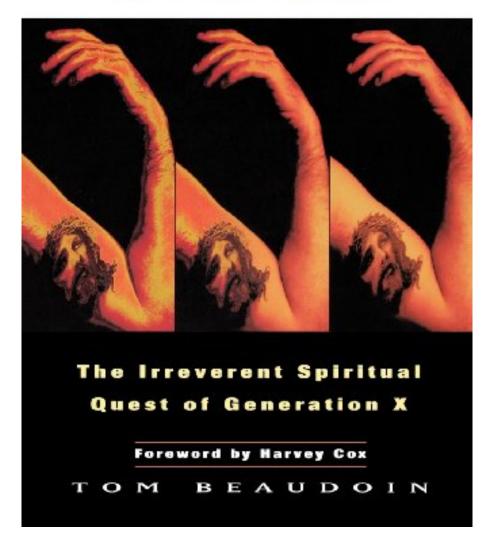


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Reveals the deep and pervasive search for meaning that haunts Generation X. This book is must reading for anyone who would understand the spirituality of young people at the turn of a new millennium.--Robert A. Ludwig, author of Reconstructing Catholicism for a New Generation

In Virtual Faith, Beaudoin explores fashion, music videos, and cyberspace concluding that his generation has fashioned a theology radically different from, but no less potent or valid than, that of their elders.

Beaudoin's investigation of popular culture uncovers four themes that underpin his generation?s theology. First, all institutions are suspect -- especially organized religion. Second, personal experience is everything, and every form of intense personal experience is potentially spiritual. Third, suffering is also spiritual. Finally, this generation sees ambiguity as a central element of faith.

This book opens a long overdue conversation about where and how we find meaning, and how we all can encourage each other in this central human searching.

Tom Beaudoin earned his Master of Theological Studies from Harvard University School of Divinity in 1996 and is currently working toward a Ph.D. in Religion and Education at Boston College.

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Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting cultural observations on spirituality of Gen X

By A Customer

I felt that the author was able to incorporate good observations on the cultural nature of Gen X. The pop nature of the book and the inclusion of various types of fashion and electronic media were of importance to his subject. As a person from this generation, I was able to resonate with many of the assumptions about culture and their inclusion in the shaping of spirituality. The irreverant and ironic criticism of institutional religion found articulation in Virtual Faith as well, as it was developed from the perspective of Gen X Christianity.

I was disappointed though, by the poor use of the four music videos. I felt that too much was read into their imagery by the author. My own thoughts are that much of the second part of the book became mired in an overdeveloped desire to place spiritual meaning upon these cultural icons. I don't think that much meaning was there, which undermined the character of the book.

I did appreciate though, the book's attempt to bring together cultural and spiritual aspects in Christianity, and

express the irreverent reverence of Gen X.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

good premise, I have only two critiques

By apptarheel@yahoo.com

I read this book for a Youth and Culture class in seminary and it was by far my favorite book of the semester. Beaudoin does a good job in describing a generalized picture of Generation X's conception of Christianity, but there are two places where I feel he misses the mark somewhat.

I feel that Beaudoin could have made better choices in his selection of videos, and this is not about personal preference or taste. Soundgarden's "Outshined" or "Rusty Cage" were both more attuned, in my estimation, to the emotions, struggles, and general attitude of Generation X than "Black Hole Sun", generally speaking. Beaudoin could have also explored why a band like Pearl Jam, which is overwhelmingly non-imagistic, could still continue to have an impact despite Pearl Jam's lack of visual exposure beyond 1992. Another example: replace "Like a Prayer" with Tool's "Sober" or with Nine Inch Nails "Head Like a Hole", and you've got something. And one last musical point: where is hip-hop? Surely the amazing success of rap music in the ninties, especially gangsta rap, says something about Generation X theologically.

My second critique concerns Beaudoin's theological engagement. I simply feel that he could have gone a little deeper. I was also looking for some wrestling with the greats. I took Systematic Theology the semester before I read this book and was looking for Beaudoin to utilize Barth, Tillich, Bultmann, etc. An examination of Tillich's views of Christianity and culture would have been especially rewarding in the context of the book. It simply seemed to me that Beaudoin could have gone a tad deeper theologically.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

An honest, insightful examination of a complex generation.

By A Customer

Using his own life and experience, Tom Beaudoin has opened the door to understanding and reaching out to a segment of our population that has been for so long misunderstood and/or overlooked in regard to matters of spirituality and faith. Although I did not agree with all of his interpretations, I thought his portrayal of suffering was very honest and on target for many in his generation. His poignant examination of Generation X with suggestions for ministry is an invaluable resource for anyone in ministry to this population, as well as for those beginning to look at the issues facing the next generation now coming of age.

One difficulty I had with Beaudoin's work, however, was its limitation as far as ethnicity and culture. Although Beaudoin referred to his peers as Generation X, he is really only examining a segment of that population. Much of his material is specific to a Caucasian middle class culture and is not applicable to others. He relies heavily on music video and as we all know, tastes and trends particularly in music vary widely between ethnicities and/or cultures. I would like to have seen him team up with other writers or sources who could have added some of the missing pieces so that the material would be more reflective of Generation X and not just a segment of it. I was struck by Beaudoin's assertion that Gen X believes in inclusivity; indeed I have in my own experience seen this to be true. However, in reading Beaudoin's book it felt as if the African American youth to whom I have ministered were invisible or non-existant. Inclusivity begins by being inclusive, and in order to avoid making the mistakes of the past generations one must determine not use the same methods. I would encourage Beaudoin and others to use that same nature of challenging traditionalism in this area as well, rather than to once again picture the same limited view of American culture that has for so long promoted suffering similar to that which he writes about in his book.

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