

Your Own Personal Jesus

Michael S. Horton

Citing examples from TV, pop music, and best-selling books, an article in *Entertainment Weekly* noted that "pop culture is going gaga for spirituality." However, Seekers of the day are apt to peel away the tough theological stuff and pluck out the most dulcet elements of faith, coming up with a soothing sampler of Judeo-Christian imagery, Eastern meditation, self-help lingo, a vaguely conservative craving for 'virtue,' and a loopy New Age pursuit of 'peace.' This happy free-for-all, appealing to Baptists and stargazers alike, comes off more like Forest Gump's ubiquitous 'boxa chocolates' than like any real system of belief. You never know what you're going to get. (1)

The "search for the sacred" has become a recurring cover story for national news magazines for some time now; but is a revival of "spirituality" and interest in the "sacred" really any more encouraging than the extravagant idolatry that Paul witnessed in Athens (Acts 17)?

Not only historians and sociologists but novelists are writing about the "Gnostic" character of the soup that we call spirituality in the United States today. In a recent article in *Harper's*, Curtis White describes our situation pretty well. When we assert, "This is my *belief*," says White, we are invoking our right to have our own private conviction, no matter how ridiculous, not only tolerated politically but *respected* by others. "It says, 'I've invested a lot of emotional energy in this belief, and in a way I've staked the credibility of my life on it. So if you ridicule it, you can expect a fight.'" In this kind of culture, "Yahweh and Baal-my God and yours-stroll arm-in-arm, as if to do so were the model of virtue itself."

What we require of belief is not that it make sense but that it be sincere....Clearly, this is not the spirituality of a centralized orthodoxy. It is a sort of workshop spiritu-ality that you can get with a cereal-box top and five dollars....There is an obvious problem with this form of spirituality: it takes place in isolation. Each of us sits at our computer terminal tapping out our convictions....Consequently, it's

difficult to avoid the conclusion that our truest belief is the credo of heresy itself. It is heresy without an orthodoxy. It is heresy *as* an orthodoxy. (2)

While European nihilism denied only God, "American nihilism is something different. Our nihilism is our capacity to believe in everything and anything all at once. It's all good!" All that's left is for belief to become "a culture-commodity."

We shop among competing options for our belief. Once reduced to the status of a commodity, our anything-goes, do-it-yourself spirituality cannot have very much to say about the more directly nihilistic conviction that we should all be free to *do* whatever we like as well, each of us pursuing our right to our isolated happiness. (3)

Like Nietzsche himself, who said that truth is made rather than discovered and was described by Karl Barth as "the man of azure isolation," Americans just want to be left alone to create their own private Idaho. While evangelicals talk a lot about truth, their witness, worship, and spirituality seem in many ways more like their Mormon, New Age, and liberal nemeses than anything like historical Christianity.

We would prefer to be left alone, warmed by our beliefs-that-make-no-sense, whether they are the quotidian platitudes of ordinary Americans, the magical thinking of evangelicals, the mystical thinking of New Age Gnostics, the teary-eyed patriotism of social conservatives, or the perfervid loyalty of the rich to their free-market Mammon. We are thus the congregation of the Church of the Infinitely Fractured, splendidly alone together. And apparently that's how we like it. Our pluralism of belief says both to ourselves and to others, 'Keep your distance.' And yet isn't this all strangely familiar? Aren't these all the false gods that Isaiah and Jeremiah confronted, the cults of the 'hot air gods'? The gods that couldn't scare birds from a cucumber patch? Belief of every kind and cult, self-indulgence and self-aggrandizement of every degree, all flourish. And yet God is abandoned. (4)

As far back as the early eighteenth century, the French commentator Alexis de Tocqueville observed

the distinctly American craving "to escape from imposed systems" and "to seek by themselves and in themselves for the only reason for things, looking to results without getting entangled in the means toward them." He concluded, "So each man is narrowly shut up in himself and from that basis makes the pretension to judge the world." Americans do not need books or any other external authorities in order to find the truth, "having found it in themselves." (5) American Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) announced that "whatever hold the public worship held on us is gone or going," prophesying the day when Americans would recognize that they are "part and parcel of God," requiring no mediator or ecclesiastical means of grace. Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" captured the unabashed narcissism of American romanticism that plagues our culture from talk shows to the church.

During this same period, the message and methods of American churches also felt the impact of this romantic narcissism. It can be recognized in a host of sermons and hymns from the period, such as C. Austin Miles' hymn, "In the Garden":

I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.
And he walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.

The focus of such piety is on a personal relationship with Jesus that is individualistic, inward, and immediate. One comes alone and experiences a joy that "none other has ever known." How can any external orthodoxy tell me I'm wrong? My personal relationship with Jesus is *mine*. I do not share it with the church. Creeds, confessions, pastors, and teachers-not even the Bible-can shake my confidence in the unique experiences that I have alone with Jesus.

A Perfect Storm

If moralism represents a drift toward the Pelagian (or at least semi-Pelagian) heresy, "enthusiasm" is an expression of the heresy known as Gnosticism. A second-century movement that seriously threatened the ancient churches, Gnosticism tried to blend Greek philosophy and Christianity. The result was

an eclectic spirituality that regarded the material world as the prison-house of divine spirits and the creation of an evil god (YAHWEH). Their goal was to return to the spiritual, heavenly, and divine unity of which their inner self is a spark, away from the realm of earthly time, space, and bodies. With little interest in questions of history or doctrine, the Gnostics set off on a quest to ascend the ladder of mysticism. The institutional church, with its ordained ministry, creeds, preaching, sacraments, and discipline, was alienating-like the body, it was the prison-house of the individual soul.

Pelagianism and Gnosticism are different versions of what Gerhard Forde called the "glory story." Following Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, which was following Romans 10 and 1 Corinthians 1, the Reformation contrasted the theology of glory with the theology of the cross. As Forde explains,

The most common overarching story we tell about ourselves is what we will call the glory story. We came from glory and are bound for glory. Of course, in between we seem somehow to have gotten derailed-whether by design or accident we don't quite know-but that is only a temporary inconvenience to be fixed by proper religious effort. What we need is to get back on 'the glory road.' The story is told in countless variations. Usually the subject of the story is 'the soul'...what Paul Ricoeur has called 'the myth of the exiled soul.' (6)

In neither version does one need to be rescued. Assisted, directed, enlightened perhaps, but not rescued-at least not through a bloody cross.

Both versions of the "glory story" drive us deeper into ourselves, identifying God with the inner self, instead of calling us outside of ourselves. The "cross story" and the "glory story" represent not merely different emphases, but entirely different religions, as J. Gresham Machen pointed out in his controversial book, *Christianity and Liberalism*.

Pelagianism leads to Christless Christianity because we do not need a Savior, but a good example. Gnosticism's route to Christless Christianity is by driving us deeper inside ourselves rather than outside to the incarnate God who rescued us from the guilt, tyranny, and penalty of our sins. Pelagianism and Gnosticism combine to keep us looking *to* ourselves and *within* ourselves. We're a self-help people and we like our gods inside of us where we can manage them. Together, these heresies

have created the perfect storm: the American Religion.

Gnosticism as the American Religion?

Contemporary descriptions in news periodicals and polling data consistently reveal that the ever-popular "search for the sacred" in American culture shares a lot of similarities with Gnosticism. Of course, in the most popular versions there may be no explicit awareness of this connection or any direct dependence on such sources.

There is an explicit revival of Gnosticism in our day, however, in both the academy and popular culture, from Harvard Divinity School seminars to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. The "Gnosticism" aisle in the average bookstore chain (next to religion and spirituality) is evidence of renewed interest in pagan spiritualities. Matthew Fox, repeating the warning of self-described Gnostic psychologist Carl Jung, expresses this sentiment well: "One way to kill the soul is to worship a God outside you." (7) Other writers in this issue focus on this revival of explicit, full-strength Gnosticism, so I will focus on the "Gnosticism Lite" that pervades the American spirituality today.

This watered-down Gnosticism does not require any explicit awareness of, much less attachment to, the esoteric myth of creation and redemption-by-enlightenment. The opposition, however, between inner divinity and enlightenment and redemption, an external God, the external Word, an external redemption in Christ, and an institutional church offers a striking parallel to America's search for the sacred.

In the American Religion, as in ancient Gnosticism, there is almost no sense of God's difference from us—in other words, his majesty, sovereignty, self-existence, and holiness. God is my buddy or my inmost experience, or the power-source for living my best life now. God is not strange (i.e., holy)—and is certainly not a judge. He does not evoke fear, awe, or a sense of terrifying and disorienting beauty. Furthermore, all the focus on making atonement through a bloody sacrifice seems crude and unspiritual to Gnostics when, after all, the point of salvation is to escape the physical realm. All of this is too "Jewish," according to Gnostics from Marcion to Schleiermacher to the "Re-Imagining Conference" of mainline Protestant leaders (especially radical

feminists) who explicitly appealed to Gnosticism in their screeds against "men hanging on crosses with blood dripping and all that gory stuff." The god of Gnosticism is not the one before whom Isaiah said, "Woe to me, for I am undone!" or Peter said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." To borrow a nice phrase from William Placher, it represents "the domestication of transcendence." God is no longer a problem for us.

Instead of God's free decision to make his home with us in the world that he created, for the Gnostic we are at home with God already, in the stillness of our inner self and away from all entanglements in space and time. As the second-century church father Irenaeus pointed out, Gnostics simply do not care about the unfolding plan of redemption in history because they do not care about history. Time and space are alien to the innermost divine self. To mystics and radical Anabaptists like Thomas Müntzer who made even the external Word of Scripture and preaching subservient to an alleged inner word of personal revelation, Luther and Calvin said that this was the essence of "enthusiasm" (literally, God-within-ism). As Luther put it, this is the attempt to ascend the ladder from matter and history to spirit and the eternal vision of "the naked God." Yet, apart from the incarnate Word, this dazzling god we encounter at the top of that ladder is really the devil, who "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

This characteristically American approach to religion, in which the direct relationship of the soul to God generates an almost romantic encounter with the sacred, makes inner experience the measure of spiritual genuineness. We are more concerned that our spiritual leaders exude "vulnerability," "authenticity," and the familiar spontaneity that tells us that they too really do have a personal relationship with Jesus than that they faithfully interpret Scripture and are sent by Christ through the official ordination of his church. Everything perceived as external to the self—the church, the gospel, Word and sacrament, the world, and even God—must either be marginalized or, in more radical versions, rejected as that which would alienate the soul from its immediacy to the divine.

It is therefore not surprising that today the "search for the sacred" continues to generate a proliferation of sects. In fact, sociologist Robert Bellah has coined the term "Sheilism" to describe American

spirituality, based on one interview in which a woman named Sheila said that she just follows her own inner voice. "Your Own Personal Jesus," parodying the title of a Depeche Mode song, seems to be the informal but intense spirituality of many American Christians as well.

Philip Lee's *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (Oxford, 1987) and Harold Bloom's *The American Religion* (Simon and Schuster, 1992) point out with great insight the connections between this popular spirituality and Gnosticism. It is especially worth pondering Harold Bloom's learned ruminations here because, as he himself observes, Philip Lee *laments* the Gnosticism of American Religion while Bloom *celebrates* it. (8)

Hailed as America's most distinguished literary critic, Bloom displays a sophisticated grasp of the varieties of ancient Gnosticism as well as its successive eruptions in the West to the present day. First of all, says Bloom, "freedom, in the context of the American Religion, means being alone with God or with Jesus, the American God or the American Christ." (9) This unwritten creed is as evident in the history of American evangelicalism as it is in Emerson.

As a religious critic, I remain startled by and obsessed with the revivalistic element in our religious experience. Revivalism, in America, tends to be the perpetual shock of the individual discovering yet again what she and he always have known, which is that God loves her and him on an absolutely personal and indeed intimate basis. (10)

Second, as extreme as it at first appears, Bloom suggests that whatever the stated doctrinal positions that evangelicalism shares with historic Christianity,

Mormons and Southern Baptists call themselves Christians, but like most Americans they are closer to ancient Gnostics than to early Christians....The American Religion is pervasive and overwhelming, however, it is masked, and even our secularists, indeed even our professed atheists, are more Gnostic than humanist in their ultimate presuppositions. We are a religiously made culture, furiously searching for the spirit, but each of us is subject and object of the one quest, which must be for the original self, a spark or breath in us that we are convinced goes back to before the Creation. (11)

"The Christ of the twentieth century" is no longer really even a distinct historical person, but "has become a personal experience for the American Christian, quite clearly for the Evangelicals." (12) In this scheme, history is no longer the sphere of Christianity. The focus of faith and practice is not so much Christ's objective person and work for us, outside of us, as it is a "personal relationship" that is defined chiefly in terms of inner experience.

Although he may at times overstate his thesis, Bloom draws on numerous primary and secondary sources from the history of particular movements to build his case. In one chapter, Bloom explores the enthusiastic revivalism of Barton Stone, who broke away from Presbyterianism to found what he regarded as the finally and fully restored apostolic church: the Church of Christ (Disciples). According to his memoirs, Stone wrote, "Calvinism is among the heaviest clogs on Christianity in the world," even from the very beginning of its assumptions: "Its first link is total depravity." (13)

A full generation before Emerson came to his spiritual maturity, the frontier people experienced their giant epiphany of Gnosis at Cane Ridge. Their ecstasy was no more communal than the rapture at Woodstock; each barking Kentuckian or prancing yippie barked and pranced for himself alone.... American ecstasy is solitary, even when it requires the presence of others for the self's glory. (14)

"What was missing in all this quite private luminosity," Bloom adds, "was simply most of historic Christianity."

I hasten to add that I am celebrating, not deploring, when I make that observation. So far as I can tell, the Southern Jesus, which is to say the American Jesus, is not so much an agent of redemption as he is an impartor of knowledge, which returns us to the analysis of an American Gnosis in my previous chapter. Jesus is not so much an event in history for the American Religionist as he is a knower of the secrets of God who in return can be known by the individual. Hidden in this process is a sense that depravity is only a lack of saving knowledge. (15)

This intuitive, direct, and immediate knowledge is set over against the historically mediated forms of knowledge. What an American knows in his or her heart is more certain than the law of gravity.

"A pragmatic exploiter of his own charisma," Charles Finney was a formative influence in the American Religion, notes Bloom. (16) So the "deeds, not creeds" orientation of American revivalism is driven not only by a preference for works over faith (i.e., Pelagianism), but by the Gnostic preference for a private, mystical, and inward "personal relationship with Jesus" in opposition to everything public, doctrinal, and external to the individual soul. Religion is formal, ordered, corporate, and visible; spirituality is informal, spontaneous, individual, and invisible.

As sweeping as it may first appear, there are clear similarities between fundamentalism and Pentecostalism on the one hand and Protestant liberalism on the other. In fact, one reason that these forms of religion have survived modernity, against all expectations to the contrary, is that they not only can accommodate modernity's privatization of faith as an inner experience but they actually thrive in this atmosphere. Repeatedly in the past few centuries, we have seen how easily an inner-directed pietism and revivalism turns to the vinegar of liberalism. One example is Wilhelm Herrmann, a liberal pietist, whose statement early in the twentieth century could be heard in many evangelical circles then as now: "To fix doctrines...into a system is the last thing the Christian Church should undertake...But if, on the other hand, we keep our attention fixed on what God is producing in the Christian's inner life, then the manifoldness of the thoughts which spring from faith will not confuse us, but give us cause for joy." (17)

So it is not surprising when today's fundamentalists eventually become tomorrow's liberals, in recurring cycles that pass through stages of intense controversy. Bloom follows a similar narrative in relation to Gnosticism. For all of their obvious differences, fundamentalists and liberals, Quakers and Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Mormons, New Agers and Southern Baptists sound a lot alike when it comes to how we in America approach religious truth.

While Luther, Calvin, and their heirs sought to reform the church, the more radical Protestant movements have often seen the church as an obstacle to the individual's personal relationship with God. (Evangelical George Barna, a guru of the church growth movement, has recently written three books arguing that the era of the local church is

over, soon to be replaced by Internet resources for personal piety.) Where the Reformers pointed to the external ministry of the church, centering on Word and sacrament, as the place where God promised to meet his people, "enthusiasm" was suspicious of everything external. Similarly, Quakers gave up the formal ministry, including preaching and sacrament, in favor of group sharing of personal revelations. Even when evangelicals retain these public means appointed by Christ, they often become assimilated to self-expression and techniques for self-transformation: means of our experience and activity more than God's means of grace. Ultimately, it's what I do alone with God that matters, not what God does for me together with his covenant people through public, earthly, material means that he has appointed.

In the history of American (and to some extent British) evangelicalism, the fear of sacraments (as opposed to ordinances) has often been defended as a defense against the perpetual threat of Romanism. In all likelihood, however, a deeper (perhaps unwitting) source of such unease is that evangelicalism has listed toward Gnosticism: Nothing can be allowed to get in the way of my personal and utterly unique relationship with Jesus. Southern Baptist theologian E. Y. Mullins was not saying anything that was not already elaborated by American Transcendentalists when he wrote, "That which we know most indubitably are the facts of inner experience." (18) The individual believer, alone with his or her Bible, was all that was necessary for a vital Christian experience. Bloom quotes Mullins' axiom, "Religion is a personal matter between the soul and God." (19) However heterodox this assumption may be by the standards of historic Christianity, it is surely the orthodoxy of American Religion.

Furthermore, Bloom observes, triumphalism-the inability to face the depravity of the inner self even at its best-marks the Gnostic spirit. "Triumphalism is the only mode," says Bloom, in which Mullins and American religionists generally "read Romans," moving quickly through the body of Paul's epistle to chapter 8: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (20)

Indeed, Gnostics are allergic to any talk about the reality of sin and death. It was in nineteenth-century America that Mary Baker Eddy founded Christian Science, whose explicitly Gnostic enthusiasms introduced into the vocabulary of Christians the

euphemism "passing away" for death and resurrection.

For Bloom, two outstanding exceptions to this Gnostic trajectory are Swiss theologian Karl Barth and Princeton scholar (and founder of Westminster Seminary) J. Gresham Machen. "Barth knows the difference between the Reformed faith and Gnosis," says Bloom, pointing out the critical divergence: the subjective experience of the self over God's objective word and work. (21)

What we call fundamentalists, says Bloom, are really Gnostics of an anti-intellectual variety. If there were a possibility of an anti-Gnostic version of fundamentalism, says Bloom, such proponents "would find their archetype in the formidable J. Gresham Machen, a remarkable Presbyterian New Testament scholar at Princeton, who published a vehement defense of traditional Christianity in 1923, with the aggressive title *Christianity and Liberalism*." Bloom adds, "I have just read my way through this, with distaste and discomfort but with reluctant and growing admiration for Machen's mind. I have never seen a stronger case made for the argument that institutional Christianity must regard cultural liberalism as an enemy to faith." (22) In contrast to this defense of traditional Christianity, those who came to be called fundamentalists are more like "the Spanish Fascism of Franco...heirs of Franco's crusade against the mind, and not the legatees of Machen." (23)

In short, "the Calvinist deity, first brought to America by the Puritans, has remarkably little in common with the versions of God now apprehended by what calls itself Protestantism in the United States." Again, as Bloom himself points out, Philip Lee's *Against the Protestant Gnostics* makes almost the same arguments, with many of the same historical examples. What makes Bloom's account a little more interesting is that he champions the American Religion and hopes for even greater gains for Gnosticism in the future. According to Bloom, a "revival of Continental Reformed Protestantism is precisely what we do not need." (24) Like ancient Gnosticism, contemporary American approaches to spirituality-however different conservative and liberal versions may appear on the surface-typically underscore the inner spirit as the locus of a personal relationship. As conservative Calvary Chapel founder Chuck Smith expresses it, "We meet God in the realm of our spirit." (25) This view is so

commonplace that it seems odd to hear it challenged. Nevertheless, the church fathers, Protestant Reformers, and orthodox theologians have always directed us with the Scriptures, outside of ourselves, where God has chosen to meet with and to reconcile strangers.

Philip Lee's contrast between Gnosticism and Calvin can be just as accurately documented from a wide variety of Christians through the ages:

Whereas classical Calvinism had held that the Christian's assurance of salvation was guaranteed only through Christ and his Church, with his means of grace, now assurance could be found only in the personal experience of having been born again. This was a radical shift, for Calvin had considered any attempt to put 'conversion in the power of man himself' to be gross popery. (26)

In fact, for the Reformers, adds Lee, the new birth was the opposite of "rebirth into a new and more acceptable self," but the death of the old self and its rebirth in Christ. (27)

Like ancient Gnosticism, American spirituality uses God or the divine as something akin to an energy source. Through various formulae, steps, procedures, or techniques, one may "access" this source on one's own. Such spiritual technology could be employed without any need for the office of preaching, administering baptism or the Supper, or membership in a visible church, submitting to its communal admonitions, encouragements, teaching, and practices.

According to the studies of sociologist Wade Clark Roof, "The distinction between 'spirit' and 'institution' is of major importance" to spiritual seekers today. (28) "Spirit is the inner, experiential aspect of religion; institution is the outer, established form of religion." (29) He adds, "Direct experience is always more trustworthy, if for no other reason than because of its 'inwardness' and 'withinness'-two qualities that have come to be much appreciated in a highly expressive, narcissistic culture." (30)

The way many evangelicals today speak of "accessing" and "connecting" with God underscores this point, in sharp contrast with the biblical emphasis on God's descent to us in the incarnation. Profoundly aware of our difference from God not only as creatures but as sinners as well, biblical faith

underscores the need for mediation. God finds us by using his own creation as his "mask" behind which he hides so that he can serve us. The Gnostic, by contrast, needs no mediation. God is not external to the self; in fact, the human spirit and the divine Spirit are already a unity. We cannot be judged-but, then, this also means that we cannot be justified.

To the extent that churches in America today feel compelled to accommodate their message and methods to these dominant forms of spirituality (dominant also in-perhaps even first in-American evangelicalism itself), they will lend evidence to the thesis that Christianity is not news based on historical events but just another therapeutic illusion.

The Flight of the Lonely Soul vs. the Journey of the Pilgrim

Longing for Christ's return, the Christian is world-weary because "this age" lies under the power of sin and death. As the firstfruits of the new creation, Jesus Christ has conquered these powers. It is only a matter of time before the restoration of redeemed creation at the end of history. In the meantime, the believer groans along with the rest of creation for this liberation (Rom. 8:18-25). So the Christian is longing for the final liberation of creation, not *from* creation. Precisely because the believer is rooted in the age to come, of which the Spirit's indwelling presence is the down payment, there is a simultaneous groaning in the face of the status quo and confidence in God's promise to make all things new.

By contrast, the Gnostic self is rootless, restless, weary of the world not because of its bondage to sin

but because it is *worldly*, longing not for its sharing in the liberation of the children of God but in its freedom at last from creation's company; not the transformation of our times and places, but the transcendence of all times and places. "Taking no root," wrote nineteenth-century American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, "I soon weary of any soil in which I may be temporarily deposited. The same impatience I feel, or conceive of, as regards this earthly life." (31) Add to this philosophical orientation the practical transience of contemporary life that keeps us blowing like tumbleweed across the desert, and Gnosticism can be easily seen to jive with our everyday experience. Uprooted, we rarely live anywhere long enough even to be transplanted. Flitting like a bumble bee from flower to flower of religious, spiritual, moral, psychic, and even familial and sexual identities, our generation actually finds it plausible that there can be genuine communities (including "churches") on the Internet.

But the "glory story" is not all it's cracked up to be. Bearing the weight of self-salvation or self-deification on our shoulders is as foolish as it is cruel. The search for the sacred leads to hell rather than heaven, to death rather than life, to ourselves (or Satan) rather than to the God who has descended to us in Jesus Christ, veiling his blinding majesty in our frail flesh. In this foolishness God outsmarts us, and in this weakness he conquered the powers of death and hell. The truth that Jesus proclaims-and the truth that Jesus is-remains for all ages, even for Americans, "the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

1 [[Back](#)] Jeff Gordinier, *Entertainment Weekly* (7 October 1994).

2 [[Back](#)] Curtis White, "Hot Air Gods," *Harper's* vol. 315/no. 1891 (December 2007), p. 13.

3 [[Back](#)] White, pp. 13-14.

4 [[Back](#)] White, p. 14.

5 [[Back](#)] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: 1898), vol. 1, p. 66.

6 [[Back](#)] Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 5.

7 [[Back](#)] Cited in Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 75.

8 [[Back](#)] Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), pp. 26-27.

9 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 15.

10 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 17.

11 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 22.

12 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 25.

13 [[Back](#)] Quoted by Bloom, p. 60.

- 14 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 264.
- 15 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 65.
- 16 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 73.
- 17 [[Back](#)] Wilhelm Herrmann, *Communion with God* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. 16.
- 18 [[Back](#)] Cited by Bloom, p. 204, from E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion* (1910), p. 73.
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- 20 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 213.
- 21 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 213.
- 22 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 228.
- 23 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 229.
- 24 [[Back](#)] Bloom, p. 259.
- 25 [[Back](#)] Chuck Smith, *New Testament Study Guide* (Costa Mesa: The Word for Today, 1982), p. 113.
- 26 [[Back](#)] Philip Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 144.
- 27 [[Back](#)] Lee, p. 255.
- 28 [[Back](#)] Roof, p. 23.
- 29 [[Back](#)] Roof, p. 30.
- 30 [[Back](#)] Roof, p. 67.
- 31 [[Back](#)] Cited in Vernon L. Parrington, "The Romantic Revolution in America," vol. 2 of *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959), pp. 441-442.

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