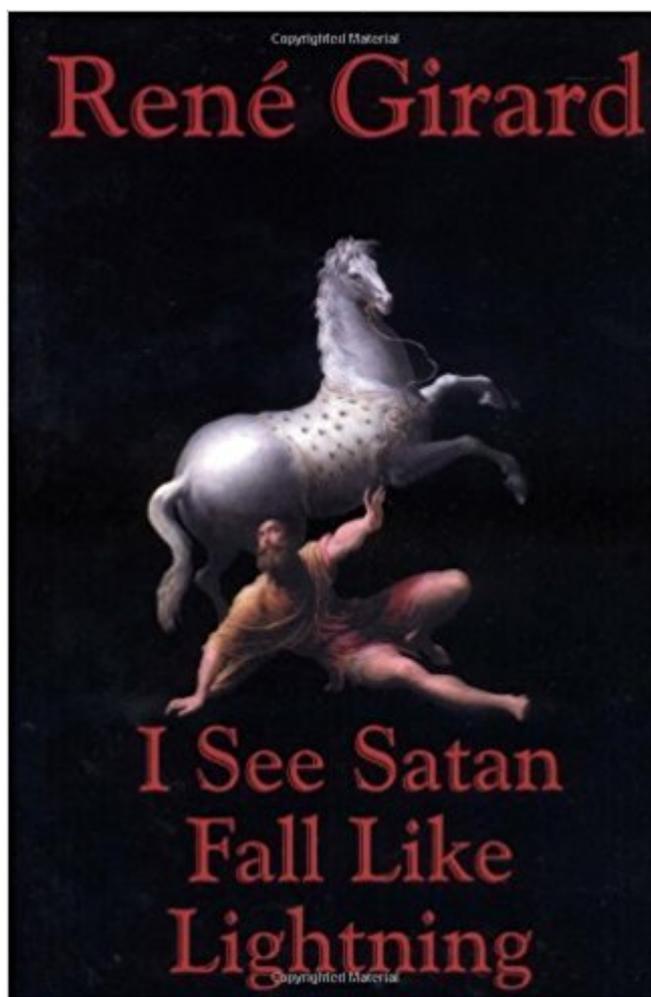


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I See Satan Fall Like Lightning



Synopsis

Rene Girard holds up the gospels as mirrors that reveal our broken humanity, and shows that they also reflect a new reality that can make us whole. Like Simone Weil, Girard looks at the Bible as a map of human behavior, and sees Jesus Christ as the turning point leading to new life. The title echoes Jesus' words: "I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven". Girard persuades us that even as our world grows increasingly violent the power of the Christ-event is so great that the evils of scapegoating and sacrifice are being defeated even now. A new community, God's nonviolent kingdom, is being realized -- even now.

Book Information

Paperback: 199 pages

Publisher: Orbis Books; First Edition edition (February 7, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1570753199

ISBN-13: 978-1570753190

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 43 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #55,585 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Philosophy](#) #221 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > General](#) #284 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Worship & Devotion > Inspirational](#)

Customer Reviews

Rene Girard has discovered the most insightful interpretation of a common, hidden but detrimental religious and social practice I have ever read. As a Biblical scholar with a Master's degree, I have read extensively on scriptural interpretations, doctrinal theologies, comparative religions, you name it, many in their original languages. But Girard hits the nail on the head with his understanding of the social and religious practice of scapegoating. According to Girard, humans, like all creatures, developed by imitation. Homonids became "ultra imitators" as they became more and more human. This led to chaos as everyone became indistinguishable because they imitated each other so well. The answer to this chaos was scapegoating. An individual or group was singled out through whatever criteria (some superior quality? some inferior quality? freckles? who knows?) and scapegoated. These scapegoats were then killed in order to pacify the stress felt by the rest of

society. This pattern was then repeated again and again throughout human history. According to Girard, through this process, culture developed. His justification for this theory is that every society has a creation myth that begins with a chaotic world which is brought to order through violence. I could go on and on with his eye-opening ideas, but I want you all to enjoy the book. I just gave a taste so you can get a feel for his insights. He does eventually get to the religious aspect of this scapegoating process which, to my mind, exists not only in religious circles but in the secular world, such as politics and corporations and offices everywhere, and even in dysfunctional families. (Is someone the black sheep in a family, the one who gets continual family disapproval but somehow never manages to be disowned or completely cut off from all contact with the family? Why? Because the dysfunctional family system needs the scapegoat to blame all family dysfunction on). As you can see, the adaptations for Girard's insights are not just evolutionary or religious. One caution, however, the writing, while very fascinating, can be scholarly and thick, requiring some rereading and pauses to contemplate.

A challenging and thought provoking book that must be taken seriously by anybody with a brain. While I don't accept Girard's exegesis regarding "Satan casting out Satan" as being something of an affirmative riddle by Christ, the concept of "mimetic" cyclical violence being something of man's fallen human condition, and how Satanic forces lurk in the background, hiding in plain site, and making use of this violence to further their agenda, only to be exposed by the death of Christ on the cross, is quite a powerful concept. A good read, even if the translation is less than stellar.

Formable and profound. Maybe the philosophical text of the 20th century written by a determined intellectual in the search to a better way for the future by understanding a difficult and hidden aspect of our species - why are we excited and enchanted by violence against other humans in our media, literature, politics?? Where did this bloodlust come and how long has it been with us?

It's a tough read with much substance. I am usually a quick reader, but this book challenges ones thought to the extent that I can only read a few pages at a time as every page generates questions/ideas that require perhaps some research elsewhere. It would be a great book for a discussion group to those interested in patterns of human behavior against a historical background. It's like watching a movie play over and over again in different situations, cultures and centuries, and never learning from its lessons.

This book, more than any I think I have ever read on the Gospels, brings light to what is actually occurring, has occurred and what it meant and still means. I can't recommend this book highly enough. However, the company that published it put the Table of Contents in the back and the text itself is riddled with errors. Still, it was worth it.

This provides a fascinating and illuminating way to see and interpret the gospels and the crucifixion. It is a definitive text on the origin of violence and how the crucifixion provides the way to avoid the contagion of violence and our unwitting persecution of the poor and despised. It contains an enlightening discussion of how Western thinking has adopted Christianity's solicitude for the victim. Yet the secular West fails to realize it is following Christ in the elaborate legal protections it has erected for victims.

A thought provoking and stimulating monograph on evil and violence in the world by a recently deceased major philosopher and writer. This is a great potential Lenten read for the seriously religious. But its appeal is definitely not limited to Christians.

Some breakthroughs are introduced in this book with the mimetic theory and the anthropological reading of the Gospel. Although the style might be redundant and the question of the revival of extreme Islam with Daech is not addressed, I fully recommend it.

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