

[PDF] Adam, Eve, And The Serpent: Sex And Politics In Early Christianity

Elaine Pagels - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly The disgust felt by early Christians for the flesh was a radical departure from both pagan and Jewish sexual attitudes. In fact, as Princeton professor Pagels (*The Gnostic Gospels*) demonstrates, the ascetic movement in Christianity met with great resistance in the first four centuries A.D. Sex became fully tainted, inextricably linked to sin under the teachings of Augustine. This troubled sinner invoked Adam and Eve to justify his idiosyncratic view of humanity

as permanently scarred by the Fall. Instead of being dismissed as marginal, Augustine's grim outlook took hold, according to Pagels, because it was politically expedient. Now that Christianity had become the imperial religion, Rome wanted its imperfect subjects to obey a strong Christian state. This highly provocative history links the religious roots of Western sexual attitudes to women's inferior status through the centuries.

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From Library Journal Pagels explores the development of the ideas of human nature, moral freedom, and sexuality in the four centuries following Christ. Focusing on the various interpretations of the Genesis creation stories, she concludes that early Christians regarded their message to be one of moral freedom and human worth. In the 5th century, Augustine turned the tide with his view of human depravity and original sin (which he linked with sexuality). She argues that his interpretations, implying human incapacity for true political freedom, appealed to the interests of the emerging Christian state and forged the mainstream of ensuing Christian theology. In her analysis, Pagels does not convincingly deal with other foundational biblical material, although she does ably dismantle Augustine's identification of sexuality with original sin. Cynthia Widmer, Williamstown, Mass.

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