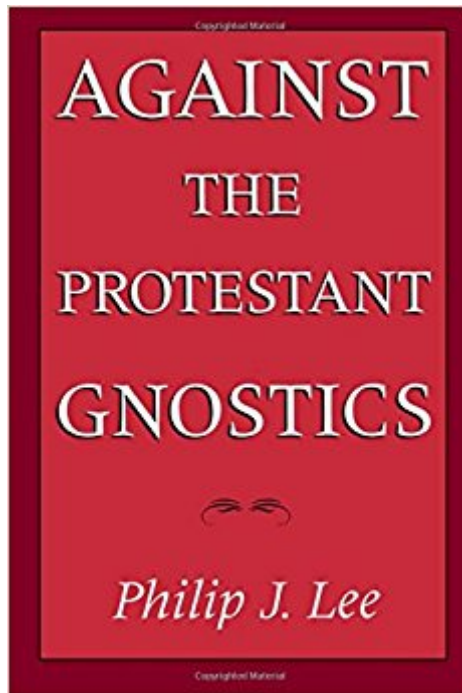




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# Against The Protestant Gnostics



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press (August 19, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195084365

ISBN-13: 978-0195084368

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #729,310 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #143 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Gnosticism](#) #984 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Ancient & Classical](#) #1287 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Sociology](#)

## Customer Reviews

Lee divides his book into three sections: "Gnosticism in Conflict with the Faith," "Gnosticism in Ascendance in North America," and "Results and Reform." He first offers an analysis of the components of gnostic religion and its heretical elements within early Christianity. Then, finding the same elements within North American Protestantism, he offers a prescription for degnosticization by restoring a sense of corporate community, spiritual equality, divine grace, and commitment to a lifelong pilgrimage of faith. Lee's analysis has far-reaching implications for families, for ecumenicism among denominations, for a return to the language and imagery of the Christian tradition, and for the recovery of a sense of God as mystery. Highly recommended for seminary libraries. Carolyn M. Craft, English, Philosophy, & Modern Language Dept., Longwood Coll., Farmville, Va. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of

this title.

"Lee asserts the ongoing relevance of the Christian story of man. In doing so, he has made the study of gnosticism crucial to the ongoing debate about the future of American culture."--The Christian Science Monitor"Lee deserves all praise for seeing clearly what is indeed there to be seen, though concealed in the multiple masks of supposed Protestantism."--Harold Bloom, in The American Religion (1992)"Lee's description of Gnosticism is not a historical sketch. Rather, it is an attempt to map the tendencies and characteristic forms of the Gnostic mindset. The resulting summary is one of the most readable and insightful treatments of Gnosticism presently available."--The Thomist"This is a thought-provoking, readable work, argued by means of numerous examples....It will prove valuable especially to those who teach North America's religious history and Protestant theologies."--Horizons"This is 'must' reading for every member of the cloth."--Virginia Episcopalian

Straight forward quick read which clearly expresses the author's position. There are a few reviews that take the author to task for his strong polemic against Gnosticism. I am afraid these critics must not have read the title as the author's intent is abundantly clear.

Apparently, I'm a Gnostic, you're a Gnostic, we're all Gnostics. In this book, Lee compares the early heresy of Gnosticism with some of the common beliefs and practices in churches today. I don't think any group was left alone. He accuses pretty much everyone. And honestly, he's probably somewhat right. I agree that there are dangerous dualistic, elitist, escapist, and hyper-spiritual tendencies in many Christian circles today. But I'm not sure I'm comfortable accusing everyone of Gnosticism. Just because we have similarities doesn't mean we're Gnostics. I mean, we have many similarities with Muslims, but we're not all Muslims. The "cure" wasn't so helpful either. He suggested that we preach. And it should be liturgical preaching in line with the creedal traditions of the church. I'm all for preaching, but I don't think preaching is the cure. All in all, the book is well researched and documented, but the diagnosis and cure both seemed somewhat skewed.

Foundational. Eye-opener. It needs to be in EVERY Protestant/Catholic Church. I have learned so much from this book that it changed horizons, understandings and gave me enlightenment. 1st revelation: That Gnosticism has been in the Church from the beginning. Gnosticism is a recurring forever error that has, and will, plague the Church. 2nd revelation; American Protestantism, even

though most can trace its roots to Calvin, has no resemblance to original Calvinistic teachings. American Protestantism inverted Calvinism thus becoming Gnostic. Gnosticism is the pervading mentality of American Protestantism. He goes into depth defining Gnosticism; its syncretism, its hatred of creation/nature, its superiority complex, its core emphasis on individual knowledge, and rejection of particularity, that "No thing matters". It is all quite dangerous. He then does a study on Calvin and how close he skirted gnosticism without actually falling into it. Calvin was not gnostic. Then, Philip Lee traces the development of Puritanism in America and how it moved into Gnosticism. Most of the major branches of American Protestantism are Gnostic. Next, he shows the damage caused by this heresy in that this Gnosticism has become America's Civil Religion and therefore a cause for American intervention everywhere causing wars and strife. And finally, he lays out excellent points about de-gnosticizing the Church by preaching from the Bible, expressing the love of the cosmos and its goodness and a return to a corporate church. He teaches that Christianity is a family/community oriented faith, not individualistic. All his points should be well heeded. Even though he, himself, (one can tell) is a liberal Protestant, his book has got to be the standard bearer of the fight against Gnosticism. It seems to me that his interaction with the Vietnam War, which he quotes here and there in the book, is the motivation behind the writing of this book. He has a lot of kind words for the Catholic Church. And so, the one ultimate piece of advice that he should have seen is that Protestantism needs to return to the Roman Catholic Church. Otherwise, despite these minor twists--the work is an outstanding piece of research, (he even researches Protestant fiction works to discover their gnosticism), excellent advice and healing; it is a necessary read not only for every priest/pastor but for the layman. It is an easy read!

This is an extremely provocative assessment of Protestantism from a catholic-minded Presbyterian minister from Canada. He basically decries the ways in which recent Protestant expressions of Christianity have rent asunder the church and her sacraments making Christianity largely unintelligible to the Reformers of the 16th century. In noting the practical absence of communion from regular Protestant worship, Lee writes: "The irony of Protestant history is that although the sixteenth-century Reformers fought like tigers to restore the wine to the people, their descendants have now deprived the people of both bread and wine." Another quote: "As opposed to the patristic and Calvinistic picture of the Church as a mother who nurses, comforts, scolds, punishes, in short, loves her children into a healthy maturity, the present image of Church is that of an organization that cashes our checks, mails us notices and newsletters, but otherwise leaves us to our own devices." Lee shows that the Protestant Reformers would not recognize most of their modern-day evangelical

offspring. He leaves the reader to wonder if, in fact, that might have something to do with the very DNA of Protestantism to begin with. If the Incarnation is true then matter matters and a gnostic rejection of the goodness of physicality - both in creation and in redemption (from sacraments to resurrection) - cannot be reconciled with Christianity.

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