

*Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*. 2 vols. Edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff in collaboration with Antoine Faivre, Roelof van den Broek, and Jean-Pierre Brach. Leiden: Brill, 2005, xxix + 1128 pp., \$289.00.

This new work is the first comprehensive encyclopedia to cover the entire spectrum from Gnosticism to Western Esotericism from late antiquity to the present. It contains about 400 entries by an international cast of over 180 scholars and provides critical discussions of the nature and historical development of the various movements and related individuals. The range is exceedingly broad. Among the movements and subjects covered are: Alchemy, Astrology, Freemasonry, Gnosticism, Grail traditions, Hermetic Literature, Magic, Mandaeanism, Manichaeism, Mysticism, Neopaganism, New Age Movement, Nicolaitans, Occultism, Pietism, Reincarnation, Satanism, Scientology, Templars, and Witchcraft. Persons discussed include Augustine, William Blake, Cerinthus, Clement of Alexandria, Dante Alighieri, Carl Gustav Jung, Simon Magus, Isaac Newton, Rudolf Steiner, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Valentinus and Valentinians. The editor is Professor of the History of Hermeneutic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The associate editors include professors at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, and at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands.

The various entries are written on a very high level of competence and serve as the ideal starting point for primary research. The essay on Cerinthus (ca. 100) may serve as an example. First mentioned in the *Epistula apostolorum* (written ca. 150), Cerinthus is described as an arch-heretic, on par with Simon Magus. Irenaeus, in his *Adversus haereses* (ca. 150), relates the famous story of the apostle John entering a bathhouse at Ephesus and taking flight upon the sight of Cerinthus. Apparently, Cerinthus distinguished between the Creator and the highest god and between Jesus and the Christ. He denied the virgin birth and considered Jesus to be the natural son of Joseph and Mary. According to Cerinthus, Christ descended upon Jesus at his baptism but left him again prior to the crucifixion. The author exercises proper caution when discussing the possible reference to Cerinthus's teaching in John's first epistle, noting that if John's opponents were actually Cerinthus and his followers, one might expect a clear reference to Cerinthus's separation between Jesus and the Christ, which is not found in 1 John. The entire discussion contains copious references to the relevant primary sources.

While clearly beyond the budget of most individual students or scholars, this important new reference work should be consulted by all those engaging in research in the areas covered by the dictionary. The reach of this work is truly astounding. *The Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* promises to be the pre-eminent reference work of its kind for many years to come.

Andreas J. Köstenberger  
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