

Adam's Contract with Satan: The Legend of the Cheirograph of Adam

Michael E. Stone



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The legend of Satan's second deception of Adam and Eve throughout Oriental Christian cultures.

According to a legend known from Greece in the West to Armenia and Georgia in the East, Satan deceived Adam and Eve a second time. The Devil tricked them into concluding a contract, submitting their offspring to his rule "until the Unbegotten is born and the Undying One dies." Christ's baptism puts an end to this contract and their servitude. Though it never became incorporated into Christian belief, this legend spread by way of popular and artistic sources through Eastern Christendom, and is alive still in the popular tales of Bulgaria and Greece. The legend of the Contract is painted on Romanian churches and has spread in Armenian legends. In Adam's Contract with Satan, Michael Stone pursues the tale through its sometimes exotic transmission and explores the world-view that emerges from it, contrasting it with the Western view, perpetuated by Augustine, of Adam's sin in the Garden. This fascinating tale becomes a detective story that involves the pursuit of a tradition and its transmission, and an exploration of its implications for the understanding of the human condition.

Michael Stone is on the faculty of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he holds the double appointment of Gail Levin de Nur Professor of Religion and Professor of Armenian Studies. He is author of over 40 books and 250 articles in the fields of ancient Judaism and Armenian Studies.

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