

THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN GNOSTICISM

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*Gnosis is as ancient as humanity; small numbers of people throughout the ages have discovered the means to explore reality and to become liberated.*¹

1. Introduction

Many spiritual aspirants, scholars, and historians are intrigued by ancient Gnosticism. Plenty of books detailing its history and translating ancient Gnostic texts, such as the Nag Hammadi library, exist. This mysterious path is even portrayed in fictional novels and movies, illustrating its appeal to the public. Some individuals take this interest even further, and today we are witnessing a re-emergence of the practice of Gnosis. Modern Gnostics study the spiritual teachings of the four Gospels, the Book of Revelation, texts of the Nag Hammadi library, the Pistis Sophia, the Gospel of Mary, and the Gospel of Judas. The teachings of modern Gnosis have continued to evolve. For example, over the last century, Samael Aun Weor, Rabolu, and most recently Belzebuub have earned international recognition as Gnostic spiritual teachers. Their teachings have been published, translated, and distributed across the world.

The emergence of spiritual teachers who have both experience with the Gnostic spiritual path and the ability to communicate in modern terms has helped to make Gnosticism more accessible and easier to understand than in the past. Gnostics use these teachings, those of ancient Gnosticism, and the spiritual text "The Flight of the Feathered Serpent" for guidance and inspiration.² Gnostic practice centres, worldwide events, and online communities bring modern Gnostics together to explore and to practice this spiritual path.

Ancient Gnosticism is intriguing on many levels, and it certainly deserves the attention it receives. However, the spark of Gnosis is alive,

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¹Belzebuub. "Ancient Gnosis." *Belzebuub Teachings*. 10 October 2010 <<http://www.belzebuub.com/ancient-gnosis>>.

²Cosani, Armando, *The Flight of the Feathered Serpent*. Emeryville: Absolute Publishing Press, 2009.

here in modern times. Yet, little is known about the modern practice, in particular the mystical side, of Gnosticism. This paper provides an overview of modern Gnosticism, with a focus on its mystical side. Firstly, the section that follows compares and contrasts modern Gnosticism with mysticism, highlighting a major similarity: a focus on spiritual practice. Secondly, the role of spiritual practices and mystical experiences in Gnosticism is explored. Finally, this paper concludes by expanding upon some of the unique aspects of Gnosticism, which differentiate it from both traditional religions and mystical traditions.

2. Modern Gnosticism and Mysticism

Mysticism includes approaches that recognize and value personal experience, in the context of religion and spirituality. Mysticism attributes credibility to truth and understanding gained through personal, direct experiences. There are specific religious and spiritual groups that emphasize mysticism.³ Zen Buddhism, Vedanta, Sufism, Daoism, Christian mysticism, and others are widely recognized as mystical traditions. Evelyn Underhill describes four characteristics of mystical traditions. In this section, these characteristics are compared and contrasted to characteristics of modern Gnosticism.

Firstly, “mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical.”⁴ She suggests that mysticism requires the aspirant to be engaged and actively seeking some knowledge or experience of substance, going beyond opinion or belief. Similarly, modern Gnostics explain that Gnosis is “not really an intellectual knowledge, but is the wisdom from within. It’s an inner knowledge, and there are techniques we can use to find it.”⁵ This is just one example of an underlying theme which repeats throughout the teachings of Gnosticism.

Secondly, Underhill explains that in mysticism, the “aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual.”⁶ Mysticism is not concerned with the physical world; rather it requires a focus on the spiritual or divine. Modern

³Ralph W. Hood, “The Empirical Study of Mysticism,” *The Psychology of Religion: Theoretical Approaches*, ed. Bernard Spilka and Daniel N. McIntosh, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997, 224.

⁴Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness*, 4th ed. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1912. 96.

⁵Belzebuub, *Gazing into the Eternal: Reflections Upon a Deeper Purpose to Living*. Emeryville: Absolute Publishing Press, 2009, 35.

⁶Underhill, *Mysticism*, 96.

Gnostics emphasize this aim in many ways. For example, Gnostic teachers encourage spiritual practices which allow the individual to merge with the spiritual essence both temporarily, as well as in the context of a spiritual path to permanent spiritual transformation. Gnostics make great sacrifices for the spiritual. In this paper, many examples are provided of how Gnostics aim to experience the transcendental and the spiritual daily, through specific spiritual practices, and in major events and traditions. However, Underhill suggests that once the mystic reaches such a state in which they are immersed in the divine, they are fulfilled: "the man's being is so penetrated with the divine substance that he loses himself therein, as a drop of water is lost in a cask of strong wine. And thus the man's spirit is so sunk in God in divine union, that he loses all sense of distinction."⁷

Gnostics, thus, appear to seek enlightenment and the realization of truth.⁸ Some may argue that these two characteristics are contradictory. However, a review of Gnostic teachings suggests that they are compatible. Gnostics seek enlightenment and truth, but this allows them to experience the spiritual more fully. For example, by gaining knowledge and truth about themselves, they are able to actually become more spiritual. Truth and enlightenment give them the ability to experience spirituality. Another way in which Gnostics may differ from mystics on this characteristic is that as they progress spiritually, they are compelled, through love and understanding, to help humanity. Therefore, mystical experiences prompt further activity in Gnostics. Finally, Gnostics recognize that wisdom is endless, and they also hint that the Gnostic spiritual path transcends this lifetime. While these are subtle differences and may be compatible with this characteristic of mysticism, they also highlight unique aspects of modern Gnosticism.

Thirdly, Underhill describes how the mystic views the divine or spiritual, "This One is for the mystic... a living and personal Object of Love; never an object of exploration. It draws his whole being homeward, but always under the guidance of the heart."⁹ Love for the spiritual is a central aspect of modern Gnosticism. Though Gnostics aim to achieve enlightenment and to understand reality, they also seek personal union with the divine. The understanding that they seek and gain allows them to transform and to act in ways that are in accordance with the spiritual.

⁷Underhill, *Mysticism*, 100.

⁸Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystic Way: A Psychological Study in Christian Origins*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1913, 284.

⁹Underhill, *Mysticism*, 96.

Fourthly, “mysticism entails a definite psychological experience.”¹⁰ Similar to mystics, psychological change is a direct consequence of Gnostic spiritual practices. The nature of their thoughts, feelings, and emotions change as they use spiritual practices and gain direct knowledge. All of this is aligned with the fourth characteristic of mysticism. This characteristic of mysticism is central in Gnosticism; however, Gnostics take this change to another level. They seek change at the energetic level. This transformation is another key aspect of Gnosticism and will be described in more detail throughout this paper.

3. Spiritual Practice in Modern Gnosticism

“[In ancient times] the Gnostics devoted themselves to meditation and spiritual practice, seeking a mystical experience—the discovery of the divine spark within themselves.”¹¹

According to the international Gnostic Movement, Gnosticism has re-emerged, despite much persecution, and discovering this divine spark within remains central to their quest. Several characteristics of Gnostic spiritual practice and experiences appear to guide them.

Firstly, spiritual experiences and spiritual transformation come from a spiritual source. All Gnostic spiritual practices involve “activating” a spiritual part within (i.e. the spiritual Essence or Consciousness). Further, they emphasize asking for spiritual help and guidance before they practice.¹² This illustrates a sense of reverence towards the divine and a recognition that human beings are limited in their ability to change without the help of a spiritual source.

Secondly, Gnostic teacher and writer Belzebuub explains that these practices work because we exist in other dimensions, beyond the physical, three-dimensional world. There are higher, spiritual planes which exist parallel to the physical world. The spiritual practices enable Gnostics to explore and to verify these different dimensions. They gain insight into life and death by experiencing these dimensions. When Gnostics use certain practices, such as meditation, they aim to experience other dimensions.

Thirdly, Gnostic practices allow aspirants to transcend the limits of the five senses. They aim to perceive reality, the truth of life, and these

¹⁰Underhill, *Mysticism*, 107.

¹¹“What is Gnosis?” *Gnostic Awakenings*. September 2010
<http://www.gnosticawakenings.com/about-gnosis/what-is-gnosis>.

¹²“Gnosis Re-Emerges.” *Gnostic Awakenings*. October 2010
<http://www.gnosticawakenings.com/about-gnosis/through-ages#Gnosis-Re-emerges>.

practices enable them to see and to understand what they cannot with the five senses or with the analytical mind. For example, Gnostics use spiritual practices which enhance intuition, allowing them to gain insight into situations, to comprehend spiritual teachings, to make sense of dream symbols, and more.¹³

Fourthly, Gnostics display a strong value and reverence towards daily life, and they strive to understand and to experience the spiritual aspects of major life events and traditions. Gnostics experience the spiritual side of life each day, which brings spiritual feelings and well-being. They also view each day as an important opportunity to gain self-knowledge and to make progress towards spiritual awakening. They view life as an opportunity to develop spiritually, each moment with a purpose and potential to learn. To modern Gnostics, "Practical life, when considered as a school through which to learn, is splendid; but to take it as an end to itself is absurd."¹⁴ Further, for many major life events, they seem to look for the spiritual significance and to gain experiential understanding of these events. For example, they view marriage as a spiritual union which transcends the boundaries of physical life. They view the events of Jesus' life leading up to Christmas and Easter as symbolic, and they strive to gain direct experience of these in pursuit of enlightenment and spiritual development.

Finally, while Gnostics express a strong value for spiritual experience, fundamentally, they aim for spiritual development and spiritual awakening. This is important because all of the spiritual practices and experiences appear to direct, guide, and help the aspirant to achieve this eternal union with Divinity. In the section that follows, Gnostic spiritual practices are described.

4. Gnostic Spiritual Practices

Modern Gnostics use out-of-body experiences, meditation, self-observation, awareness, developing intuition, mantras, dream interpretation, visualization, and other spiritual practices. They use these practices to experience spiritual states, psychological change, and ultimately spiritual transformation – bringing them closer to the "divine spark within."

¹³Belzebuub, *Secret Knowledge, Hidden Wisdom*, Emeryville: Absolute Publishing Press, 2007.

¹⁴Weor, Samael Aun, *A Treatise on Revolutionary Psychology*, Bondi Junction: The Gnostic Movement Inc., 1998, 18.

In this section, an overview of each practice is presented. For each practice, experiences of Gnostics are drawn from stories shared on two well-known Gnostic websites.¹⁵ The stories come directly from Gnostics who have used these practices, and they give insight into the mystical or spiritual side of modern Gnosticism. With Gnosticism, just as in other mystical traditions, scientific evidence and independent verification are limited; “It’s completely beyond the capacity of science at the moment to prove or even explore these things, because they’re nonphysical, they’re part of a person’s own inner experience.”¹⁶

4.1. Out-of-Body Experiences

As stated above, Gnostics suggest that we exist in multiple dimensions. By using spiritual practices to go to different dimensions, in a conscious way, Gnostics strive to find truth. One of these dimensions is the astral dimension. They explain that we go to the astral dimension every night when we go to sleep. Gnostics use practices, including astral projection, to go there consciously. This involves going to sleep with one’s mind concentrated to avoid falling into dreams. They concentrate on the heartbeat, certain words or syllables (i.e. mantras), or even the visualization of a place in order to stay conscious during the sleep process. If they are able to do this, they may find themselves in the transition period between wakefulness and sleep. This allows them to explore the astral dimension while their physical bodies sleep. Gnostics also have methods to increase the likelihood that they will realize they are dreaming once asleep (often called lucid dreaming).

In addition to experiencing a connection with the spiritual part within, often referred to as the Essence, these out-of-body experiences provide Gnostics with many benefits. They are able to verify, directly, that there is more than a three-dimensional world. They report using these opportunities to investigate questions about themselves, life, death, and other mysteries. Some even receive guidance from spiritual beings and go to spiritual places to learn in the astral dimension.¹⁷

David P., a practicing Gnostic in Australia describes his experience:

¹⁵The personal accounts are from *AstralWeb: Out-of-Body Experiences, Dreams, and Astral Travel* <<http://www.astralweb.org/astral-experiences>> and *Gnostic Awakenings: For the Experience of Gnosis* <<http://www.gnosticawakenings.com/practices>>, which are supported by the Gnostic Movement®

¹⁶Belzebuub, *Gazing into the Eternal*, 117.

¹⁷For further explanation, see Belzebuub, *A Course in Astral Travel and Dreams*, Emeryville, CA: Absolute Publishing Press, 2005.

On this occasion, I was directing my attention to concentrating on the heart. And before I knew it I just floated all the way out of my body, and I was there floating at the end of the bed, in the astral counterpart of my bedroom. And, it was just such an amazing feeling. It was like someone pulled me out. I just literally was lying flat, and then just came straight out like that...it was quite awesome. You know, it's just something that changes your life forever...¹⁸

4.2. Meditation

Similar to astral projection, Gnostics use meditation practices to achieve out-of-body experiences. However, they aim to go to an even higher dimension, which they refer to as a place where only spiritual Consciousness goes. All human emotions and motives are left behind, and the Gnostic experiences pure Consciousness through meditation. Rather than concentrating their minds, they strive to clear their minds of human thought. If the mind is silent when the aspirant falls asleep, rather than drifting into dreams, they go into a spiritual dimension.

They use a variety of techniques which aim to quiet the mind while reaching a state of sleepiness. For example, Gnostics use koans, questions which have no answers, to tire their minds until thoughts emerge less frequently. If the aspirant falls asleep with the mind completely empty, they are able to experience pure, spiritual Consciousness. In addition to the life-changing effects of profound spiritual experience, meditation benefits modern Gnostics by helping them to gain knowledge. The meditation practice gives them an opportunity to connect with a spiritual aspect that holds wisdom and intelligence beyond the human capacity for reasoning. They gain insight into their own spiritual obstacles, which is needed for spiritual transformation.¹⁹

According to Jenny P., a practicing Gnostic from the United States, The thoughts became fewer and fewer, and the silence grew longer and longer. Then I started to experience this kind of rushing sensation and I started to feel like I was very far away from my body, but at the same time more present inside of myself than I ever have

¹⁸David, "Davids Hearty Efforts," *AstralWeb: Out-of-Body Experiences, Dreams, and Astral Travel*, October 2010.

¹⁹For further explanation, refer to the source for this section: Belzebuub, *Secret Knowledge, Hidden Wisdom*.

been. It was a very new feeling. It was very peaceful and I felt very connected with a real, spiritual part of myself.²⁰

4.3. Self-Observation

The practice of self-observation involves watching one's thoughts and feelings as they arise. Gnostics explain that the part which observes is the Consciousness, and the Consciousness becomes stronger and more present as a person practices self-observation. To practice self-observation, Gnostics simply train themselves to direct their attention to their thoughts and feelings. A goal in Gnosticism is to use this practice every day, while doing almost anything else.²¹

In addition to bringing the Consciousness into daily life, this benefits them by giving them self-knowledge. Gnostics suggest that, when practiced, self-observation provides immediate understanding of the nature of thoughts and feelings. This immediate understanding is possible because the Consciousness, rather than the analytical mind, observes. "A key aspect of self-knowledge and spiritual growth is the ability to see what is happening psychologically within oneself, it enables one to directly discover what exists within. It is vital for spiritual development and is the first step to take for real inner progress."²²

Sabah, a practicing Gnostic in Australia, describes how she used self-observation to handle an angry customer:

As I continued to observe myself, I began to notice a beautiful sensation overwhelming me inside. A real sense of love and gratitude filled me, both for my own existence and towards all people who are searching in some way for lasting happiness and fulfilment. I felt love for this lady I was dealing with, as I comprehended the true reason for her behaviour. A written description of this joy does not do it justice; I'll just say it made me feel truly united with other people and life. It was a natural and spontaneous way of being, and I experienced the truth of the existence of that particle of divinity inside me.²³

²⁰Jenny, "A Silent Connection," *Gnostic Awakenings: For the Experience of Gnosis*, October 2010.

²¹Belzebuub, *The Peace of the Spirit Within*, Emeryville: Absolute Publishing Press, 2006. See also Weor Samael Aun, *A Treatise on Revolutionary Psychology*, 33-35.

²²Belzebuub, *Searching Within: A Nine Week Course in Gnostic Psychology*. Emeryville: Absolute Publishing Press, 2010. 27.

²³Sabah, "Retail Therapy," *Gnostic Awakenings: For the Experience of Gnosis*, October 2010.

4.4. Awareness

The practice of awareness involves bringing one's attention to the present moment. Gnostics use this practice, with self-observation, to bring the Consciousness into each day. To do this, Gnostics experience life in the present moment, through the five senses, while keeping their minds from drifting into daydreams of the past or future. When they become aware that they are out of the moment, they turn their attention inwardly. Using self-observation, they instantly comprehend the thought or feeling which takes them away.

In addition to bringing the spiritual aspect of oneself into the moment, this benefits them in many other ways. Gnostic teacher Belzebuub explains that, "When we are free from the inner states that give unhappiness (even just for a moment at a time) and we have developed the consciousness sufficiently, we can find happiness and peace."²⁴ Further, he suggests that one can immediately understand the nature of a situation if they are in a state of awareness. They experience spiritual strength, clearer dreams, and they are able to use other spiritual practices more effectively when practicing awareness consistently.²⁵

Mike L., a practicing Gnostic in Canada, experienced peace, by practicing awareness, despite difficult circumstances:

After getting home and eating supper I went for an evening walk. At the start of my walk, for some reason, a car full of rowdy people drove by me and started swearing at me and making offensive gestures... As they insulted me, I didn't feel any anger or fear or negativity whatsoever. I just kept walking and held onto the awareness. All I felt was inner-tranquillity and even compassion for these people in the car; it was almost blissful...²⁶

4.5. Mantras

The practice of mantras involves using sound to develop spiritual abilities and to experience spiritual states. These spiritual abilities include those such as intuition, and Gnostics teach that these are faculties of the Divine within. To use mantras, Gnostics simply focus on a word or syllable that

²⁴Belzebuub, *Searching Within: A Nine Week Course in Gnostic Psychology*, Emeryville: Absolute Publishing Press, 2010, 6.

²⁵"Practicing Awareness." *Gnostic Awakenings: For the Experience of Gnosis*. October 2010 <<http://www.gnosticawakenings.com/practices/awareness>>.

²⁶Mike, "The Best Bad Day of My Life," *Gnostic Awakenings: For the Experience of Gnosis*, 10 October 2010.

they repeat aloud or mentally. By focusing on the word or syllable, they activate certain chakras or “spiritual senses.” These mantras have particular effects; for example, the mantra “O” is expected to heighten intuitive abilities.²⁷

In addition to experiencing spiritual states, practicing mantras has many benefits. Gnostics use mantras to gain spiritual insights and strength, enabling them to experience spirituality further. Some mantras are used for astral projection, such that the aspirant repeats mantras that can quicken the astral projection process. They also use mantras which quiet the mind during or before meditation practices.

Jordan, a practicing Gnostic in Canada, describes his direct experience with a mantra: it was simply by trying one of the techniques posted on this website, the mantra “La Ra S”, that I was able to experience coming out of my body. Even though it was such a short experience, it gave me direct experience that I could actually come out of my body. And this opened up all sorts of possibilities: most importantly, there must be more to life than what I could see. If I was able to come out-of-body, then perhaps there is some credence to the idea of life after death, and what else could I learn...²⁸

The mantras do not have a permanent impact on the aspirant. To get these benefits using this approach, the Gnostic must practice mantras regularly.

4.6. Dream Interpretation

The practice of dream interpretation involves gaining insights from dreams. With dream interpretation, Gnostics strive to get a direct understanding behind the meaning of a dream, without using the analytical mind. They use dream interpretation methods because dreams are often symbolic, and they suggest that the Consciousness can grasp the meaning of these symbols. They use intuition, mantras, meditative techniques, and dream symbol guides for dream interpretation. Gnostics use intuition to get an instant, direct understanding of a dream’s meaning. They use mantras upon waking that help them to recall dreams. They have meditative practices that allow them to reflect on dreams. Finally, Gnostics recognize a variety of esoteric symbols as useful in interpreting dreams.

Dream interpretation benefits Gnostics by allowing them to gain understanding and wisdom from their dreams. For example, Gnostics are

²⁷Belzebuub, *The Peace of the Spirit Within*.

²⁸Jordan. “Skeptical of Out-of-Body Experiences,” *AstralWeb: Out-of-Body Experiences, Dreams, and Astral Travel*, October 2010.

able to learn about themselves, their inner motives, and obstacles to spiritual development through reflecting on their dreams. They can also learn about spiritual matters and get practical insight into life situations.²⁹

Mike L., a practicing Gnostic in Canada, describes how dream interpretation helped him: ...this dream I had, through its symbology, was telling me that my time with Sasha [family pet] that summer was going to be the last time...[Later] my mom...told me Sasha had become extremely uncoordinated and had been put down. The news...wasn't completely traumatizing since I had been prepared for the event through that dream and was able to enjoy my time with Sasha to the fullest.³⁰

4.7. Visualization

The practice of visualization involves directing one's imagination in a purposeful way to explore something or some place. This practice allows one to gain an understanding that goes beyond the five senses. With the Consciousness activated, this practice can enable one to understand or to experience the very nature of something. It can also be used to explore a particular place while having an out-of-body experience. Gnostics use different techniques depending on the purpose of visualizing. They have some techniques of visualizing an object, such as an exercise of visualizing the flame on the tip of a candle. They go beyond trying to imagine the flame and strive to get insight into the nature or essence of fire. For out-of-body experiences, they visualize a place during a practice or while in the astral dimension in order to go to that place. They often strive to go to places of spiritual significance, but may aim to go to a familiar place, like in the example below.

Dara, a practicing Gnostic in Canada, describes her experience with visualization during an astral projection practice:

I imagined myself in my kitchen, observing the counters, the metal sink, the grain of the wood in the cabinets...Suddenly, as I looked down at the fruit I was holding in my hands, the entire scene exploded into brilliant, vibrant color. I really saw my kitchen, as real as being there physically, full of light and life, but more detailed in

²⁹For further explanation, refer to the source for this section: Belzebuub, *A Course in Astral Travel and Dreams*, Emeryville, CA: Absolute Publishing Press, 2005.

³⁰Mike, "A Summer to Remember," *AstralWeb: Out-of-Body Experiences, Dreams, and Astral Travel*, 10 October 2010.

fact than how it normally appeared. The next thing I knew I had projected out of my body, straight over head of my family at the kitchen table.³¹

5. Practicing Spirituality in Modern Gnosticism

Gnostics emphasize spiritual practice, and this can be seen in the review of practices above. Just as in ancient times, Gnostic aspirants rely on spiritual teachings to learn the methods for experiencing spiritual transformation. The Gnostics explain that Jesus taught the general public religious truths, but that he also gave special teachings to his disciples, who had the ability to understand these deeper teachings.³² Just as his disciples relied on these teachings, modern Gnostics rely on spiritual teachers for guidance.

A review of modern Gnostic writings suggests that there have been three spiritual teachers, in particular, during modern times, who have led aspirants to achieve this transformation, just as Jesus did. These spiritual teachers include Victor Manuel Gomez, “Samael Aun Weor”; Joaquin Amortegui Valbuena “Rabolu”; and currently Mark H. Pritchard “Belzebuub.”

Spiritual leader Samael Aun Weor is considered the founder of modern Gnosticism. According to the Gnostics, he was born with a specific mission of bringing Gnostic spiritual teachings, the keys to enlightenment and salvation, to humanity. He aimed to help humanity make a shift toward spiritual transformation. From the 1950’s through the late 1970’s, he published over 75 books on modern Gnosticism. His writings focus on spiritual development through gaining self-knowledge and using spiritual practices. After many years of practicing Gnosticism based on the revered Samael Aun Weor’s teachings, Rabolu, emerged as the Gnostic spiritual leader. Rabolu published several books on Gnosticism, as well. He taught spiritual aspirants worldwide, including the current Gnostic spiritual leader Mark H. Pritchard, who teaches under his spiritual name of Belzebuub.

Since 2000, Gnostic spiritual leader Belzebuub has become internationally recognized for guiding spiritual aspirants towards spiritual development and enlightenment. He has sacrificed greatly to help others experience the spiritual path of Gnosis. This is evident in the many books

³¹Dara. “My Kitchen from Another Point of View.” 2010. *AstralWeb: Out-of-Body Experiences, Dreams, and Astral Travel*. 10 October 2010.

³²*Secret Quest: A Three-Part Series on the Christian Gnostics*, Dir: The Gnostic Movement (TGM), 2009.

he has published, in the various ways in which he has taught Gnosticism directly to aspirants in practice centres and on retreats, and in his efforts to make his teachings available freely on the World Wide Web.

There are a few notable distinctions about the teachings of these modern spiritual leaders. Firstly, their writings and teachings are based on personal experience. Their teachings are not interpretations of ancient Gnostic texts, nor are they translations of ancient texts into modern language. The teachings have their lineage in ancient Gnosis, but these spiritual teachers have acquired their own understanding through direct experience. Their teachings come from that perspective, and in modern times, each of them has taken responsibility for teaching humanity what they have learned. Secondly, the Gnostics seek the divine spark within, and it is something that they acquire ultimately through great sacrifice. Gnostics revere these spiritual leaders Samael Aun Weor, Rabolu, and Belzebuub because they have reason to trust that each has made such sacrifices. Thirdly, consistent with Gnostic spiritual principles and traditional religions, each of these spiritual leaders has sacrificed greatly to publicize their teachings freely to all of humanity.

6. Conclusion

Modern Gnosticism, similar to mysticism, is brought to life with a variety of spiritual practices. Experiencing other dimensions, enlivening spiritual senses, and exploring beyond the body are worthwhile, inspiring, and perhaps even natural for Gnostic aspirants. However, a closer look reveals spiritual transformation is their highest pursuit.

The quest for the Holy Grail, the search for truth and a yearning for spiritual change have captured the hearts and interests of spiritual aspirants throughout centuries. For Gnostics, this quest seems to be at the heart of their journey. They use spiritual practices every day, demonstrating a strong commitment and value for spiritual experiences. However, it is clear that they are driven by a search for something more – the divine spark within.

Gnostic teacher, “Belzebuub” describes,

... in Gnosis, then, we are trying to bring about an inner revolution, to bring about change, and the revolution is in consciousness. This is the starting point, this is what we develop, this is what changes. It increases, and then at a particular point along the way, the divine, the

spirit, the soul, the Christ, merges with it, and from then, those things grow. Eventually they become dominant within us.³³

Alchemical change is the process by which they seek this transformation. They seek transformation at the energetic level, metaphorically described as changing lead into gold. This involves rooting out all negativity and human desires while creating spiritual qualities within, transforming hate into love. Like every aspect of Gnosis, this spiritual transformation and alchemical change seem very real and practical, even verifiable. In this way, Gnostics experience true psychological change, similar to other mystics, as well as a spiritual transformation that changes their energetic makeup.

While Gnosticism shares much in common with mystical traditions from around the world, to the author's knowledge, no other tradition describes such a path to transformation as this. The very inner makeup of the aspirant changes.

Further study into modern Gnosticism clarifies that the Gnostic path brings knowledge and wisdom of both good and evil. Overcoming much opposition, they voluntarily seek and sincerely long for the path that Jesus Christ painfully illustrated. Gnostics appear to be compelled by this inner yearning to sacrifice the unspiritual – within and in their lives – to achieve this transformation.

With this experience and spiritual practice comes wisdom about the struggles of all of humanity. Love grows within the Gnostic. With this comes a sincere yearning to help others. They make great sacrifices for humanity, helping those who long for the same path to enlightenment: "As a person progresses esoterically they gain more wisdom and understanding, with it comes a responsibility to explain this wisdom to others, so that they can also acquire it."³⁴

³³Belzebuub, *Gazing into the Eternal*, 93.

³⁴Belzebuub, *Secret Knowledge, Hidden Wisdom*, 198.