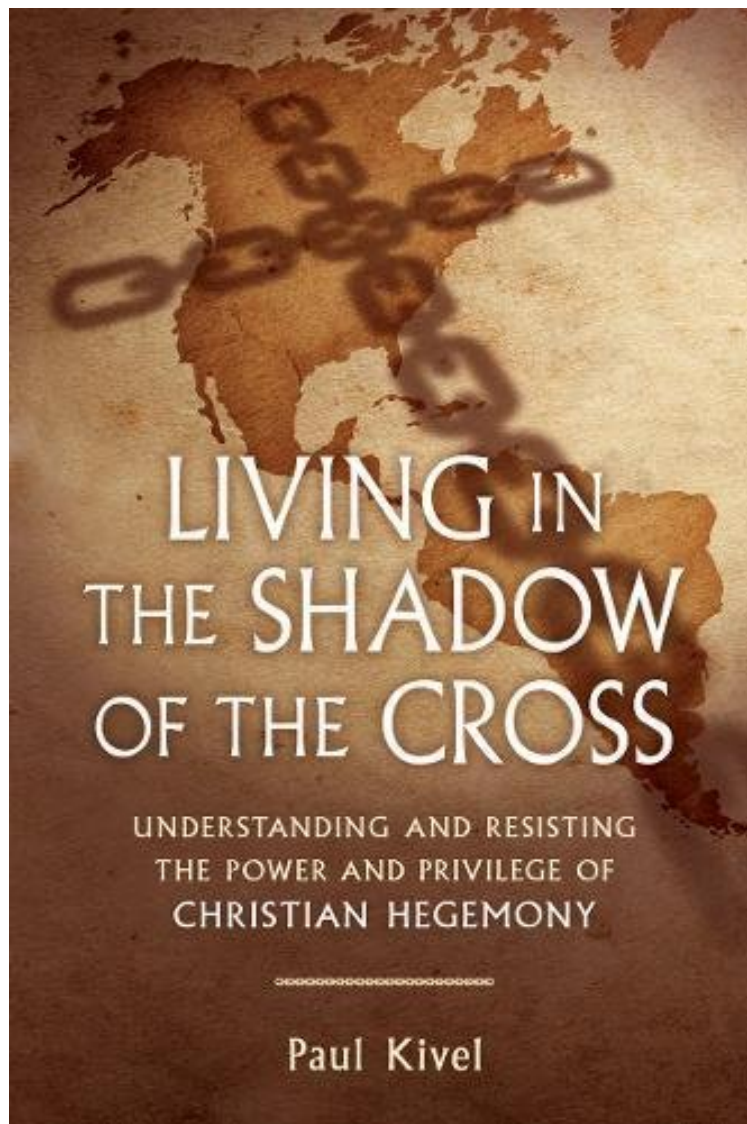


(Download pdf) Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony

Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony

Paul Kivel

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Paul Kivel : Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A practical text on an often-ignored topicBy CarolineSome types of

power and privilege are discussed more than others, and one of the lesser-acknowledged types of oppression is Christian Hegemony. The author of this book, Paul Kivel, defines Christian Hegemony as the everyday, systematic set of Christian values, individuals, and institutions that dominate all aspects of U.S. society. This is an important text for those who want to understand the ways in which privileges and benefits exist for those who are raised as or pass as Christians in the U.S. For readers open-minded enough to consider this possibility, the book is very interesting and quite enlightening. Kivel's book breaks down the ways in which Christian Hegemony works in the U.S. through the power of individual clergy, parachurch organizations, Christian elites who control important institutions, as well as the subtle internalization of Christian beliefs and the deep legacy of ideas, values, and practices produced within dominant Western Christianity over the centuries that continues to frame our culture and frame our public policies. Chapter two includes a very useful checklist called Living in a Christian-Dominant Culture which checklist can help you to see the ways in which we are influenced and impacted by living in a Christian-dominant society. Chapters three and four are fascinating looks at the ways in which key Christian concepts and ways of thinking influence individuals, societies, and histories. Kivel discusses and gives concrete examples of the impact of concepts like dualism, good vs. evil, sinners in need of salvation, one truth, a linear and finite temporal focus, dominion over nature, etc., as well as dominant Christian narratives like conversion, captivity and the need for a Savior, charity and benevolent intervention, science and technology, etc. There is another great checklist in chapter four to help you think about how we internalize these ideas. Kivel also does a chapter on the origins and history of Christianity and its influence, which is extremely helpful in understanding important Christian-influenced historical events like the Crusades, witch hunts, the Protestant Reformation, colonization, missionaries, Manifest Destiny, slavery, and even the Jewish Holocaust. One of the most important chapters of the book is chapter six, which helps the reader see the direct links between Christianity and public policy, both domestic and foreign. This is especially critical post 9/11 as Islamophobia has become public policy in many ways. What I most appreciate about this book is that it ends on a hopeful and needed note the last chapter is titled Resistance and discusses how both Christians and those of other faiths can work for change and greater inclusion and pluralism. This chapter also has two great resources: a section on common denials and possible responses and a section on guidelines for Christian allies. These two sections are practical and helped me to think about how I would actually apply what I read about in the text. I can understand why some readers might be put off by the topic of this book or feel defensive. I applaud Paul Kivel for having the courage to write an entire text on a topic that can cause fear and conflict he is challenging us to think about something that surrounds us everyday in the U.S. but is rarely ever acknowledged. He makes clear that the book is not about Christianity per se, but about dominance. I am a Christian, and while I was familiar with some of the ideas in the book prior to reading, it really opened my eyes to the direct and more subtle ways in which Christian Hegemony functions on a societal level as well as in the way that I view events and my perspective on the world. I highly recommend this book for anyone wanting to understand and learn more about this topic, and I think it would be particularly useful for educators and activists working on issues of religious intolerance. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Kivel has provided us with a great guide for understanding the way Christianity has shaped our ...By Ted McKnight Kivel has provided us with a great guide for understanding the way Christianity has shaped our thinking, actions and culture. He has pointed us in the direction of dealing with this in a positive way; but nobody said it is going to be easy. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Bright side of Christianity acknowledged/dark side revealed By M. Hill It is the first book I've seen that shows both the good and the bad role of the church from centuries ago to the present time.

Over the centuries, Christianity has accomplished much which is deserving of praise. Its institutions have fed the hungry, sheltered the homeless, and advocated for the poor. Christian faith has sustained people through crisis and inspired many to work for social justice. Yet although the word "Christian" connotes the epitome of goodness, the actual story is much more complex. Over the last two millennia, ruling elites have used Christian institutions and values to control those less privileged throughout the world. The doctrine of Christianity has been interpreted to justify the killing of millions, and its leaders have used their faith to sanction participation in colonialism, slavery, and genocide. In the Western world, Christian influence has inspired legislators to continue to limit women's reproductive rights and has kept lesbians and gays on the margins of society. As our triple crises of war, financial meltdown, and environmental destruction intensify, it is imperative that we dig beneath the surface of Christianity's benign reputation to examine its contribution to our social problems. *Living in the Shadow of the Cross* reveals the ongoing, everyday impact of Christian power and privilege on our beliefs, behaviors, and public policy, and emphasizes the potential for people to come together to resist domination and build and sustain communities of justice and peace. Paul Kivel is the award-winning author of *Uprooting Racism* and the director of the Christian Hegemony Project. He is a social justice activist and educator who has focused on the issues of violence prevention, oppression, and social justice for over forty-five years.

Living in the Shadow of the Cross is a powerful, compassionate, yet challenging piece of work. This is a must read for anyone who is committed to social justice and ameliorating oppression. As a Pastor in the Christian church, I initially

wanted to explain away or make excuses, but Paul offers a perspective that feels very familiar to me as one who has felt the impact of White Supremacy and patriarchy.---Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington, Assistant Pastor, Unity Fellowship Church of Baltimore, and Founding Faculty, Social Justice Training InstituteLiving in the Shadow of the Cross serves as a reminder of why the United States is not a Christian Nation and never was. Kivel illustrates why no religion should attempt to cram the First Amendment into an exclusionary theological straightjacket. Disturbing yet necessary truth-telling for those of us who are Christian or who follow any religious belief system.---Chip Berlet, investigative reporter, scholar and co-author, Right-Wing Populism in AmericaAs a white Christian woman who has spent her life attempting to understand white privilege and white supremacy and to make change, Paul Kivel has upped my ante of personal work and understanding. Christian hegemony is an essential piece in the puzzle of systemic domination. What a gift!--- Frances E. Kendall, author Understanding White PrivilegeWe need this book. Living In the Shadow of the Cross helps us understand the many ways that ruling classes historically and today use Christianity to justify, implement and even celebrate, colonization, exploitation and oppression. Working for liberation requires us to decolonize our minds for the logic of the oppressor so that we can generate logics of liberation from which to create, live, love, and act from. Decolonize your heart, mind and soul, and study this book.---Chris Crass, author, Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-racist organizing, feminist praxis and movement-building strategyYou may not realize it, but this is the book you have been waiting for! In the growing field of Privilege Studies, religious privilege has been under-examined. In his characteristically accessible style, Kivel provides us with a nuanced yet comprehensive volume that fills this gap. This will be an indispensable resource and teaching tool for anyone seeking to understand privilege, and the ways that religion intersects with race, class and gender studies.---Abby L. Ferber, Director of The Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion, and Professor of Sociology and Women's Ethnic Studies at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.After more than 200 years, a book has finally emerged that validates Thomas Paine's concerns about Christian hegemony. Living in the Shadow of the Cross shows readers of all faiths how the ruling elite turned a doctrine of love into a doctrine of discovery that has ultimately kept us from embracing the spiritual wisdom of Indigenous cultures that Paine and other founding fathers of the U.S. saw as incompatible with Christian orthodoxy. This book is a must-read if we are to break through the illusions that continue to keep our collective heads in the hegemonic sands that are contained by Christian seas. Our very survival may require such an awakening as Kivel offers here.---Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs, Ph.D., Ed.D.), author, Teaching Truly, Primal Awareness and Unlearning the Language of Conquest.With Living in the Shadow of the Cross, Paul Kivel once again sets a high standard for investigating and making visible dominant group privilege, power, control, and domination, which are pervasive and deeply entrenched. By coming into the topic from multiple perspectives historical, theological and philosophical, economic and political Kivel exposes how the Christian cross has not merely cast a shadow across the globe, but more importantly, how it has operated like a coercive hammer (a weapon) in several spheres resulting in colonization, forced conversions, confiscations of property and resources, territorial expulsions, and, ultimately, to genocide. Living in the Shadow of the Cross puts to rest lingering false impressions and long-standing justifications for a supposed naturalness and normalcy of Christian hegemony.---Warren J. Blumenfeld, co-editor, Investigating Christian Privilege and Religious Oppression in the United States, and Associate Professor, School of Education, Iowa State UniversityPaul Kivel courageously confronts Christian hegemony by addressing historical and present-day realities that few are willing and able to openly challenge. With careful detail, Kivel clearly delineates distinctions between systems of oppression and Christians who resist dominance due to their deep commitments to social justice and liberation. Moreover, he gives voice to those of us who are outside of the Christian religion and consistently subject to Christian hegemony by highlighting how we are forced to navigate realities that dramatically shape and impact our daily lives."---Amer F. Ahmed, educator, social justice activist, poetI am grateful to Paul Kivel for his deep and detailed analyses of Christian assumptions and the actions they have produced. His analyses are both appalling and empowering. They name the historical and ideological problems that most students of oppression in the last 150 years have simply avoided. For me, Paul Kivel opens up whole new territories of pain, but shows that those of us who were raised in Christian traditions can lessen institutional Christian oppressiveness without disowning the soul itself and all the spiritual impulses that go into what Paul Tillich called "the ground of our being"---Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director, Wellesley Centers for Women and Founding Director, National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum.Paul Kivel has done it again; awakened us to a system of dominance that has been invisible for centuries. I found myself defending Christianity and arguing its goodness; seeing its dominance revealed by Kivel but still denying its hegemonic impact on the world. The success of this book will not be measured by ones agreement or disagreement but rather the degree to which it helps change the discourse about Christian power and dominance. Can we be open-minded enough to engage in deep discourse and ultimately change the dominant paradigm and structures that lead to power and privilege?--- Hugh Vasquez, social justice educator and Senior Associate at the National Equity Project