color? And why only in certain cases? There are multiple theories. One suggestion is that the Virgin Mary had a sunburned complexion, appropriate for a Semite, and that the custom of depicting her as black or simply dark-skinned came from ... the mythical portrait attributed to Saint Luke..." (Pg. 185-186)"No one has ever been able to prove that the painting in the Priscilla Cemetery is an image of the Virgin. But if she is brown, it is because someone deemed it wise to depict her in a color that was intended to say something." (Pg. 189)

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