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RELIGION

The Parallax from Hell: Satan's Critique of Organized Religion and Other Essays
Douglas L. Laubach
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

"You should not judge harshly the poor, unfortunate soul I chose to pen this manuscript," cautions Satan, the supposed author-behind-the-author of *The Parallax From Hell*. "Thomas Aquinas he is not," adds the Lord of the Netherworld.

Indeed, Douglas L. Laubach is no Thomas Aquinas, but he is a good writer with a quirky sense of humor. For at least the first third of his book, he shoots off entertaining, thoughtful one-liners and zingers in rapid fire. Most are about the bad rap Satan has received and how most of the evil in the world is actually the work of the Lord: "God signs my paycheck," notes Satan.

Laubach channels the Devil much like a prophet of yore served as a conduit for the revelations of the On High. He labors mightily in this work to shift the blame for the nasty nature of humankind from the denizens of Hell to the citizens of Heaven. Much of the book focuses on what Laubach laments as the "cruel barbarism of organized religion," and the horrific toll it has taken upon humankind since the time of Moses. As he notes, no one ever went to war for Satan; it is the leaders of the "warrior religions," as Laubach describes them, who unleash war and slaughter with the name of God upon their lips.

Laubach explores and dissects the origin of each of the major world religions, as well as some of what he calls the "cults" followed by Scientologists and Mormons. He has little good to say about any of them, let alone their chief figures, most of whom he cites as murderous, adulterous, greedy empire-builders obsessed with power and prestige. On the subject of King David, for example, he writes, "I could have taken lessons from this guy!"

Atheists and nonbelievers do not get off lightly either. "Don't be smug," Laubach, in his role as a conduit for Satan, warns them. "Does your own creed or religion rest on any firmer ground?"

Laubach will make many readers smile or laugh, but he is not writing just to be amusing. This is an exploration of organized religion, and the roles played by both God and the Devil in its creation and development.

There are “rebuttals” of religious doctrines and faiths, offerings of historical evidence that contradicts Biblical scholarship, and explorations of a number of philosophical and moral questions and topics. At times, especially from the midpoint of the book on, his ideas get a bit heavy, and as he becomes more serious, the author offers fewer amusing asides. Rather than present his views as a volatile rant or an academic lecture, Laubach has chosen a more entertaining approach, at least in the opening third and at the very end.

“My inept public relations people have allowed others to define me for well over two thousand years,” says Laubach’s Satan. Now the time has come, he adds, “to state my case as objectively and logically as possible.” Laubach may be no Thomas Aquinas, but he is a damn fine writer.

Mark McLaughlin