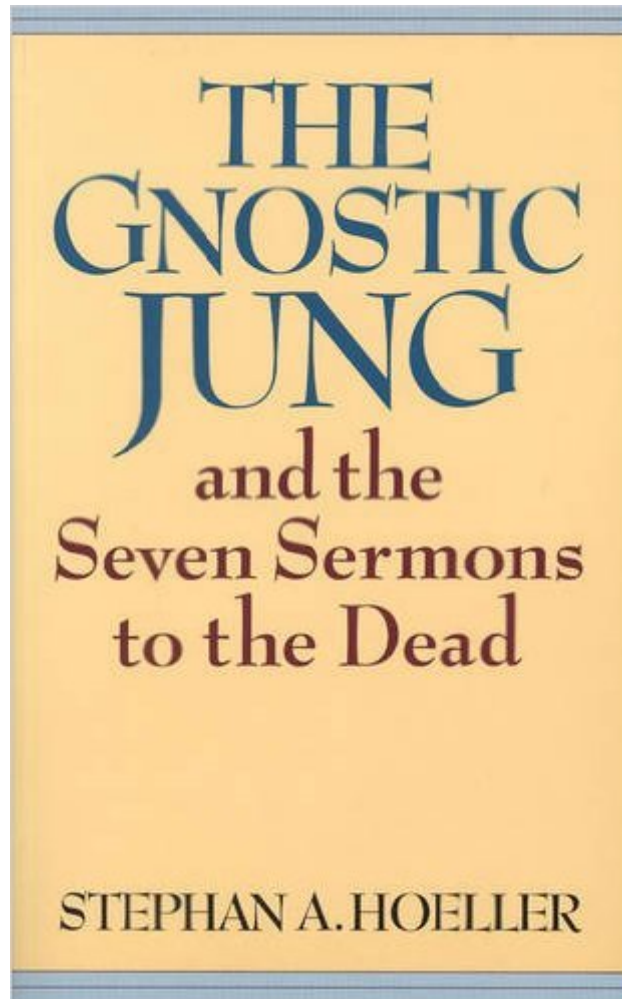


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The Gnostic Jung And The Seven Sermons To The Dead (Quest Books)



Synopsis

Jungian psychology based on a little known treatise he authored in his earlier years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The dead came back from Jerusalem, where they did not find what they were seeking." So begins the short esoteric treatise "The Seven Sermons to the Dead" by the late C.G. Jung, reproduced here with an introduction and extensive commentary and analysis by the learned and insightful Dr. Stephan A. Hoeller. Who are the dead? They are really the living dead, the spiritually dead -- those who are ignorant of "the knowledge of the heart", or Gnosis. Why do they return from Jerusalem? Because it is the symbolic home of the dogmatism and "dead creeds" which have blinded men to their own true nature. This book is part gnostic treatise and part academic exegesis of Jung's "Seven Sermons". It serves as an extremely enlightening introduction to both Gnosticism and Jungian psychology. Hoeller clears up many misunderstandings about the ancient Gnostics, who have been vilified by mainstream Christians as "heretics" since ancient times. He also restores dignity to the notion that we (post)moderns can draw on a store of "ancient wisdom". New Age gurus who can't hold a candle to Hoeller bandy this phrase about ad nauseum. Hoeller's knowledge of history and primary texts and his own insight and wisdom shine through to create a unique and vital synthesis that puts the New Age crowd to shame. Hoeller's writing is intellectually sound and spiritually compelling. There is no dry analysis or tedious language here. Indeed, Hoeller clearly loves the English language and uses it more creatively and adeptly than many native speakers (English is not

his first language). His style tends toward the esoteric, but such is the clarity of his thought that the sometimes archaic vocabulary doesn't distract one's attention for an instant.

Many decades later Jung commented thus upon these sermons: "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 seven sermons deal with the self as the androgynous being Abraxas, with the message that self-knowledge may be attained by the conscious assimilation of the contents of the subconscious, in order to achieve unity. The "dead" are those who stopped growing spiritually by not questioning their egos. By not growing, they are in essence the living dead. Jung considered his own work a link in the golden chain from ancient gnosticism via philosophical alchemy to the modern psychology of the subconscious. Just as in those ancient texts, his work reveals a fragmented self in which the image of the divine may be found. The author made his own translation of the sermons and provided a comprehensive preface, exegesis of the sermons and afterword in which he comments grippingly on Jung, gnosticism and the current era. His views on the survival of the pansophic/theosophic tradition (through the arts) are particularly enlightening. Jung's central doctrine of individuation is an ancient concept of the western esoteric tradition - the tendency of the individual consciousness not to surrender its light into nothingness. Unlike many eastern spiritual systems, the Western tradition never knew the permanent dissolution of the individual consciousness in the divine. Already in the first sermon this question is discussed, i.e. how to remain an individual while simultaneously achieving an optimal degree of unity with the ineffable greatness of the pleroma within us.

Firstly, I am neither scholar nor religious zealot, and that this book, while it touched me very deeply, is only the first that I have read concerning gnosticism or the spiritual inquiries which drove much of Jung's psychological work. That said, this review is intended more for those who have little or no knowledge of the gnostic gospels who are curious if this book is a good point to embark upon a path of gnostic study. Before his exposition of Jung's Seven Sermons, Hoeller attempts to give the reader an understanding of Jung's life and work, a description of gnosticism, and how Jung's individuation through depth psychology work and the gnostic pursuit of wholeness through spiritual experience are inevitably related. The Sermons themselves, translated by Hoeller, are, to say the least, amazing. "Seven Sermons to the Dead" makes for an intimidating title, and while it is not literal, it is perhaps just as frightening in its true meaning. The dead, as Jung refers to them, are those who have ceased to grow into their higher self. They have ceased to question their existence

as desirous egos, and so no longer do they continue to grow into their innately known, true self. Proceeding no further in their path to enlightenment, they are, essentially, the living dead. The sermons are a short discourse on the truths missed if one carries on blindly through their short stint at life. Hoeller then goes on giving his interpretation of the sermons, which are thoughtful and well written. Throughout the entire book, Hoeller managed to set the tone for the proper absorption of the material.

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