etc. However, unlike Andama, Obbo does not seem to have any viable suggestions or solutions to the country's throes. While *Uganda Now* has the advantage of being analytical, *War, Violence*'s "on-the-spot" investigative research is equally, if not more useful in looking at the country's contemporary woes.

Stephen B. Isabirye
Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff

Elaine Pagels. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent.* New York: Random House, 1988.

Imagine the thrill. Walking into a literary bookshop in the emporium, you spot a handsomely illustrated volume by a respected scholar in your field. Aha! This book may be a nook in the marketplace and is exciting because your specialized field certainly contributes to the larger educated audience. Alas, Pagels' book has value as an explanation of individual gnostic pyschology but does not contribute to the world of scholarship. The work fails to explain how gnostics lived *within* the world of late antiquity.

Elaine Pagels—known for *The Gnostic Gospels*—affirms here that the Western *ideas* concerning sexuality, moral freedom, and human values definitively form during the first four centuries of the common era. This is hardly controversial: however, she claims that the form these ideas took—interpreting the Genesis creation stories, Adam, Eve, and the serpent—are a departure from Christian, Jewish, and even "pagan" tradition. Thus, in the form of this departure they became inseparable from the heritage of the West; except, she hints, some revealers of the truth sit with equanimity because they do not suffer the vicissitudes of life.

Her argument is aesthetically appealing but misleading. Although the simplified approach here is based on Pagels' more technical and scholarly published work, it stands by itself and may properly be judged as such.

An important premise for her, of course, is the misleading notion that Christianity uniquely advocates "freedom." Christianity, according to Pagels, is characterized by its sense of freedom and the infinite value of

all human life.

Pagels, in a telling example, notes that Christians were steadfast before Roman officials who carried out their policy of maintaining order. She concocts much of a Christian under torture who *raises up his liberty* (55)—indeed, she claims that this is the same liberty that upheld Americans against the British claim to divine right: all men are created equal.

In the face of the Roman argument that Christians upset the Roman order, the Christian apologist Tertullian appeals to a common ground: Christians *too* share in some rights as denizens of the Empire. Pagels states that Tertullian argues that "every human being has a right to religious liberty" (56).

But he doesn't say that at all. Tertullian, ever the passionate jurist, actually argues that "*libertini*" (freemen) have the right of *liberti* (Apology, 28.1). In his appeal to Roman rulers for justice, Tertullian argues on legal precedent: "as it *was* (emphasis mine) easily seen to be unjust" to compel freemen to worship in such a way, it is *also* unjust to compel Christians to worship in a particular manner. "Liberty" in this context means manumission for a former slave. Tertullian's view of liberty is much more restricted than Pagels allows: he never knew the French Revolution.

On the other hand, the Romans worshipped divine abstractions—including liberty—by the time of Tertullian (160-220 C.E.). Indeed, even to the cosmopolitan emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 C.E.), the notion of equal justice for all naturally continued to remain outside the experience of the age. These Roman notions of liberty seem to elude Pagels who must capitalize on isolated examples that can't bear the weight of her argument.

But the book is not without its merits. What Pagels has done most valuably is to provide a psycholoy of gnosticism. In so doing, she implies why gnosticism remains a live option for so many well into the twentieth century. This is no new alternative; it is woven into the most ancient cosmologies and philosophies. The gnostic psychology of religion obviates an enormous problem which disturbs religious and non-religious alike: the problem of guilt. For gnostics, evil was present from the beginning as a malignant principle of good, rooted in the spirit and in light. The gnostic thereby escapes guilt and evil.

But the overwhelming weight of tradition—and perhaps a human

tendency to accept personal blame for suffering—implies that suffering and death are the wages of sin. The human tendency to accept blame is as observable among non-believers as it is among believing "religious" people. This spiritual dimension is shared with all of humanity; thus, people often *would rather feel guilty than helpless* (146).

Augustine's ideas allowed guilt to be adopted as the major option in the West. This pyschology—which imputes guilt upon the offender (xxvi) is unattractive to Christian and non-Christian alike—according to Pagels. But this pastor admirably expounds the concept of sin, a deliberate and knowing breach of the relationship between creature and Creator. From this breach—original sin—all evil issued, although, it emitted inadvertently. The sin was prompted by a tempter, the serpent, but committed by archaic man and primal woman; free agents made in the likeness of their Creator.

Meanwhile, the gnostic psychology is an answer to readers throughout the ages who find in gnosticism an immediacy which claims their attention. These gnostic ideas tickle our ears: we sense that we have heard them before—or something very much like them. As a matter of fact, Pagels finds interesting modern parallels to gnosticism in various liberation movements. She makes a strong case for liberation, yet something of significant historical impact is missing.

The missing element locates the gnostics *outside* the Christian community, which fails to situate them in their natural habitat. Walter Bauer, in his work on early Christian heresy, points out that the gnostics were, for the most part, firmly enclosed *within* the churches. According to Bauer, it took centuries for Christians to arrive at an "orthodox" position, to free themselves from an entangling alliance with gnostic thought. Augustine's rather poetic interpretation of the fall of humanity's original parents and the consequences of that Fall to all persons *per generationem* left the church with a theological formulation too close to gnosticism for comfort.

Only as long as Christians are aware that language about original sin is being used to describe an *imagined* world—apart from the graciousness of God—does their thinking remain conventional. Even the most prosaic Christians who populate the apocryphal Acts of the apostles--and, significantly, the stories collected, recounted, and relished in these Acts by many Christians for two centuries before Augustine—seemed to know this.

But Pagels adheres to an idealist view of history–ideas and their conflicts are the crucial factor in analyzing history–rather than in plucky historical actors, who, despite their corruption, we recognize. Not surprisingly, Pagel's colleagues, as she dutifully reports, are a bit confused with her research. Appropriately, they ask what is she doing?

She maintains, as many modern thinkers, that the origins of religion may be discovered by science. These true reasons are located, not in dogmas–but in religious practice. It was in the practice of religion, as William James discovered, that the scientific reality of religious experience lay.

Often we sense contamination through contact with others and seek an escape. But the materialist world that we are living in cohabits with fallen matter and corruptible persons. We would do well to consider a myth of our "materialist" age: our failing is not materialism *per se* but a lack of respect for matter.

The implied revealers of the truth who sit with equanimity–without suffering– are instructed in the text of the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Elders who persevere sit on a couch while Hermas, who falls short, sat alone on a chair. Thus sequestered, Pagels is the person alone on the chair.

G. Mick Smith
University of California, Los Angeles and Woodbury University

Seed, Patricia. *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1988.

At the 1989 Conference of the American Historians' Association, Patricia Seed was presented the Herbert Bolton Memorial Prize for her book, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico*. Seed's work is certainly deserving of this award, given annually by the Conference of Latin American Historians for the best book written in English on any significant aspect of Latin American History. This official appreciation of her work can be seen as an acceptance of women scholars into the field of Latin American History, as well as the recognition of the necessity of including women and their concerns in historical writing.

In *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico*, Patricia Seed