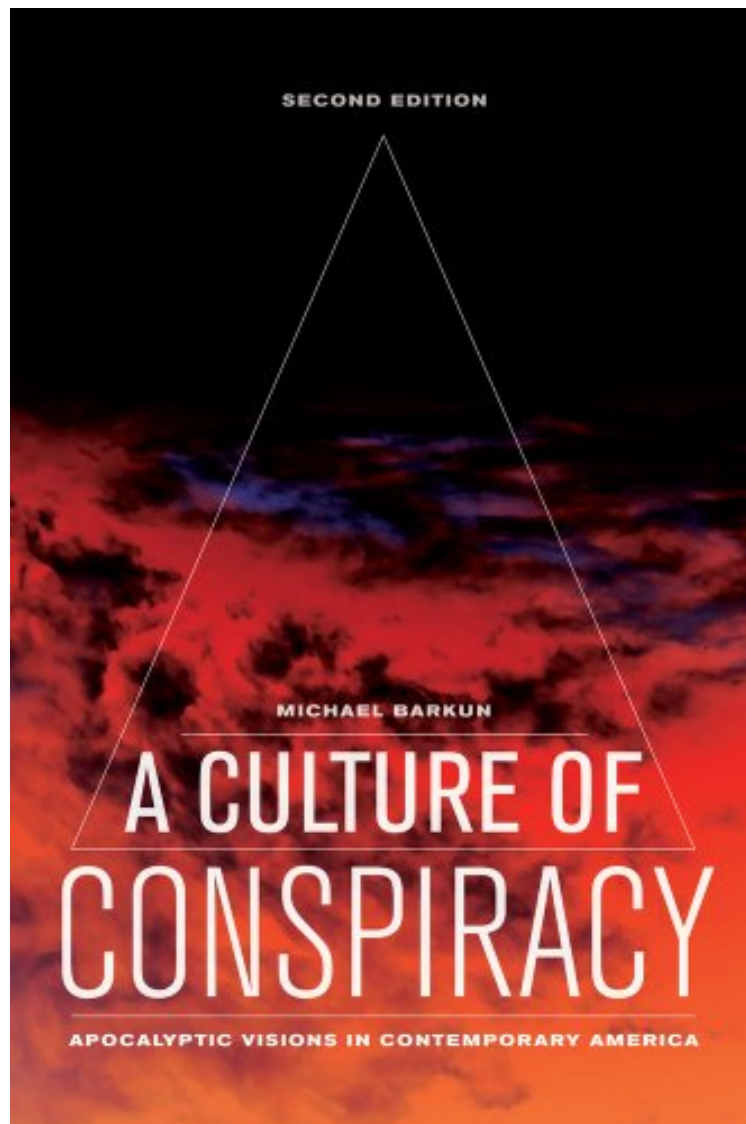


[Library ebook] A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society)

## **A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society)**

*Michl Barkun*

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**Michl Barkun : A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America (Comparative Studies in Religion and Society):

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Absolutely called-for! By Sylvan A. Scholarly yet easily readable work and, definitely called for. It was high time someone simply presented products of the religulous-convoluted mind in a comprehensive form. Although limited to America, it is clearly an international, indeed global phenomenon, and it goes back some 2000 years, to Hellenism and Gnosticism. What prevents me from giving it a full five star rating is that I miss a history-of-ideas element as a backdrop. For instance: Barkun outlines the story in a movie, starring Mel Gibson, who at the end is on the point of meeting a swarm of black helicopters. It wouldn't have hurt to point out that this is an ingenious take on the ancient Greek story of Orestes who, having killed his mother, sees big black birds settling in the garden trees all around him. Others cannot see them but he can, and it chases him around the world. Both Sartre and Hitchcock made use of that; it is fair to say that it belongs to the collective unconscious--close to an archetype. A string of such comments would have expanded the scope of the book in a fascinating way, also putting the contemporary phenomenon in a historical perspective. Maybe, bringing in a co-writer would have been a good idea.

24 of 34 people found the following review helpful. Lots of conspiracies.... By E. N. Anderson I'm sure that the various conspiracy theorists will all jump on this book and pan it, so let me counter them in advance by posting a good review. I read and loved the first edition. This new edition has various new subjects of conspiracy theorizing, such as President Obama, the alleged Maya prophecies for 2012, and the increasing number of conspiracy theories about 9-11. Suffice it to say that this book is your guide to the idea that giant reptiles under the earth secretly control the world through the Trilateral Commission, the Masons, and the Illuminati. The book is scholarly and well researched, which means it is not as exciting as the literature it analyzes (but, judging from the quotes, Barkun's book is in much better English--conspiracy theorists do not seem very literate). We are living in a surrealistic age when everything is a "matter of opinion." The conspiracy theorists are no more far-out than the postmodernists who held in the 1990s that science was merely a set of white male hegemonic claims. That fad seems to have died, but it produced a widespread discrediting of science, seen e.g. in the truly horrible and terrifying anti-"shots" movement, as well as in denial of global warming, and in resurgent racism. I recently wrote a distinguished academic about some racist claims made by someone under his direction (at the time). The claims were factually wrong, disproved years ago, but the answer I got was that this was a matter of "opinion" and not to be censored. Similarly, in spite of the fact that global warming has been settled science for years, USA TODAY recently "balanced" an article about it with a denialist counter-article. People seem to have genuinely forgotten that there is a difference between an actual personal judgment and a proven fact. Maybe this anti-fact agenda is yet another sneaky trick of those reptiles from outer space....

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Not the easiest read, but very educational. By Lavoie76 I have seen Michael Barkun's A Culture of Conspiracy mentioned in other books about conspiracies, most notably Voodoo Histories. I found the book to be very informative, but also tough to read. I think that Barkun did a fine job of outlining the differences in conspiracy theories, but overall, I think that his use of jargon made the book a little difficult to understand. When he described specific conspiracies, I found myself flying through the pages, but when he dug into the conspiracy theorists, I slowed down. I would recommend this book for the serious researcher on conspiracies, but if you are looking for a fluff piece endorsing some strange theory or exposing some deep-seated corruption, I'd look elsewhere. Barkun thoroughly debunks the entire notion of conspiracies and gives the skeptic some additional ammunition in the process.

American society has changed dramatically since A Culture of Conspiracy was first published in 2001. In this revised and expanded edition, Michael Barkun delves deeper into America's conspiracy sub-culture, exploring the rise of 9/11 conspiracy theories, the "birther" controversy surrounding Barack Obama's American citizenship, and how the conspiracy landscape has changed with the rise of the Internet and other new media. What do UFO believers, Christian millennialists, and right-wing conspiracy theorists have in common? According to Michael Barkun in this fascinating yet disturbing book, quite a lot. It is well known that some Americans are obsessed with conspiracies. The Kennedy assassination, the Oklahoma City bombing, and the 2001 terrorist attacks have all generated elaborate stories of hidden plots. What is far less known is the extent to which conspiracist worldviews have recently become linked in strange and unpredictable ways with other "fringe" notions such as a belief in UFOs, Nostradamus, and the Illuminati. Unraveling the extraordinary genealogies and permutations of these increasingly widespread ideas, Barkun shows how this web of urban legends has spread among subcultures on the Internet and through mass media, how a new style of conspiracy thinking has recently arisen, and how this phenomenon relates to larger changes in American culture. This book, written by a leading expert on the subject, is the most comprehensive and authoritative examination of contemporary American conspiracism to date. Barkun discusses a range of material-involving inner-earth caves, government black helicopters, alien abductions, secret New World Order cabals, and much more--that few realize exists in our culture. Looking closely at the manifestations of these ideas in a wide range of literature and source material from religious and political literature, to New Age and UFO publications, to popular culture phenomena such as The X-Files, and to websites, radio programs, and more, Barkun finds that America is in the throes of an unrivaled period of millenarian activity. His book underscores the importance of understanding why this phenomenon is now spreading into more mainstream segments of American culture.

From the Inside Flap Praise for the First Edition: "Tracing the beliefs in various conspiracies and mega-conspiracies in literature, apocalyptic and political writing, and popular culture, Barkun creates an exceptional and invaluable genealogy of the extraordinary permutations that these ideas have undergone since WWII and, of course, as a result of the Internet. Barkun dives into the religious and political matrix of what some call the "lunatic fringe," forcing us to look at the revival and spread of conspiracist thinking on an even grander scale into broad reaches of American culture. For those who think conspiracy thinking is a fading phenomenon, or a cultural phenomenon of little significance or creativity, think again. Welcome to the third millennium." Richard Landes, Director, Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University; editor of *The Encyclopedia of Millennial Movements* and author of *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History* "Millennial dreams, apocalyptic nightmares populated by agents of the Antichrist, space aliens, and acolytes of the New World Order- With a calm approach and scrupulous academic bearings, Barkun navigates through the reefs of conspiracist allegation from the cosmic to the comic, from Biblical prophecy to Internet alerts." Chip Berlet, co-author of *Right-Wing Populism in America* "This is a gripping, and at times scary, book. Michael Barkun, one of our most respected political scientists, has produced a meticulously researched and highly perceptive account of those who find credible an incredible assortment of nefarious conspiracies emanating not only from the Jews, Masons, Catholics and politicians in our midst, but also from 'out there. This book should be read by everyone who believes that there are some ways of checking the differences between truths and fantasies - and by everyone who doesn't." Eileen Barker, Professor of Sociology, the London School of Economics