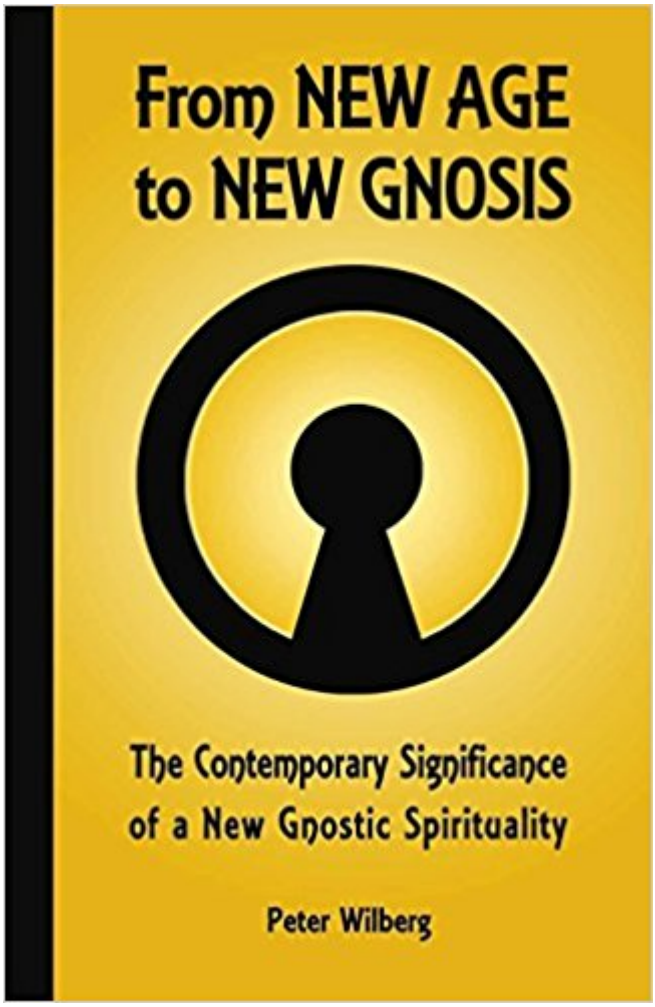
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From New Age To New Gnosis: The Contemporary Significance Of A New Gnostic Spirituality



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Synopsis

Peter Wilberg presents a political history of the subversive ’gnostic’ theologies of the first century, and with it, a theo-political critique of the ruling god-concepts of the 21st century. ’From New Age to New Gnosis’ is spiritual Marxism and a powerful spearhead aimed at the ’New World Order’ of economic ’liberalism’, neo-conservatism and military imperialism. It challenges all four faces of its famous dollar pyramid - the ’i-dollartry’ of new technologies, the reduction of the human being to a genetic machine, the politically illiterate platitudes of New Age ’spirituality’ - and the spiritual illiterate ’literalism’ of Christian biblical fundamentalism and racist Zionazism - which now see their own zealotry mirrored and confronted by militant Islam. What Peter Wilberg’s recognises is that what our divided world now calls for is not a revival of fundamentalisms of any sort but a New Gnostic spirituality that understands the "wordless knowledge within the word" (Seth).

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Customer Reviews

Wilberg takes on such modern Gnostic icons as Jung with the same brilliant, unrelenting reasoning that characterizes the author’s criticism. -- Gnostics.com - Theo Eridanos, June 2004

Lifting the Veil In the centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ, a multi-cultural mix of races co-existed under the political sway of the Roman empire and its vassals, along with a medley of spiritual mythologies and theologies - a medley mirrored in today’s New Age pick-and-mix assortment of ancient spiritual traditions and new fangled therapies. Then,

as now, the main concern of the ruling powers of the day was only to ensure that no coherent spiritual movement emerged which in any way challenged their political authority or the military hegemony. But the spiritual key word of the day was not ‘therapy’ or ‘healing’ however, but ‘redemption’. This word did not mean salvation from sin but freedom from slavery to the ruling military-political powers and their religious servants. Thus it was that in closest secrecy small circles of initiates formed covert spiritual ‘cells’ whose purpose was to quietly educate others in a new and coherent religious philosophy. This philosophy, unlike the ‘New Age’ style medley of gods and religions that preceded it, was indeed spiritually and politically subversive. Its sheer spiritual power was a covert challenge to the ruling military-political powers. For it was capable of restoring a sense of authentic spiritual communion between individuals that transcended the ethnic, class and cultural divisions on which those powers rested. One outcome of the work of these initiates was the birth of a ‘Christianity’ which very soon deformed itself into a personality cult of saviour worship and redemption from ‘original sin’. Another, less visible outcome was the continued survival of a powerful underground spiritual tradition - the ‘gnostic’ tradition. This tradition had begun with the secret cells of initiates - spiritual teachers who taught that the key to ‘salvation’ lay neither in political rebellion nor in redemption from ‘sin’, but rather in overcoming spiritual blindness and ignorance. In place of this ignorance they offered knowledge or gnosis - not in the form of dogmas but in the form of direct spiritual experiences undergone by individuals through initiation. For those in the business of creating a new structure of spiritual-political and cultural-communal authority - the Church - gnostic Christianity became subversive heresy. The ‘official’ canon of Christian gospels were carefully selected to remove as many traces as possible of the gnostic message or ‘gospel’ that Christ had been chosen to publicly enunciate and embody. Direct knowledge of spiritual reality through individual experience was regarded as inherently suspect and replaced by official rites or ‘sacraments’ which merely symbolised initiatory experiences. In today’s world however, ‘knowledge’ is something identified solely with academic studies and science, whereas religion is seen as a matter of ‘belief’ or ‘faith’, ‘culture’ or ‘community’. All claims to knowledge that fall outside its officially sanctioned sources - science and academia - are deemed to be ‘unscientific’ rather than ‘heretical’. Nevertheless, the very idea that there is such a thing as subjective knowledge is of course sheer scientific heresy in modern scientific terms. The fact that we no longer see any scientific truth in direct subjective experience - not least spiritual experience -

is testament to the spiritual ignorance or a-gnosticism fostered by centuries of institutionalised Christianity. The official churches fulfilled the function of nurturing and sustaining a communal spirituality based on personal faith and sacramental rites. The underground ‘anti-church’ of traditional gnosticism focused on the enlightenment of the individual through initiation in secret societies. But as Martin Buber emphasised: "The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation." Martin Buber Here Martin Buber writes as a prophet of a New Gnosis, being the first spiritual thinker to identify spirituality as such with a Third Realm transcending both the individual and the community, the realm of human relationships or ‘inter-being’ that he called The Between. The primary focus of this New Gnosis is neither the fostering of a communicable faith nor the spiritual enlightenment of the individual. Instead its whole purpose lies in the redemption and spiritual deepening of relationships between individuals.

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