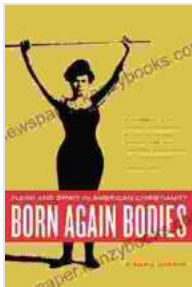


Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity: California Studies in Food and Culture

Food is a fundamental part of human life. It nourishes our bodies, sustains our communities, and shapes our cultures. In the United States, food has played a particularly important role in the development of American Christianity. From the earliest Puritan settlers to the present day, food has been used to shape religious identities, negotiate social boundaries, and promote political agendas.



Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity (California Studies in Food and Culture

Book 12) by R. Marie Griffith

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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In *Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity: California Studies in Food and Culture*, authors Sarah Barringer Gordon and Peter J. Williams explore the complex relationship between food, religion, and culture in the United States. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including cookbooks, sermons, and personal narratives, the book shows how food has been used to create and maintain religious communities, to define and defend religious identities, and to promote social and political change.

Food and Religious Identity

One of the most important ways that food has been used in American Christianity is to shape religious identities. In the early days of the United States, food was often used to distinguish between different religious groups. For example, Puritans believed that eating simple, plain food was a sign of their religious devotion. In contrast, Anglicans and Catholics tended to eat more elaborate and luxurious foods. These different foodways helped to create and maintain distinct religious identities for these groups.

In the 19th century, food continued to play an important role in the formation of religious identities. For example, the temperance movement, which sought to ban the sale and consumption of alcohol, was closely tied to evangelical Protestantism. Temperance advocates believed that drinking alcohol was a sin, and they used food to promote their cause. They organized temperance picnics and rallies, and they published cookbooks that contained recipes for non-alcoholic drinks and foods.

In the 20th century, food continued to be used to shape religious identities. For example, the rise of the Pentecostal movement was accompanied by a new emphasis on healthy eating. Pentecostal preachers taught that eating healthy foods was a way to please God and to live a holy life. This emphasis on healthy eating helped to create a distinct religious identity for Pentecostals.

Food and Social Boundaries

Food has also been used to negotiate social boundaries in American Christianity. In the early days of the United States, food was often used to distinguish between different social classes. For example, wealthy landowners often ate more elaborate and expensive foods than poor

farmers. This difference in foodways helped to create and maintain social hierarchies.

In the 19th century, food continued to play an important role in the negotiation of social boundaries. For example, the rise of the middle class was accompanied by a new emphasis on domesticity and family meals. Middle-class families began to eat more elaborate and expensive meals at home, and they used food to entertain guests and to display their social status.

In the 20th century, food continued to be used to negotiate social boundaries. For example, the rise of the civil rights movement was accompanied by a new emphasis on soul food. Soul food was a type of cuisine that was developed by African Americans in the South. It was often made with simple, inexpensive ingredients, and it was often served at family gatherings and church suppers. Soul food helped to create a sense of community and solidarity among African Americans, and it also helped to challenge the social boundaries that had been created by white society.

Food and Politics

Food has also been used to promote political agendas in American Christianity. In the early days of the United States, food was often used to support the cause of abolitionism. Abolitionists argued that slavery was a sin, and they used food to raise awareness of the plight of slaves. They organized anti-slavery fairs and picnics, and they published cookbooks that contained recipes for dishes that were made without slave-produced ingredients.

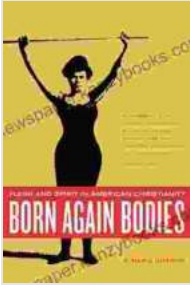
In the 19th century, food continued to be used to promote political agendas. For example, the women's suffrage movement was closely tied to the temperance movement. Suffragists argued that women should have the right to vote because they were the ones who were responsible for feeding and caring for their families. They organized temperance rallies and picnics, and they published cookbooks that contained recipes for non-alcoholic drinks and foods.

In the 20th century, food continued to be used to promote political agendas. For example, the civil rights movement was closely tied to the fight for food justice. Civil rights activists argued that African Americans should have equal access to food, and they organized food drives and food pantries to help feed the hungry.

Food has played a complex and multifaceted role in the development of American Christianity. It has been used to shape religious identities, negotiate social boundaries, and promote political agendas. The study of food and religion can help us to better understand the history of Christianity in the United States, and it can also help us to better understand the role that food plays in our own lives.

Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity: California Studies in Food and Culture is a valuable resource for anyone who is interested in the history of food and religion in the United States. The book is well-researched and clearly written, and it provides a comprehensive overview of this important topic.

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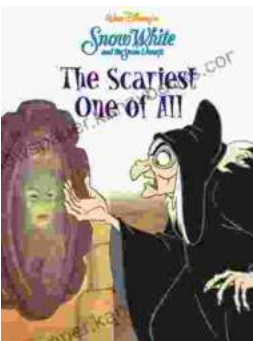
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