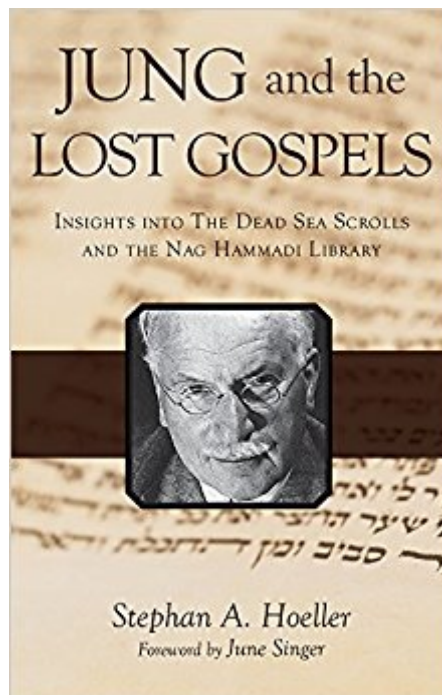


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Jung And The Lost Gospels: Insights Into The Dead Sea Scrolls And The Nag Hammadi Library



Synopsis

The "Lost Gospels" refer to the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library, both discovered in the 1940s. The Nag Hammadi Library consists of writings found by two peasants who unearthed clay jars in 1945 in upper Egypt. These did not appear in English for 32 years, because the right to publish was contended by scholars, politicians, and antique dealers. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in clay jars in Palestine by a goatherder in 1947, weathered similar storms. The first team of analysts were mostly Christian clergy, who weren't anxious to share material that frightened church leaders. As Dr. Hoeller shows, they rightly feared the documents would reveal information that might detract from unique claims of Christianity. Indeed, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Library both contradict and complement accepted tenets of the Old and New Testaments. As to the connection with Jung, Dr. Hoeller states, "Jung knew that the one and only tradition associated with Christianity that regarded the human psyche as the container of the divine-human encounter was that of the Gnostics of the the first three centuries of our era. For this reason he called for a renewed appreciation of this ancient tradition, and particularly for a return to the Gnostic sense of God as an inner directing and transforming presence." Dr. Hoeller goes on in his preface, "His sympathetic insight into the myths, symbols, and metaphors of the Gnostics, whom by his own admission he regarded as long-lost friends, continues as the brightest beacon of our day..."

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Customer Reviews

Gospels discovered in the the 1940s reveal a pre-Christian Judaism of Gnostic character. The Dead Sea Scrolls essentially are mystical documents. It appears the Scrolls' Essene authors of 130 B.C-70 A.D., like the Nag Hammadi Gnostic authors of the Apostolic Age, experienced visions of an esoteric nature, and that the Scrolls possess an inner, hidden meaning.

Excellent!

This is a remarkable book that combines gnostic scholarship with spiritual insight and deep understanding of Jungs ideas. The book starts with a disquisition on the esoteric origins of Christianity and the role of a Jewish sect (the Essenes) living around Qumran. Essenes (some scholars believe they may represent the Sadducees) were repelled by phariseic/Rabbinic Judaism and practiced a mystical religion that might have inspired the first Christians (John the Baptist, was possibly associated with a similar group). I found the chapters that feature Hoeller's interpretations of apocryphal gospels to be, while an easy read, remarkably profound and providing much food for thought. Together with Elaine Pagels' books, Hoeller's work sheds light onto Christian ontology that shows the rich palette of religious beliefs practiced 1-3rd century AD. Most of these beliefs were ruthlessly suppressed following the Council of Nicea when Christian 'dogma' assumed the lowest common denominator that allowed for easier state control. Suddenly, people like Augustine (himself a former Manichean) and Irenaeus were in charge. Books by 'heretic' and pagan mystics were burned and teachers of experiential, mystical Christianity (Gnosis) persecuted and often killed through commands by orthodox bishops. From championing freedom, Christianity became obsessed with control of people's bodies and minds. Gospels discovered at Nag Hammadi provide us with a priceless view of another (in a sense less adulterated, more vibrant and real) Christianity. Quite possibly, they allow us a closer look to what the historical Christ really taught. This includes a different understanding of Judas' betrayal and quite possibly, a different view of God. To many gnostics, YHWH represented a 'demiurge' - an angry, jealous, impetuous, aggressive deity that demands to be worshipped. Examined from an analytic POV, the demiurge clearly shows major signs of unconsciousness. A principal deficit is the absence of feminine energy (Sophia) which has retreated and/or been disavowed, something that was manifested by Israelite genocide(s) against peaceful Isis/Astarte worshiping cultures, but also in the aggressive religiosity of the contemporary Bible belt. According to Nag Hammadi gospels, Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' most elevated disciples and he considered the union of male and female energies a prerequisite for 'entering Father's kingdom'. To me, the gospels sometimes sound more Buddhist than Nicean. Nor is there

obsession with worldly success that we see in latter day televangelists and Saints; after all, Jesus expelled merchants and money changers from the temple. Reading gnostic gospels, then, brings us closer to the real teachings of the real Jesus of Nazareth and out of demiurge's clutch. Hoeller's Jungian interpretations of gnostic material are good while his depictions of gnostic myths are masterful and inspired me deeply. Since this book was first published more material has been discovered and translated but the basic picture, as far as I can tell, remains the same. You can't go wrong with this accessible yet profound introduction into gnostic Christianity.

Among the many scores of books on Gnosticism now available, there are two which I consider essential reading: "The Gnostic Gospels" by Elaine Pagels and this book, "Jung and the Lost Gospels", by Stephan Hoeller. Pagels elucidates the nature and historical roots of Gnosticism while introducing the Gnostic texts found at Nag Hammadi. Hoeller carries the discussion forward to our own time and brings the immediacy of a modern psychological understanding to the ageless message of Gnosis. Readers who delve directly into a reading of the Nag Hammadi Library often find themselves bewildered -- or simply overwhelmed -- by the complexity of the Gnostic worldview. Hoeller offers aid by clearly and systematically examining the central themes and myths of Gnosticism. His discussion of the Essene communities (whose writings we find in the Dead Sea Scrolls) helps further develop a basic understanding of the creative and heterogeneous visionary environment in which Christianity was born. The name "Jung" (as in C. G. Jung, the Swiss psychologist) may attract some readers, while undoubtedly frightening many others. Hoeller is not overbearing in his use of Jung. This is a book about the birth and continuing life of Gnosticism. Those seeking a living understanding of "Gnosis" will find here wonderful new insights into both Gnosticism, Jung, and themselves. Addendum: After seventeen years in print, this book remains a classic study. I still highly recommend it.

No so much on Jung, but excellent on Gnosticism. One of the best books on Gnosticism I've read and I've read many. His translation of the Hymn of the Pearl is the best I've seen. I highly recommend it.

A well-written introduction to Gnosticism, this work is unique in its comparison of the Nag Hammadi Library to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Hoeller examines the mysticism and mythology of the Essenes and the Gnostics within the framework of Carl Jung's depth psychology. The almost simultaneous discoveries at Qumran and Nag Hammadi revealed an ancient psycho-spirituality that had been

virtually forgotten for almost 18 centuries. In both cases the retrieval/collection, translation and publication took years to complete and some documents are undoubtedly lost forever. The author emphasizes Jung's awareness that Gnosticism was the only tradition which considered the psyche or soul as the meeting point of the divine and the human. The open practice of Gnosticism endured to the third century of our era (except for the Mandaeans of Mesopotamia that survived to the present day). Jung called for a revival of this ancient heritage and for a return to the understanding of God as an "immanent and transformative presence. His view of the symbols, myths and metaphors of the Gnostics inspired his life's work. Many decades after having written them, he commented as follows on the "Seven Sermons to the Dead: "All my work, all my creative activity, has come from those initial fantasies ... everything that I accomplished in later life was already contained in them ..."

The first part deals with the discovery and significance of these mystical texts, both representing an inner tradition that was later branded 'heretical' by ecclesiastical Christianity when it became dominant towards the end of the second century and especially under and after Constantine. The author compares the Gnostic Christ and the Essene Messiah, looks at various feminine concepts of wisdom and identifies the similarities between the two sets of texts. There were colonies of Essenes in Hellenistic Egypt which was a crossroads of many religious influences. People like Menander, Saturninus, Basilides, Lucius Charinus and Marcion are discussed here.

Part Two, The Other Reality, is devoted to myth. Amongst those investigated are the myths of Sophia/Wisdom and its relation to the Dancing Savior or Gnostic Christ who descended from the heavenly pleroma and fused its nature with that of Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan River. Others examined are those of the evil angels or 'Watchers' who descended on Mount Hermon and interbred with human beings, and that of the Song of the Pearl. It includes a look at modern myths in a chapter that opens with Jung's controversial view of The Book of Job and then explores examples of gnostic symbols and motifs in the dreams and imaginations of individuals from our era.

Part Three investigates certain of the Nag Hammadi texts in detail. Some of these contain information on altered states of consciousness and how to attain gnosis through various spiritual practices. They include Allogenes, The Treatise on the 8th and 9th, and Zostrianos, but the Gospel of Philip is the most explicit and comprehensive of these. Hoeller argues that it may be seen as a gnostic sacramental theology. Under the themes of redemption and ecstasy, he discusses the Gospel of Truth and the Gospel of the Egyptians. The Gospel of Truth -- possibly a Valentinian text -- is a poetic work of Christian mysticism like The Cloud of Unknowing. It speaks of the Father, the Truth and the Word. The second deals with the Pleromic Region (Ayn Soph), the figure of Seth and the transmission of light from that incorruptible realm to the earthly plane. It further contains the

Sacrament of Seth wherein its ecstatic nature is exposed in evidence of glossolalia represented by sequences of vowel sounds. The epilogue is titled From Hiroshima to the Secret Gospels: The Alternative Future of Human History. This is an assessment of our age, a warning of where humanity is heading, a call for introspection and a plea for renewed efforts at healing the human race. Serious contemplation of the wisdom contained in the Scrolls and the NH library may contribute to this healing process. Recognizing both the evil and the "Divine Presence" within ourselves is necessary for individuation, both individual and collective. This thought-provoking book concludes with bibliographical notes and an index. The Gnostic Gospels by Elaine Pagels would be ideal reading for those who enjoyed this book whilst Jung's Memories, Dreams and Reflections, an accessible autobiography of the great psychologist's inner life, has much to impart about the Nag Hammadi texts. Other works of related interest include Hoeller's "Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing, The Varieties of Religious Experience by William James and "A Psychology Of Hope" by Kaplan and Schwarz.

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