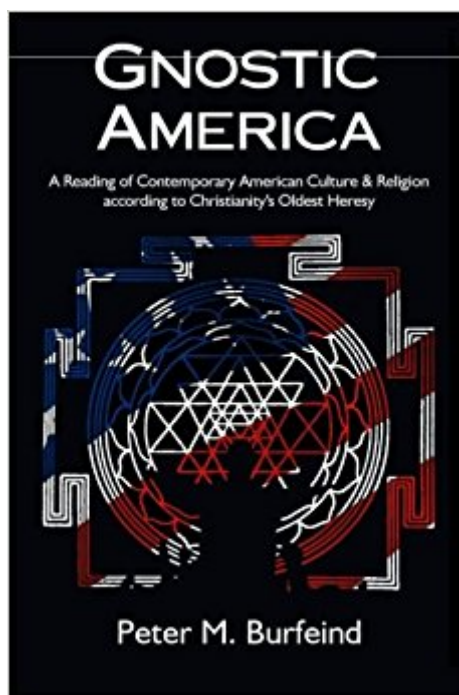




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Gnostic America: A Reading Of Contemporary American Culture & Religion According To Christianity's Oldest Heresy



Synopsis

Gnostic America is a reading of current American culture, politics, and religious life according to the ancient movement known as Gnosticism. In it, Peter M Burfeind builds off the foundations of Hans Jonas, Denis de Rougement, Norman Cohn, William Voegelin, Carl Jung, and Harold Bloom, each of whom saw the effects of Gnosticism in contemporary American (and Western) life. He explores the spiritual mechanisms going on behind everything from transgenderism to so-called "contemporary worship," from the deconstructionist movement to the role pop music and media have in our culture, from progressive politics to the Emergent Church. Particularly challenging is Burfeind's claim that both progressivism and Neo-evangelicalism -- seemingly at odds in the "culture wars" -- actually share the same Gnostic roots. Burfeind's book is a tour de force through contemporary rock, pop, movies, television, politics, and religion showing how many of the values driving these cultural elements are informed by the ancient esoteric teachings of Gnosticism. Burfeind marshals a ton of surprising evidence to make his case, taking us through ancient and Medieval history, through the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, to today. Those willing to grapple with the philosophical and spiritual positions of the fathers of contemporary American life will be rewarded. Gnostic America is a must read for those who sense a new "spiritual but not religious" religion has arisen in America, but who can't put their finger on what exactly this religion is. Burfeind commits the sacrilege of defining a religion that claims to be "beyond" definition. More importantly, he poses the question, if the spiritual trends of contemporary culture are indeed a religion, what First Amendment safeguards remain for those who haven't "evolved" with the emerging new consciousness, but choose to remain stuck in supposedly retrograde paradigms of thought?

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Customer Reviews

Peter Burfeind serves as pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church and Student Ministry at the University of Toledo. He is also a US Army Chaplain and publisher of children's educational materials (Pax Domini Press). He lives in Toledo, Ohio with his wife Jillian and four children.

prompt delivery. Good quality. Excellent material content.

Well-written, scholarly work that raises awareness, not only about Gnosticism, but also how its ideology underlies today's culture, politics, and religion in America. A must read for those who are wondering, Why?

The sub-title of this book is: A Reading of Contemporary American Culture & Religion according to Christianity's Oldest Heresy. Peter Burfeind has accomplished that by identifying Gnostic traits and following the movement of this heresy as it was vigorously opposed and suppressed in the early church, through to emergence during the Reformation and Enlightenment, then coming to full bloom in modern manifestations both politically (fascism, communism, and nazism) and religiously (Liberalism and Neo-Evangelicalism). The interplay between political and religious elements was fascinating. Early on, the close ties of Church and State suppressed gnostic ideas from becoming a force. As this barrier began to crumble across Europe and into the U.S., gnostic thought flourished and became more ingrained in the psyche of whichever society had as its head a leader adhering to the principles. Gnostic traits would then seep into the Church causing multiple splits, as more and more splinter groups sought (and seek) to work toward the utopian "other" not bound by the strictures of any specific doctrine or practice. Especially disheartening is the role of Anabaptists in fomenting gnosticism. Most of my Christian years have been spent in this part of Christendom, and it causes me to question some of the truths I learned, while reinforcing what had already been changing in my mind. In addition, the author shows how music has been used to subvert the Church from within, leading to the current state of Contemporary Christian Music and its use in worship. Western Christianity needs a "gut check," and this book can do it. A great deal of research and analysis went into this work, and it is written at an academic level. I was glad for my previous

reading of Irenaeus which gave me background to follow, as the author traced the movement and pointed back to the early heresy. The reader needs to keep the gnostic traits and the spirit entities in relationship while going through this, but the reward will be a solid understanding of how Western Civilization got to this deplorable state. There are some proofreading errors in the text, but nothing prevents comprehension. All in all, this is definitely worth reading.

Very insightful look at modern culture. Great read

Pastor Burfeind's work is the most definitive on this current American topic known to me. In this book we see that the Anabaptist heresy of the sixteenth century continues today as a force of destabilization within the Christian community. Sadly it confirms the continuation of the 2000 year old myth of the "rapture" and those identified as "millennialist"

A rambling, curmudgeonly, erudite, and biting sarcasm tour de force exploration of American spirituality. Burfeind almost lost me a couple of times with his far-afield forays into medieval Christian sectarianism, troubadours, philosophies of Heidegger, opera music, Wagner, Hitler, totalitarianism, utopianism, progressivism, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Joel Osteen, Emergent Christianity, Jung and Self-Help. I was pretty skeptical. At first blush it seems so random, but eventually Burfeind brings it all together showing how all of these movements and strains of thought spring from the same Gnostic well that has always existed in parallel with orthodox Christianity. Interesting as far as it goes. What is important about this book is Burfeind's discussion of the implications of all this - the old "ideas have consequences." Theology and Philosophy matters, and impacts everything in our lives and culture, from how we raise our children, to the societal laws we enact, to our relationship to government, to how we worship, how we use language, to whether language, grammar and logic even mean anything at all. The "fundamental, binary choice" deciding these theological, ideological, political questions comes down to the basic question: "Is truth derived from nature and nature's God, from something outside of us? Or is it derived from the inner Self?" Among other things, Burfeind makes a pretty compelling case for the chaotic, dissipating, despairing nihilism that results from choosing the latter. Very worthwhile to think about.

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