

English 1006T  
28 February 2013

Pagels' voice and our assumptions

Here's a passage from Elaine Pagels, "John's Revelation: Challenging the Evil Empire, Rome."

Even today, countless people throughout the world turn to it to find meaning, and many Christian groups claim to see its prophecies of divine judgment being fulfilled before their eyes. Millions fear being "left behind" when the end comes, as Tim La Haye's best-selling book series warns, and believe that they are seeing its prophesied battles playing out in catastrophic events of recent history. (p. 1)

In the space below, inkshed for five minutes about your response to this, thinking about whether you find Pagels assuming you know or believe -- or assume -- things you don't (or that you do), or simply explaining how you respond.

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Many have seen America as a "redeemer nation" that is to bring in the millennium, while others see its present military and economic system as evil Babylon. Political rhetoric still appeals to our nation's sense of divine destiny – or damns America for its sins.

How did this book speak to people when it was written two thousand years ago, and how does it continue to do so today? (p. 2)

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Who wrote this book? Why – and how – do so many people still read it today? And what is revelation? Are any so-called revelations what they claim to be: messages from God? How can we know whether these visions actually communicate truth about reality or only one person's projection or delusion? (p. 3)

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Historians have often assumed that reverence for emperors as gods or heroes was a matter of political expedience, not piety. But Oxford historian Simon Price has brilliantly shown that the matter looked very different to the Asian citizens who built the Sebasreion. The distinction between religion and politics would have made no sense to them – or, for that matter, to most of their contemporaries. (p. 13)

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