



Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism

By Richard Smoley



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The success of books such as Elaine Pagels's Gnostic Gospels and Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code proves beyond a doubt that there is a tremendous thirst today for finding the hidden truths of Christianity – truths that may have been lost or buried by institutional religion over the last two millennia.

In Forbidden Faith, Richard Smoley narrates a popular history of one such truth, the ancient esoteric religion of gnosticism, which flourished between the first and fourth centuries A.D., but whose legacy remains even today, having survived secretly throughout the ages.



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Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism By Richard Smoley Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Tackling the perplexing, if not esoteric, topic of Gnosticism has proved a daunting challenge for most who have tried to introduce it to the general reading public. Not so for Smoley, former editor of the journal *Gnosis*. This clear, concise (albeit cursory in spots) primer traces the Gnostic threads of philosophy, religion, science and popular culture from their biblical references through to their 21st-century appearances in novels and film. Moving easily from one century to the next while at the same time connecting them to each other, Smoley is at once thoughtful and thought-provoking, suggesting that if the history of the Gnostic legacy were a drama, he'd script it in two acts, divided between the "rise and fall of the great dualist heresy... [and]... the entrance of Kabbalah" into Western heritage. Beside the usual examples of the Gospel of Thomas, the Cathars, Rosicrucians and Masons, he resuscitates Manichaeism and Hesychasm. He highlights not only William Blake and Carl Jung, but Theosophy maven Helena Blavatsky, German philosopher Eric Voegelin and, surprisingly, literary critic Harold Bloom. Throughout, Smoley reinforces that Gnosticism is, and always has been, here to stay. He paves a wide, clear path to understanding it, accessible even to the weekend seeker. (May)

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From [Booklist](#)

There are plenty of books about Gnosticism, but instead of just interpreting Gnostic Gospels in relation to Christianity, Smoley takes a more inclusive approach, showing how Gnosticism has flourished in one form or another throughout the ages, rearing its head today in the popularity of *The Da Vinci Code* and the myriad books that have followed in its wake. Smoley begins with an introduction to the Gnostics, tracing their beliefs back to the Egyptians. He then moves forward in history, discussing in readable style the Gnostics' battles with orthodoxy as well as Gnosticism's evolution and its links to other forms of mysticism, including kabbalah. Throughout, Smoley makes the point that the appeal of Gnosticism, whatever its form, stems from a lack of vitality in Christianity, which in turn derives from the fact that "crucial material about the earliest era of Christianity seems to be missing." Although Smoley writes in a popular style, he never lacks for scholarship. The many readers interested in Gnosticism will find new and valuable ways of looking at the topic here. *Ilene Cooper*

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Review

"[A] clear, concise primer... a wide, clear path to understanding Gnosticism, accessible even by the weekend seeker." (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

"A compelling and accessible argument. A thoroughly enjoyable read; highly recommended for all libraries with strong religious collections." (Library Journal)

"If you are interested in the appeal of these popular manifestations of Gnosticism, Smoley is certainly your best guide." (Spirituality and Health magazine)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kevin Buckley:

Here thing why that Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism are different and trustworthy to be yours. First of all studying a book is good but it depends in the content than it which is the content is as delicious as food or not. Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any e-book out there but there is no reserve that similar with Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing this happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in park, café, or even in your means home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the imprinted book maybe the form of Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism in e-book can be your option.

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