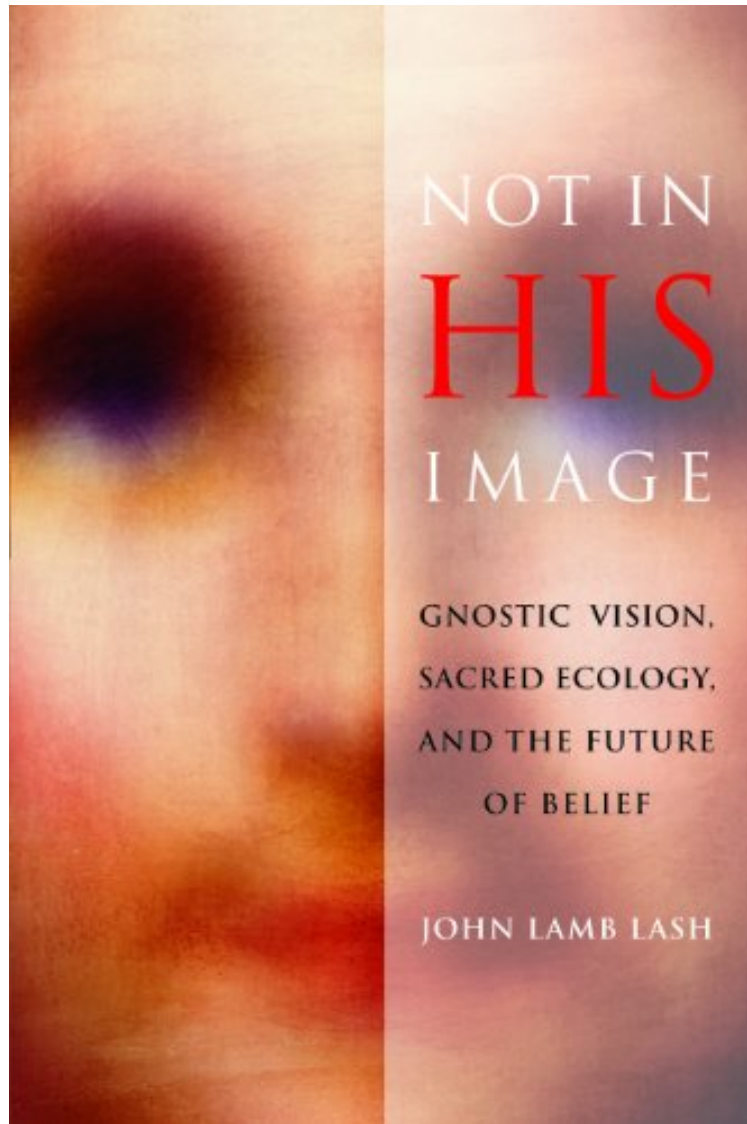


[Free pdf] Not in His Image: Gnostic Vision, Sacred Ecology, and the Future of Belief

Not in His Image: Gnostic Vision, Sacred Ecology, and the Future of Belief

John Lamb Lash

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John Lamb Lash : Not in His Image: Gnostic Vision, Sacred Ecology, and the Future of Belief before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Not in His Image: Gnostic Vision, Sacred Ecology, and the Future of Belief:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A life-changing book! By CustomerA very challenging book to read. However, if one has the mind to put aside preconceptions and read this through, they may find, as I did, a better

understanding for why the world is today is in such bad shape. The problems we all face are too deeply rooted in culture and memes we grew up with, so that any attempt to find solutions to the economic and cultural issues today will become impossible without addressing these religious issues first. An excellent read by a sincerely devoted disciple of Hypatia. A life changing book, but only for those willing to read it cover to cover, and more than once. David A. Smith 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Shocking and brilliant By Sage Fasten your seatbelts. "Not in His Image by John Lamb Lash" will turn you on your head and shake you hard. This is a paradigm-shifting book about the true nature of gnosticism. For years I had wondered about gnosticism, and nothing I read quite satisfied that wondering. This does. Mr. Lash's book turned me inside out. He reverently offers up the secrets of an ancient, earth-friendly, pre-Christian belief system in Europe. There was powerful information that was new to me. It was material which I felt intuitively and deeply to be true about our ancient history and how the world came into being. This may be one of those books that simply change the world one reader at a time. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A passionate but ultimately futile manifesto to retrieve a Paradise Lost? By Michael James Rapson Drawing upon the Nag Hammadi texts as his primary source material, comparative mythologist, John Lamb Lash, presents an ambitious work to revive a mythology for our time; a mythology that lauds the earth mother culture of the animist/pagan antiquity. The author argues that this world was disrupted by the intervention of a kind of patriarchal pathology, exemplified by the Bible and other religious texts, and that this intervention has been traumatic for the human psyche and also destructive in how we relate to the earth and our fellow entities. Above all else, the author argues that the doctrine of redemption from a "profane earth", expressed in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic theologies, created an abyss that has separated us from our synergistic relationship with our divine, living planet, while the demented God of the Bible was a minor Canaanite thunder god that an ancient Jewish sect promoted to absentee landlord of the entire universe. Modern "Gaia" theory seems to provide scientific corroboration that the earth is indeed a living, biological organism, although the scientists stop short of attributing self-determination to the planet. I think that the central point Lash is trying to make is that the earth itself is a "Goddess": a stranded aeon, who fell from the pleroma. This idea echoes the work of Caitlin Matthews, who wrote that Sophia, the consort of the Godhead, fell into matter. However, Lash is considerably more erudite than Matthews. I assume that the title of this book signifies that its author, John Lash, is responding to "In His Image" by Brand and Yancey, who argued that the body and spirit of Christ and God is expressed within the human physical and emotional being. It would be an understatement indeed to say that Lash vehemently disputes the divinity of Jesus Christ or of the God and theology he advocated for. That argument is bound to raise more than a few hackles, but the author does mount a convincing argument that the salvationist creed attributed to Jesus is a kind of viral mind trap, because, while it claims to preach love, it has actually delivered misogyny, pedophilia, brutality, war and murder. This was certainly true of the anti-witch pogroms, the Papal crusades, the Spanish Inquisition and the conquest of the new world, all delivered under the banner of the cross with appalling violence. This schizophrenic doctrine has made adherents through the ages conflicted on how they should express their faith. Centuries of indoctrination into the toxic redeemer cult has blinded many Christians to the crimes being committed, where it was doctrinaire to brutalize and kill people in order to "redeem" their souls for Jesus, "Prince of Peace". However, I don't think the author places enough importance on the fact that much of this aggressive "evangelism" was a subterfuge for the "big game" of treasure hunting and empire building, using religious conversion merely as a pretext. This anomaly is illustrated when Lash lauds Marcus Aurelius, an empire builder and defender of his empire against the very indigenous 'Europeans' he celebrates as salt of the earth people. While Marcus may have expressed the pagan sense of life in his poems, he may not be the best exemplar of quintessential paganism. It's a bit like John Wayne eulogizing the American Indian while acting out their demise. John L. Lash states as the aim of 'Not in HIS Image': "To reclaim Gnostic wisdom for today and merge Mystery teachings with deep ecology." (p.16) Does he succeed? The author gives the deflating and anti-climactic answer himself when he concludes: "Looking around the planet, it does seem that the immense majority of people are still firmly entrenched in patriarchal religion. Perhaps the weakest point in the ethical agenda of deep ecology is this: People are not easily convinced that human nature is essentially good and that we need no exhortation or off-planet moral commandments to make us care about each other and the earth" (p.353). I am being slightly over-scrutinising of the book only because it is so ambitious in what it sets out to achieve. However, I wouldn't class this work as an exercise in futility because "Not in HIS image" is an excellent reference for those who seek a dissenting view to the Abrahamic redeemer/salvationist doctrines, and also it will provide affirmation for those who follow deep ecology and earth-based spiritualities. Finally, while the cause to rescue our battered and forsaken planet, and also the spiritual integrity of humanity, seems a forlorn hope, John L. Lash has succeeded in identifying a vital truth; a truth that has been lost on nearly all of humanity and that identifies a tragic irony: (p.15) "...the divine power ... is here, fully earthbound, providing the matrix in which we live, move, and have our being."

Basing much of Not in His Image on the Nag Hammadi and other Gnostic writings, John Lamb Lash explains how a little-known messianic sect propelled itself into a dominant world power, systematically wiping out the great Gnostic spiritual teachers, the Druid priests, and the shamanistic healers of Europe and North Africa. They burned libraries and

destroyed temples in an attempt to silence the ancient truth-tellers and keep their own secrets. But as Lash reveals, when the truth is the planet Earth it cannot be hidden or destroyed. *Not in His Image* delves deeply into the shadows of ancient Gnostic writings to reconstruct the story early Christians tried to scrub from the pages of history, exploring the richness of the ancient European Pagan spirituality--the Pagan Mysteries, the Great Goddess, Gnosis, the myths of Sophia and Gaia--and chronicles the annihilation of this Pagan European culture at the hands of Christianity. Long before the birth of Christianity, monotheism was an anomaly; Europe and the Near East flourished under the divine guidance of Sophia, the ancient goddess of wisdom. The Earth was the embodiment of Sophia and thus sacred to the people who sought fulfillment in her presence. This ancient philosophy was threatening to the emerging salvation-based creed of Christianity that was based on patriarchal dominion over the Earth and lauded personal suffering as a path to the afterlife. As Derrick Jensen points out in the afterword, in Lash's hands Jesus Christ emerges as the agent provocateur of the ruling classes.

Los Angeles Times Sunday Book -Gnosticism is a label applied to a collection of religious ideas that has long exerted a certain appeal to public intellectuals and controversialists, ranging from the theologian Marcion in the 2nd century AD to literary critic Harold Bloom in our time. What attracts them, I suppose, is the conviction that the highest truths are available only to a small circle of initiates -- the Greek term *gnostokoi* can be translated as "those who understand divine matters, knowing what the gods know." The latest to unfurl the banner of Gnosticism is John Lamb Lash, who describes the Gnostics of the ancient world as "the elite of Pagan intellectuals" and declares that their writings are "the explosive charge that can blow the institution of the Faith off its foundations, for good and all." By "the Faith," he means the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition in its entirety, and he intends to do nothing less than convert his readers into latter-day Gnostics. Lash, whose publisher describes him as "an exponent of the practice of mythology," rejects much of the contemporary scholarship on Gnosticism. For example, he dismisses the work of Princeton historian Elaine Pagels, author of *The Gnostic Gospels*, because she places the texts discovered at the Egyptian archeological site of Nag Hammadi within the context of early Christianity. Such an approach, he insists, "has hampered understanding of who the Gnostics were, and why they protest so vehemently against the rise of Christianity." Lash seeks to rescue Gnosticism from the dustbin of Christian history and restore it to its rightful place amid the splendors of pagan antiquity. To signal his admiration for the fecund religious imagination of paganism, he capitalizes the word "Pagan" as if it were a single faith rather than a phantasmagorical assortment of beliefs and practices. But he does point out that Gnosticism itself shouldn't be described as a religion or even a sect, if only because *gnostokos* was "the generic term for any person learned in divine matters." Above all, he insists that Gnosticism represents the path toward "spiritual deep ecology," symbolized by today's adherents of the Greek earth goddess Gaia. *Not in His Image* is perhaps best compared to Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*, an earlier and only slightly less eccentric effort to find and explain the linkages among the fantastic variety of religious experiences in the ancient world. Like Graves, Lash is a self-invented scholar who has read widely and thought deeply. (He is the author of *Quest for the Zodiac*, *The Hero and The Seeker's Handbook*, and the co-founder of *metahistory.org* with a former wife, Joanna Harcourt-Smith, who lived with Timothy Leary in the 1970s. And he is general executor of the estate of Jack Kerouac's daughter, Jan, to whom he also was once married.) He confidently issues pronouncements about what he calls "the wholesale genocide of Pagan culture" and prescriptions for the spiritual salvation of the world. Lash offers this work as a corrective to the "scholarly specialization" that condemns the Gnostics to "an obscure and uncertain place on the margins of the history of religion." Along the way, he seeks to repudiate what he sees as the pigheadedness of the academic establishment. Thus, for example, he condemns biblical scholars who do not see the continuities that Lash detects between the early Christians and the religious community at Qumran. He calls them "Zaddikites," but they are better known to the lay reader as the custodians of the Dead Sea Scrolls: "They fail to realize that the message of love in the charming miracle tales of the New Testament is a sugar coating on the bitter cyanide of Zaddikite ravings." But Lash is not concerned merely with scolding biblical scholars. His goal is to melt down the religious and philosophical ideas of antiquity and recast them as a serviceable faith for our world. In place of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, which he links to "the religious schizophrenia of the ancient Hebrews" and which he flatly condemns as "annihilation theology," he proposes that we embrace Gnosticism and what he dubs "Gaian ethics," which he describes as "not a call to faith in God, but faith in the human species." Lash is capable of explaining the mind-bending concepts of Gnosticism and pagan mystery cults with bracing clarity and startling insight. At moments, however, he slips into a kind of New Age rant as baffling as any mystical text. "What we seek in 'Gaia theory' is a live imaginal dimension," he writes in one such passage, "not a scaffolding of cybernetic general systems cogitation." Or: "Gnosis, taken as a path of experimental mysticism, and the Sophianic vision, taken as a guiding narrative for co-evolution, can provide the spiritual dimension for deep ecology independently of the three mainstream religions derived from the Abrahamic tradition." Even he acknowledges that his book can be "a long haul and a lot to follow" and that his line of reasoning "demands exceptional concentration from the likes of us, many of whom cannot stay in the moment for three minutes at a time." Lash's arguments are often lively and entertaining, even when they aren't convincing. When he contends that Celtic civilization spread to the far corners of the ancient world -- "An apocryphal legend claims that John the Baptist

was a Celt," he writes, "and Mary Magdalene was Circassian, half Celt, half Jewish" -- he is reduced to citing the film "Lawrence of Arabia" to support the proposition that "Celtic half-breeds survived in the Levant down into the early twentieth century." And when he considers what he calls the "sci-fi theology" of the ancient Gnostics, he comes uncomfortably close to affirming that the otherworldly "Archons" of Gnostic myth were authentic extraterrestrials. "It is worth noting that the first great UFO wave of the twentieth century occurred in the summer and fall of 1947 when Jean Doresse was in Cairo examining the Nag Hammadi Codices, at the very moment the first Dead Sea Scrolls were found," Lash writes. "This was also the year that the CIA was founded, with the dual intention (according to UFO conspiracy buffs) to co-opt alien technology and cut a deal with the aliens, allowing them to experiment covertly on human subjects.... In fact, a CIA agent named Miles Copeland was dispatched to Damascus to examine and photograph some of the first scroll fragments to be unearthed." At one telling moment at the outset of his book, Lash describes how his life was transformed when, in early adolescence, he was reading a copy of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in the back seat of the family car on the way back from an orthodontist's appointment in upstate New York. "I swore to finish what Nietzsche had begun," he declares. "I vowed to think through and live out his critique of Christianity to the end." With *Not In His Image* he keeps that vow. But when Lash invites us to embrace the "high strangeness" of what he calls the "ET/Archon" hypothesis "with the Gnostic theory of alien intrusion" -- "the stranger it gets, the more sense it makes," he insists -- he passes wholly through the looking glass. (Jonathan Kirsch) "John Lash's *Not In His Image* presents a fascinating view of meanings in a sacred history long--and wrongly--suppressed. It demands profound correction of what Western civilization has been taught to call religion. It is a book that should be read by everyone." --Barbara G. Walker, author of *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, *Feminist Fairy Tales*, and others. "This remarkable book introduces a Gnostic approach to Sophia-Gaia, the feminine wisdom principle embodied by the earth, vividly soliciting us to embrace Her revival for our survival. When the human race revered the fertility of the earth, the perennial philosophy of human kindness and good sense, as embodied in the common laws of indigenous people the world over, was equally prominent in ancient Europe. Gyncentric societies did not know the taint of sexual apartheid; mystery cults were participatory, experiential and peaceful. The erudition and mindfulness of the Pagan world have been hugely underestimated, since the onslaught of patriarchy, symbolized by the flood, destroyed a much larger civilization than we have been lead to believe. Initiated in antediluvian times with the arrival of misogynic sky gods, it took the three monotheistic religions to achieve the undoing of the sophisticated way of life of our forebears. In Gnostic terms, evil came from outside of the matrix of the earth, from another dimension or parallel universe. Entities of this parallel dimension managed to insinuate themselves into our world. It may come as a shock to many, that the Gnostics held Yahweh to be such an entity, facilitating the promotion of the perpetrator-victim ethos of Salvationism, held to be an abomination and a fateful error. John Lash presents the stark contrast between the tenets of retribution and exploitation - of the feminine , and the ethos of illuminism, with its emphasis on personal experience and communion with nature, within the framework of a vast body of knowledge, reaching from the classic authors of antiquity to present-day proponents of eco-science and eco-spirituality. A fascinating read." --Susanne G. Seiler, Gaia Media News. Basel, Switzerland "Sometimes a book changes the world. *Not In His Image* is such a book. It is clear, stimulating, well-researched, and sure to outrage the experts. Take it from a scientist: the 'experts' are often wrong. In fact, a hallmark of breakthroughs is that they are usually well-researched and outrage 'experts.' Science shows the importance of trusting clear thinking about direct evidence. This book is full of both. Get it. Improve not just your own life, but civilization's chances for survival." --Roger Payne, Ph.D., MacArthur Fellow, president of Ocean Alliance, author of *Among Whales* "John Lamb Lash's *Not in His Image* is a rare achievement, combining impeccable scholarship with remarkable visionary insight. In a breathtaking tour de force, the author provides a profound analysis of the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and their connections to the patriarchal system. He identifies the deep roots of the intrinsic problems of these three religions-- perpetrator-victim emphasis and salvationist ideology--and points out their relationship to the alienation and agony of modern humanity. This book is a must for everybody who is trying to understand the psychospiritual currents underlying the present global crisis." --Stanislav Grof, M.D., author of *Psychology of the Future* and *The Cosmic Game* "Not In His Image is a brilliantly subversive and provocative work of scholarship and passion that overturns everything you ever believed about Christianity. The gnostic mysteries have found a new and eloquent champion in John Lash." --Graham Hancock, author of *Fingerprints of the Gods* "An extraordinary and profound book. *Not In His Image* a blessing, and a warning that we must cease taking the terrible advice of Christianity and that we must instead re-inhabit our own joyful, painful, mortal, beautiful bodies and fight for our lives and for the lives of those we love. 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Some may find it challenging and even shocking, but it is an important read for those interested in life on earth. It is made for readers to chew on, rather than believe." --Jeremy Narby, anthropologist, author of *The Cosmic Serpent, DNA and the Origins of Knowledge and Intelligence in Nature: An Inquiry into Knowledge* From the Publisher "Sometimes a book changes the world. *Not In His Image* is such a book. It is clear, stimulating, well-researched, and sure to outrage the experts. Take it from a scientist: the 'experts' are often wrong. In fact, a hallmark of breakthroughs is that they are usually well-researched and outrage 'experts.' Science shows the importance of trusting clear thinking about direct evidence. This book is full of both. Get it. 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