



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:

Melvin Wilhelm:

The knowledge that you get from Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism could be the more deep you searching the information that hide inside the words the more you get interested in reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in certain way that can be understood by means of anyone who read that because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. That book also makes your current vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism instantly.

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