



The Status of Women and Gnosticism in Irenaeus and Tertullian (Studies in Women and Religion)

Daniel L. Hoffman

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This study explores each facet of Elaine Pagels' theory regarding a positive correlation between the active female deities of Gnostic cosmologies and the actual status of women in Gnostic groups in the 2nd and early-3rd centuries. The work expands on earlier studies that noted the presence of many secondary, inferior, or otherwise negative female images in Gnostic thought, and refutes the theory that women in early orthodox Christian groups had low status in relation to women in Gnosticism, primarily by considering the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian. Daniel Hoffman seeks to demonstrate that a comprehensive understanding of their views of women do not allow for the assumption that they distorted the truly negative position of women in some Gnostic groups. Finally, the study provides a balanced contribution to the late-20th-century debate about gender imagery for God.

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