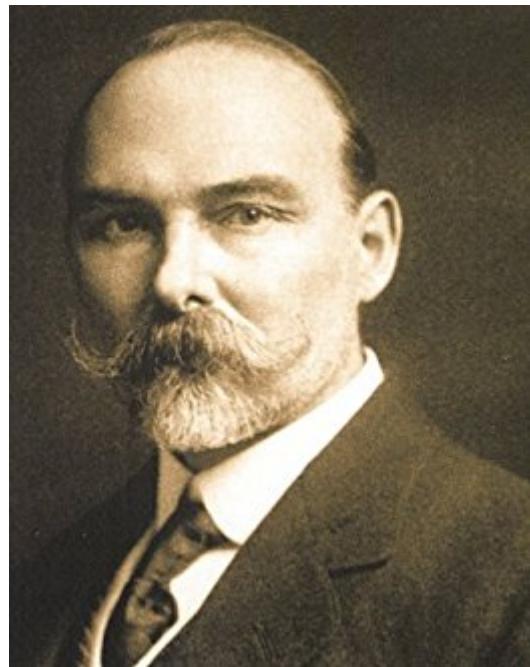


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Fragments Of A Faith Forgotten



Synopsis

This is one of the best books about the Gnostics written prior to the Nag Hammadi discoveries. G.R.S. Mead, who also translated the Pistis Sophia, summarizes what was known about the Gnostics at the turn of the 20th century. At that time, a better picture of the Gnostics was emerging, based on several papyri which had been recently discovered. Although there had been a lot of academic research on this subject, most of the key works were in German or French. Therefore this book and The Gnostics and Their Remains are the only two major books in English on this subject currently in the public domain. It was becoming increasingly obvious that early Christianity was a wide spectrum of sects, the record of which had been subsequently forgotten or suppressed by the Church. The Gnostics had deep connections with ancient Mystery religions, Pythagoreanism, Hinduism and other ancient beliefs. Most of the sacred texts of Gnosticism were long lost or survived only in small quotes. Mead draws on information provided both by the Early Church Fathers hostile to Gnosticism, and the available corpus of actual Gnostic documents at the time, cryptic and fragmentary as it was. He includes excerpts from previously untranslated manuscripts, and extensive summaries of the Pistis Sophia and the writings of the critics of Gnosticism. This book is required reading for anyone who wants to understand Gnosticism and the development of early Christianity.

Book Information

File Size: 1415 KB

Print Length: 357 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1517128668

Publication Date: July 13, 2010

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B003VS0DT6

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #480,016 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #60

inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies & Reference >

Gnosticism #158 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Gnosticism #17255

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Customer Reviews

This is a very good book and far ahead of its time. G.R.S. Mead represents the movement of scholarship and research in religious texts to move away from the western "orthodox" Christian biases and to conduct research and investigations into other cultural beliefs with an open mind. This book is well over 100 years old and still has relevance. At the time little was known about Gnosticism as this was before the discovery, or at least the public or scholarly recognition of the discoveries at Nag Hammadi, so all Mead had to work with was few actual authentic texts and the quotes of the early Church Fathers who were notorious in their vehemence against the Gnostics. Certainly any tracts written by ones enemies must be taken with a grain of salt. Beyond the heresy hunters, there was the Pistis Sophia (an edition by Mead still selling today), the contents of the Askew, Bruce and Akimim Codices, and some fragments that found their way into non-canonical acts of the apostles. Sometimes Mead gets a bit out of bounds - pondering if perhaps Jesus lived in 100 B.C. based on minor Talmud references, and comparing some of the aspects of a certain Gnostic system to parts of the human brain. Attempting to think outside of the box and to understand long forgotten and complex religious systems can lead one into minor dead ends or blind alleys. Overall I think this is an admirable work even today and I especially enjoy his chronological history of the early Gnostic individuals (legendary in some cases) and groups. Mead's association with Theosophy caused his work to be scorned or ignored by the scholars and "experts" of his own day (I am not a big Blavatsky fan myself), but after 100 years his works are still being sold while much of the work of these critical or dismissive contemporaries are utterly forgotten. In the modern Neo-Gnostic revival heralded by the public release and dissemination of the Nag Hammadi texts in English, Mead is something of a forerunner, a John the Baptist of the modern Gnostic discovery.

Nobody will read through Mead's text but use it episodically to check on or find specific information. And there is no lack of it. Mead has patiently accumulated all the information he could gather on side-track Christianity with all its many shades. The variations on the theme of non-orthodox Christianity are incredibly profuse, as even a birds-eye view of the book reveals. This online version is however not as easy to handle as could be expected.

I really liked the way Mead put this together in a flowing readable manner. Very interesting the first read. I'll reread it in a few months. I'm always looking for authors like this and was compelled to buy a few more of Mead's books.

Excellent!

Very easy to read with a plethora of information. Recommended for any one interested in this subject.

This is a book I own in hard copy and Kindle. It is a book to open your mind to other possibilities. Really a great read.

A very good translation and compilation of the original text. Makes it much easier to follow and understand.

Biblical knowledge from the perspective of inner reflection instead of searching outside oneself for the Truth. The Truth is within us, not in external worship.

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