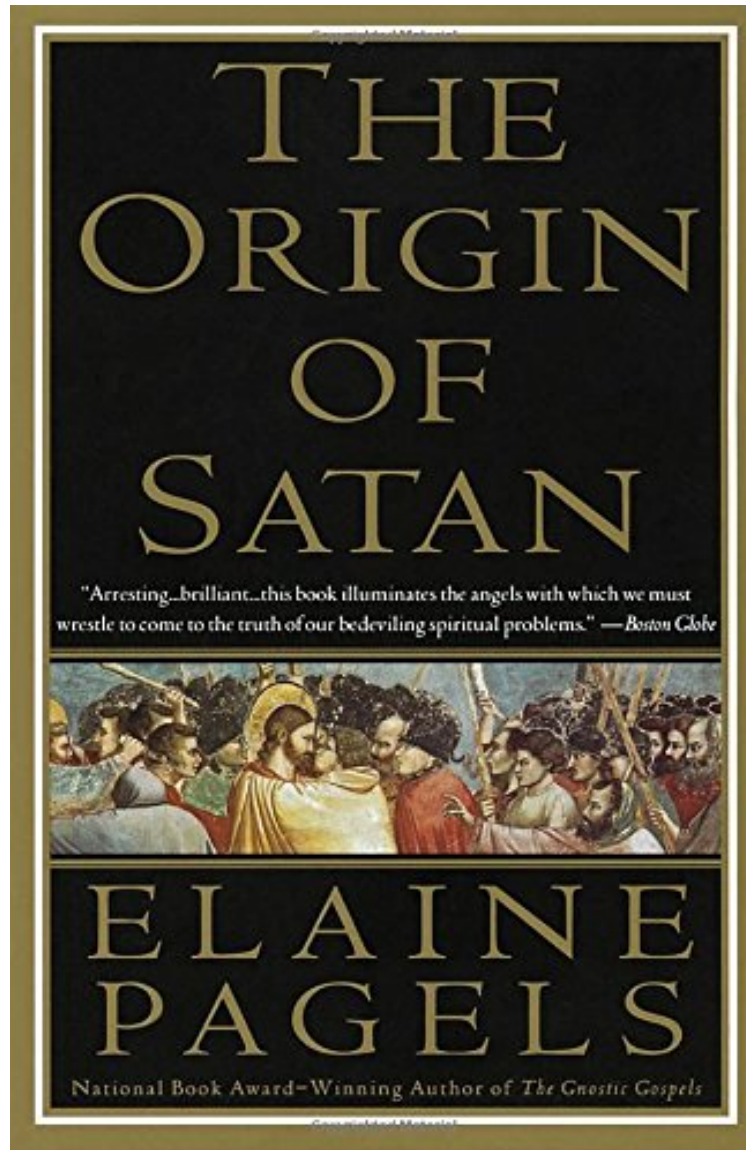


(Download) The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics

# The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics

*Elaine Pagels*

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**Elaine Pagels : The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The socio-political context of early Christianity, with Satan as a

backdropBy Robert J. CrawfordThis is a very interesting book that recapitulates the emergence of Christianity in context, detailed and vivid, from its origins in Palestine to its expansion westward. But the focus is on the use of Satan, first as a kind of gadfly or tester of belief in the Jewish and Pauline traditions to the "cosmic war" of later Christianity, whereby opposition from without and within are portrayed as intrinsically evil and irredeemable. It is beautifully written and fascinating throughout, but it was not what I was looking for. The evolution of the notion of Satan progresses from an angel who tests people for God, posing questions and proposing alternatives to the righteous in contravention of God's will, into the embodiment of evil, whether as a being or a force within one's heart and mind. Pagels explains this strictly from both Biblical and "heretical" texts, with a keen eye on political developments of the time. First, in the Hebrew Bible, Satan (or Biezebub or by any array of names) is an angel. Slowly, he becomes the force behind sectarian disagreements, from intra-Jewish ones to opponents of Jesus' supposed vision for the Jews. He also serves as the source of evil to be found in GOYIM, or those who are not of the nation of Israel. Second, as Christianity progressively becomes dominated by gentiles, the notion of the devil's evil work moves from a) vilification of non-believing Jews, Romans, and Pagans, to b) the condemnation of those Christians who promote rival interpretations to one's own, ending in c) a question of what is in one's own heart and what causes one to sin. All of these notions, Pagels argues persuasively, came to dominate the consciences of the various branches of monotheism over the next 2,000 years. With the accusation (or "demonization") of the "other" as irredeemably evil and not on the side of God and his righteous, it creates a kind of solidarity and certainty in the face of sometimes overwhelming odds - and an excuse to treat others as less than human in a cosmic war. This makes her argument, in my view, essential reading. Nonetheless, I was looking for an examination of Satan himself, not only as a socio-political phenomenon, but as imagery, characterization, etc. As he appears in this book, Satan is a kind of morphing gravity well, a murky socio-political force. While very interesting, I was disappointed and will have to seek the other perspective elsewhere. REcommended with enthusiasm. It is a great review of early Christianity and crucial to understanding the monotheistic mind. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent and succinct exploration of the idea of Satan and ...By WilsonAn excellent and succinct exploration of the idea of Satan and how it was used as a social and political tool throughout the history of Judaism and Christianity. Pagels work leads the reader to a better understanding of the current manifestations of Satan in our society and, perhaps, why the idea has lost some of its power. Namely, in general, we are more accepting of people from other religions and backgrounds, no longer allowing the evil influence of Satan to be used as an excuse for hate and bigotry. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Her other books are equally excellentBy sandra whitmorePagels is an incredible thinker and presents her ideas clearly She puts religion in historical context and they are by clarifies the implausibles that in my case get in the way of faith. That may not be her intention but became for me a beneficial effect of her writing. Her other books are equally excellent

From the religious historian whose *The Gnostic Gospels* won both the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award comes a dramatic interpretation of Satan and his role on the Christian tradition. With magisterial learning and the elan of a born storyteller, Pagels turns Satans story into an audacious exploration of Christianity's shadow side, in which the gospel of love gives way to irrational hatreds that continue to haunt Christians and non-Christians alike.

.com . . . ground-breaking . . . Many times in the course of reading her explications I found myself saying, "Of course, why hasn't someone said this before?" By showing how the sectarian demonization of the "intimate enemies"--Jews and heretics--shaped early Christianity, the book helps us to understand the power of irrational forces that still need to be confronted in contemporary society. -- S. David Sperling, professor of Bible, Hebrew Union CollegeFrom Library JournalPagels, whose *Gnostic Gospels* (LJ 1/15/79) was a best seller and a major award winner, here examines the New Testament tendency to associate the Devil with Jews resistant to the teachings of Christianity. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.From BooklistPagels' lucid history of the social construction of Satan is not only a wealth of historical information, but also a source of important insights into the demonization of "intimate enemies" that has marked the history of Christianity. Pagels writes that she began with the assumption that Christian discourse about invisible beings, including Satan and other angels, had as its primary purpose what Austrian-born Israeli philosopher Martin Buber called the "moralizing" of the natural universe. She discovered that it had far more to do with social relations among particular persons, and that discovery informs the entire book. She traces the development of Satan in the Jewish community from a sort of roving agent acting on God's behalf--always obstructing but not always evil--to an increasingly evil force identified more and more with intimate enemies, members of one's own community with whom one is in conflict. That trend toward demonization of portions of the Jewish community intensified with the emergence of Christianity and became the basis for demonization of heretics and centuries of anti-Semitism. This is an informative, beautifully written book, an excellent illustration of how careful historical research can illuminate questions of more than passing historical interest. Steve Schroeder