

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

[#Gnostic America](#) [#contemporary American culture](#) [#American religion](#) [#Christianity's oldest heresy](#) [#Gnosticism influence](#)

This compelling analysis, "Gnostic America," offers a deep dive into contemporary American culture and religion, examining how it is profoundly shaped by Christianity's oldest heresy. Explore the subtle yet significant impact of Gnostic thought on modern societal values, spiritual practices, and philosophical underpinnings across the United States.

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Gnostic America

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?

Gnosticism: The History and Legacy of the Mysterious Ancient Religion

*Includes pictures *Includes ancient accounts *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading "This knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself." - Plato

Gnosticism is one of the great mysteries in the history of Western religion. At its core is an ancient Greek word, *gnosis*, a word prominent in the writings of Plato which refers to a deep personal knowledge or understanding that often transcends the physical world. The Gnostics painted a picture of a fallen, broken world in which physicality was a product of a lesser deity. This deity was created in defiance of the One and in order to trap humans and blind them to the truths of their predicament and divine origins. By acquiring insight, or *gnosis*, in this secret nature of the world, humans might escape their prison. Only through knowledge can people be set free. As that makes clear, Gnosticism as a belief system is difficult to define since it is not a well-organized or uniform doctrine like Christianity or Judaism, but at one time there was some synchronization with Christianity that nurtured both movements. As a religion and philosophy, Gnosticism flourished alongside Christianity, and it is not easy to say which one came first, but it is certain that both movements influenced each other. To paraphrase John Dominic Crossan, it is unclear whether Gnosticism was a Christian heresy, a Jewish heresy, or an original religion that powerfully merged with both. Gnosticism borrowed elements from Christians, just as the whole of Christianity took a certain Gnostic flavor, to the point that some books of the New Testament, especially the Gospel of John, could easily pass as a proto-Gnostic document. At the risk of oversimplifying, Gnosticism was the belief that the souls are divine sparks imprisoned in imperfect physical bodies, due to the machinations of a lesser and evil god who created the world. This evil god is identified with the creator of the Genesis and the Hebrew Bible. The material world and the body are prisons separated from the divine realm, from which humans must escape through the ascent of various levels. This is possible through the acquisition of secret knowledge reserved for the elect. This special revelation or *gnosis* (knowledge) was supposedly disclosed by Jesus to his dearest disciples, and it can be found in the Gnostic books, deliberately written in cryptic language. The acquisition of the secrets necessary for the salvation of the soul in many cases implied a radical asceticism and corporal sacrifice. Due to such classical roots, it would be easy to conclude that Gnosticism is an ancient philosophy, and a cursory glance might categorize it as simply a way of understanding the world and promoting investigation. However, the term is most often used to describe not a philosophy but a religion, and not just any religion, but a branch of one of the most resilient and influential traditions in history: Christianity. So what exactly is Gnosticism, and why does it remain such a source of confusion, captivation, and charisma for modern scholarship and culture alike? These answers are complex, and indicative of how the many turnings of the last two millennia have unexpectedly unearthed some answers while burying others even deeper. *Gnosticism: The History and Legacy of the Mysterious Ancient Religion* looks at the different origins that shaped Gnosticism, what Gnostics believed and practiced, and the influence they had on other religions. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about Gnosticism like never before.

Wrestling with Archons

This book demonstrates that ancient Christian Gnosticism was an ancient form of cultural criticism in a mythological garb. It establishes that, much like modern forms of critical theory, including the Frankfurt School and queer theory, ancient Gnosticism was set on deconstructing mainstream discourses and cultural premises.

American Gnosis

The Greek word "*gnosis*," defined as direct spiritual knowledge or insight, has its origins in historical offshoots of Christianity in late antiquity. But the terms "Gnosticism" and "*gnosis*" have become widespread in many other contexts. They are common in contemporary scholarship on religion and in popular usage among magical, religious, and spiritual practitioners. And they have entered popular usage in contemporary society, with applications in numerous political, religious, and cultural contexts. *Gnosis and Gnosticism* have become leitmotifs in popular culture, in films such as *The Matrix* and *Dark City*, as well as in anime and other popular art forms. In *American Gnosis*, Arthur Versluis explores the fascinating connection between the Gnostic tradition and contemporary American spirituality, politics, and popular media. Versluis surveys themes of Gnosticism and *gnosis* in American culture, both within the United States and in global contexts. Versluis shows that *gnosis* is key to understanding

a wide spectrum of global syncretic religious and intellectual movements-some sensational, even wild, but all fascinating. American gnosis, he argues, is a defining feature of hybrid new religious forms in the twenty-first century. Versluis provides case studies of major contemporary figures and texts that are emblematic of neo-gnosticism, offering a comprehensive framework of gnosis and an understanding of gnostic trends in modernity. He explores how neo-gnostic memes recur in social media and shows how American gnosis has manifested as spiritual independence, reflecting the ever-growing demographic category "spiritual but not religious." In delving into the intersection of contemporary American spirituality, politics, and literature, American Gnosis uncovers the remarkable prevalence of neo-gnostic elements today.

The Gnostic World

The Gnostic World is an outstanding guide to Gnosticism, written by a distinguished international team of experts to explore Gnostic movements from the distant past until today. These themes are examined across sixty-seven chapters in a variety of contexts, from the ancient pre-Christian to the contemporary. The volume considers the intersection of Gnosticism with Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Indic practices and beliefs, and also with new religious movements, such as Theosophy, Scientology, Western Sufism, and the Nation of Islam. This comprehensive handbook will be an invaluable resource for religious studies students, scholars, and researchers of Gnostic doctrine and history.

Gnostic Afterlives in America Religion and Culture

Fourteen scholars investigate the intersection of Gnosis/Gnostic spirituality and American religion and culture.

The Gnostics

Who were the Gnostics? And how did the Gnostic movement influence the development of Christianity in antiquity? Is it true that the Church rejected Gnosticism? This book offers an illuminating discussion of recent scholarly debates over the concept of "Gnosticism" and the nature of early Christian diversity. Acknowledging that the category "Gnosticism" is flawed and must be reformed, David Brakke argues for a more careful approach to gathering evidence for the ancient Christian movement known as the Gnostic school of thought. He shows how Gnostic myth and ritual addressed basic human concerns about alienation and meaning, offered a message of salvation in Jesus, and provided a way for people to regain knowledge of God, the ultimate source of their being. Rather than depicting the Gnostics as heretics or as the losers in the fight to define Christianity, Brakke argues that the Gnostics participated in an ongoing reinvention of Christianity, in which other Christians not only rejected their ideas but also adapted and transformed them. This book will challenge scholars to think in new ways, but it also provides an accessible introduction to the Gnostics and their fellow early Christians.

Against the Protestant Gnostics

In this penetrating and provocative assessment of the current state of religion and its effects on society at large, Philip J. Lee criticizes conservatives and liberals alike as he traces gnostic motifs to the very roots of American Protestantism. With references to an extraordinary spectrum of writings from sources as diverse as John Calvin, Martin Buber, Tom Wolfe, Margaret Atwood, and Emily Dickinson, he probes the effects of gnostic thinking on a wide range of issues. Calling for the restoration of a dialectical faith and practice, the book points to positive ways of restoring health to endangered Protestant churches.

Revival of the Gnostic Heresy

In this rigorous analysis, Morris draws parallels between Fundamentalist methods of biblical interpretation and the early Christian heresy of Gnosticism.

A Separate God

The Greek word 'gnosis' means knowledge; the Gnostics themselves used it to refer to the spiritual knowledge they believed would redeem them from what they regarded as the inherent evil of the material universe. As a mystical alternative tradition within Christianity, Gnosticism suffered the hostility of the official church and, as a result, remains largely unknown or misunderstood to this day.

The Gnostics

This historic book may have numerous typos and missing text. Purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. Not indexed. Not illustrated. 1887 edition. Excerpt: ... That nothing upon the subject of Gnosticism should have hitherto been attempted in our language except by Dr. Walsh in his very meagre sketch (long since out of print), seemed to me a sufficient excuse for my undertaking the same task upon a more comprehensive scale, as well as upon different principles. Dr. Walsh's performance, entitled 'An Essay on Coins, Medals, and Gems, as illustrating the progress of Christianity in the Early Ages, ' is little more than an abridgment of some popular Church History for the period oomprehended within its scope, illustrated from the very scanty store of monuments at his command; whilst his explanations are, like the source supplying them, based upon grounds altogether fallacious, and, even to the beginner, obviously unsatisfactory. Taking for granted, upon the bare word of their opponents, that the various Teachers of the Gnosis were mere heretics, that is, perverters of the regular () Christian doctrine which they had at first embraced as a divine revelation, he, like his guides, did not trouble himself any further to investigate the true origin of their systems, but was content with roughly sketching their most prominent features; whilst in explaining their extant productions, he refers all, however diverse in nature, to the same school, and interprets them according to his own preconoeived and baseless views of their character. On such a plan as this, neither the doctrines nor the monuments they have bequeathed to us in such profusion are susceptible of even a plausible explanation, much less of one capable of satisfying an unprejudiced and inquiring mind. The method, therefore, of treating the subject which I have followed in the present work is to begin by reviewing the great religious systems of..

Gnostic and Historic Christianity

DOES A BELIEF IN UFOS AND BENEVOLENT EXTRATERRESTRIALS MARK YOU AS A HERETIC BY TODAY'S RELIGIOUS STANDARDS? COULD GNOSTICISM EVENTUALLY BECOME AS MAIN-STREAM AS CONVENTIONAL CHRISTIANITY? IS THE UFO ABDUCTION PHENOMENON BUT A CONTINUATION OF A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MAN? Most of us have grown up with the idea that Christianity is a matter of attending church and taking part in a community of believers. But there is a form Christianity that takes an entirely different approach, called Gnosticism. For followers of Gnosticism, communion with God is a subjective, individualized experience that involves coming to know God by coming to know one's self. If you can see arrive at the most primal truths about yourself, then God is waiting there to meet you. Needless to say, this belief is a classic example of "heresy" in that it differs from nearly all orthodox doctrines. "The Heretic's UFO Guidebook" offers an analysis of several of the Gnostic scriptures discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. But it also goes beyond scriptural analysis and explores the connections between ancient heretical beliefs and the even more ancient UFO phenomenon. These are new ways of seeing the old stories, and no matter what you believe in religious terms, they are nevertheless fascinating to read and ponder.

The Gnostics and Their Remains; Ancient and Mediaeval

"Gnostic religion is the expression of a religious worldview which is dominated by the concept of Gnosis, an esoteric knowledge of God and the human being which grants salvation to those who possess it. Roelof van den Broek presents here a fresh approach to the gnostic current of Late Antiquity within its historical and religious context, based on sources in Greek, Latin and Coptic, including discussions of the individual works of preserved gnostic literature. Van den Broek explores the various gnostic interpretations of the Christian faith that were current in the second and third centuries, whilst showing that despite its influence on early Christianity, gnostic religion was not a typically Christian phenomenon."--

The Gnostic Religion

Gnosticism is a countercultural spirituality that forever changed the practice of Christianity. Before it emerged in the second century, passage to the afterlife required obedience to God and king. Gnosticism proposed that human beings were manifestations of the divine, unsettling the hierarchical foundations of the ancient world. Subversive and revolutionary, Gnostics taught that prayer and mediation could bring human beings into an ecstatic spiritual union with a transcendent deity. This mystical strain affected not just Christianity but many other religions, and it characterizes our understanding of the purpose and meaning of religion today. In The Gnostic New Age, April D. DeConick recovers this vibrant underground history to prove that Gnosticism was not suppressed or defeated by the Catholic Church long ago, nor was the movement a fabrication to justify the violent repression of alternative forms of

Christianity. Gnosticism alleviated human suffering, soothing feelings of existential brokenness and alienation through the promise of renewal as God. DeConick begins in ancient Egypt and follows with the rise of Gnosticism in the Middle Ages, the advent of theosophy and other occult movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and contemporary New Age spiritual philosophies. As these theories find expression in science-fiction and fantasy films, DeConick sees evidence of Gnosticism's next incarnation. Her work emphasizes the universal, countercultural appeal of a movement that embodies much more than a simple challenge to religious authority.

The Heretic's UFO Guidebook: Revealing the Secrets of the Gnostic Scriptures from Aliens to Jesus' Love of Mary

The workings of Western intelligence in our day--whether in politics or the arts, in the humanities or the church--are as troubling as they are mysterious, leading to the questions: Where are we going? What in the world were we thinking? By exploring the history of four "cultures" so deeply embedded in Western history that we rarely see their instrumental role in politics, religion, education, and the arts, this timely book provides a broad framework for addressing these questions in a fresh way.

Fragments of a Faith Forgotten

Translated by R. McL. WilsonA full-scale study based on the documents of the Coptic Gnostic library found at Nag Hammadi providing a comprehensive survey of the nature, the teachings, the history and the influence of this religion.

Gnostic Religion in Antiquity

A study of gnosticism examines the various ways early Christians strove to define themselves in a pluralistic Roman society, while questioning the traditional ideas of heresy and orthodoxy that have previously influenced historians.

Fragments of a Faith Forgotten

Given the degree of popular fascination with Gnostic religions, it is surprising how few pay attention to the one such religion that has survived from antiquity until the present day: Mandaism. Mandaeans, who esteem John the Baptist as the most famous adherent to their religion, have in our time found themselves driven from their historic homelands by war and oppression. Today, they are a community in crisis, but they provide us with unparalleled access to a library of ancient Gnostic scriptures, as part of the living tradition that has sustained them across the centuries. Gnostic texts such as these have caught popular interest in recent times, as traditional assumptions about the original forms and cultural contexts of related religious traditions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have been called into question. However, we can learn only so much from texts in isolation from their own contexts. Mandaean literature uniquely allows us not only to increase our knowledge about Gnosticism, and by extension all these other religions, but also to observe the relationship between Gnostic texts, rituals, beliefs, and living practices, both historically and in the present day.

The Gnostic New Age

In Western religious traditions, God is conventionally conceived as a humanlike creator, lawgiver, and king, a being both accessible and actively present in history. Yet there is a concurrent and strong tradition of a God who actively hides. The two traditions have led to a tension between a God who is simultaneously accessible to humanity and yet inaccessible, a God who is both immanent and transcendent, present and absent. Western Gnostic, esoteric, and mystical thinking capitalizes on the hidden and hiding God. He becomes the hallmark of the mystics, Gnostics, sages, and artists who attempt to make accessible to humans the God who is secreted away. 'Histories of the Hidden God' explores this tradition from antiquity to today. The essays focus on three essential themes: the concealment of the hidden God; the human quest for the hidden God, and revelations of the hidden God.

Four Cultures of the West

A lively and accessible guide to the rich literary, philosophical and artistic achievements of the notorious age of Nero.

Gnosis

With an emphasis on detailed and truly contemporary case studies, Lundskow offers a provocative and compelling exploration of the Sociology of Religion.

What is Gnosticism?

This is a short, accessible analysis of Christianity that focuses on its social and cultural diversity as well as its historical dimensions.

The Mandaean Book of John

A startling exploration of the history of the most controversial book of the Bible, by the bestselling author of *Beyond Belief*. Through the bestselling books of Elaine Pagels, thousands of readers have come to know and treasure the suppressed biblical texts known as the Gnostic Gospels. As one of the world's foremost religion scholars, she has been a pioneer in interpreting these books and illuminating their place in the early history of Christianity. Her new book, however, tackles a text that is firmly, dramatically within the New Testament canon: The Book of Revelation, the surreal apocalyptic vision of the end of the world . . . or is it? In this startling and timely book, Pagels returns The Book of Revelation to its historical origin, written as its author John of Patmos took aim at the Roman Empire after what is now known as "the Jewish War," in 66 CE. Militant Jews in Jerusalem, fired with religious fervor, waged an all-out war against Rome's occupation of Judea and their defeat resulted in the desecration of Jerusalem and its Great Temple. Pagels persuasively interprets Revelation as a scathing attack on the decadence of Rome. Soon after, however, a new sect known as "Christians" seized on John's text as a weapon against heresy and infidels of all kinds-Jews, even Christians who dissented from their increasingly rigid doctrines and hierarchies. In a time when global religious violence surges, Revelations explores how often those in power throughout history have sought to force "God's enemies" to submit or be killed. It is sure to appeal to Pagels's committed readers and bring her a whole new audience who want to understand the roots of dissent, violence, and division in the world's religions, and to appreciate the lasting appeal of this extraordinary text.

Histories of the Hidden God

Reproduction of the original: *The Influence of the Bible on Civilisation* by Ernst von Dobschutz

Cross Currents

Why is religion still around in the twenty-first century? Why do so many still believe? And how do various traditions still shape the way people experience everything from sexuality to politics, whether they are religious or not? In *Why Religion?* Elaine Pagels looks to her own life to help address these questions. These questions took on a new urgency for Pagels when dealing with unimaginable loss—the death of her young son, followed a year later by the shocking loss of her husband. Here she interweaves a personal story with the work that she loves, illuminating how, for better and worse, religious traditions have shaped how we understand ourselves; how we relate to one another; and, most importantly, how to get through the most difficult challenges we face. Drawing upon the perspectives of neurologists, anthropologists, and historians, as well as her own research, Pagels opens unexpected ways of understanding persistent religious aspects of our culture. A provocative and deeply moving account from one of the most compelling religious thinkers at work today, *Why Religion?* explores the spiritual dimension of human experience.

The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Nero

Gnosticism - derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, to know - is the name given to various religious schools that proliferated in the first centuries after Christ and, at one time, it almost became the dominant form of Christianity. Yet some Gnostic beliefs derive from the older Mystery traditions of Greece and Rome, and the various Gnostic schools came to be branded as heretical by the emerging Christian church. Indeed, although some Gnostic beliefs are close to mainstream Christianity Gnosticism also held that the world is imperfect as it was created by an evil god who was constantly at war with the true, good God; that Christ and Satan were brothers; that reincarnation exists; and that women were the equal of men As a result, the Gnostics held the Feminine Aspect of God - whom they addressed as *Sophia*, or *Wisdom* - in very high regard. They also stressed that we each have a spark of the Divine inside us which, when recognised and developed, will ultimately liberate us from the prison of the

material world. Although largely stamped out by the Church by the sixth century, Gnosticism survived underground through groups such as the Bogomils and the Cathars, and influenced the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the psychologist Carl Jung, the Existentialists, the New Age movement and writers as diverse as William Blake, W.B. Yeats, Albert Camus and Philip K. Dick. In this book, Sean Martin recounts the long and diverse history of Gnosticism, and argues for its continued relevance today.

Religion Index One

"This book is a faith builder. It challenges every believer to walk in supernatural signs and wonders as a natural part of everyday life." -John Arnott; Anyone can walk in the miraculous-even you! If you've ever wanted to live and walk in the supernatural power of God, here's your chance! It is truly possible for human people to walk in the divine, and Christ came to show us the way. It is by rediscovering our true identity in Him that we can begin to move into the promises of God regarding the miraculous. Bill Johnson not only teaches the supernatural, he imparts it by changing the way we think. If you are not walking in the miraculous, you're living far below your birthright! By laying a carefully constructed biblical foundation for walking in the supernatural power of God, When Heaven Invades Earth provides all the equipment you need to experience miracles every day.

The Sociology of Religion

The early Christian Gnosis did not spring up in isolation, but drew upon earlier sources. In this book, many of these sources are revealed for the first time. Special emphasis is placed on the Hellenistic doctrine of the "Solar Logos" and the early Christian symbolism which depicted Christ as the Spiritual Sun, the illumination source of order, harmony, and spiritual insight. Based on 15 years of research, this is a unique book which throws a penetrating light on the secret traditions of early Christianity. It clearly demonstrates that number is at the heart of being. Jesus Christ, Sun of God, illustrates how the Christian symbolism of the Spiritual Sun is derived from numerical symbolism of the "ancient divinities."

Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity

The Devil has fascinated writers and theologians since the time of the New Testament, and inspired many dramatic and haunting works of art. Today he remains a potent image in popular culture. The Devil: A Very Short Introduction presents an introduction to the Christian Devil through the history of ideas and the lives of real people.

Christianity

In this first extensive Jungian treatment of Milton's major poems, James P. Driscoll uses archetypal psychology to explore Milton's great themes of God, man, woman, and evil and offers readers deepened understanding of Jung's profound thoughts on Godhead. The Father, the Son, Satan, Messiah, Samson, Adam, and Eve gain new dimensions of meaning as their stories become epiphanies of the archetypes of Godhead. God and Satan of Paradise Lost are seen as the ego and the shadow of a single unfolding personality whose anima is the Holy Spirit and Milton's muse. Samson carries the Yahweh archetype examined by Jung in Answer to Job, and Messiah and Satan in Paradise Regained embody the hostile brothers archetype. Anima, animus and the individuation drive underlie the psychodynamics of Adam and Eve's fall. Driscoll draws on his critical acumen and scholarly knowledge of Renaissance literature to shed new light on Jung's psychology of religion. The Unfolding God of Jung and Milton illumines Jung's heterodox notion of Godhead as a quaternary rather than a trinity, his revolutionary concept of a divine individuation process, his radical solution to the problem of evil, and his wrestling with the feminine in Godhead. The book's glossary of Jungian terms, written for literary critics and theologians rather than clinicians, is exceptionally detailed and insightful. Beyond enriching our understanding of Jung and Milton, Driscoll's discussion contributes to theodicy, to process theology, and to the study of myths and archetypes in literature.

Revelations

The Influence of the Bible on Civilisation