

The Gnostic Gospels

What We Believe — Scripture

As we have discussed, many texts are not accepted into the New Testament canon, primarily because they do not show The Holy Spirit's inspiration (2 Peter 1:21). For years, many questions arose over ancient texts in book form, referred to as a Codex or the plural codexes, titled as "The Gospel of ___." The codexes in contention were found near Nag Hamadi, Egypt, in December 1945. Dan Brown's book, "The Da Vinci Code," appeared in 2003 and brought the ancient texts to light. Brown's fictional book claims that the texts, called gospels, should have been part of our Bibles. In fact, early Christians prevented them from being part of the New Testament Canon. The manuscripts were written in the second and third centuries by people known as Gnostics. They claimed secret knowledge, known only to them, contradicting the first-century apostle's writings. Although these Gnostic Gospels were written between 125 and 300 A. D., the teaching was already evident to John, Paul, and the other apostles who refuted them. These texts are now known as the Nag Hamadi documents and contain the Gnostic Gospels. We might mention that the modern gnostics are trying to remove the name Gnostic from the codexes and themselves.

The Greek word for knowledge is "gnosis." The name Gnostic identifies both the people and their documents because they claimed secret knowledge, only known to them. Paul warned Christians of such vain knowledge as he wrote, *"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ"* (Colossians 2:8). John opposed the Gnostics when he wrote about how to know the actual knowledge of God in truth. *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world"* (1 John 4:1-3).

Elaine Pagels, Ph.D., Department of Religion, Princeton University, a scholar on early Christianity, writing in her book "Beyond Belief The Secret Gospel of Thomas" said, "I was amazed when I went back to the Gospel of John after reading Thomas, for Thomas and John clearly draw upon similar language and images, and both, apparently, begin with similar secret teaching. But John takes this teaching to mean something so different that I wondered whether John could have written his Gospel to refute what Thomas teaches. I was finally convinced that this is what happened." As a scholar in early Christianity, she should have known that no portion of God's word contradicts or refutes any other portion. Many sayings in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas contradict Jesus' sayings as recorded in the Four Gospels.

The thirteen codexes found at Nag Hamadi contain 52 texts. These individual texts contain gnostic thoughts on Jesus and His teaching or the secret knowledge (gnosis) and wisdom (Sophia). Many of these thoughts can be traced to the Far East philosophies and mystic sayings in Tao Te Ching and The Tibetan Book of the Dead. The Gnostic texts propose interpretations and rituals that are different or in addition to Old Testament prophecies and apostolic writings. They describe God as a duality, part male and part female, occupying all nature as the pantheist claims. Some texts of the codexes describe Jesus as just a man with a consort named Meriam. This duality corresponds with the pagan teaching that god is male, and his consort is the female wisdom. The early Christians declared them heretical when they were written and attempted to destroy them. Subsequently, the

Gnostics gathered and buried them. However, the Gnostic opinions continued, in various forms, through Western culture until today.

Gnosticism today is a tradition reborn in the Gnosis Kardia (Knowing Heart) of humanism. The result of Gnostic thought through the centuries can be found in Catholicism, Mormonism, Equal Rights efforts, Abortion Rights, and the LGBTQ community. The primary aim has always been to destroy belief in God, Christ, and the authority of a creator to establish law for His creation.

In 1995, Robert Funk, former professor at the University of Montana, and Professor Dominic Crossan of DePaul University founded the **Jesus Seminar**. The seventy-four scholars who participated claimed their purpose was to "...assess the degree of scholarly consensus about **the historical authenticity of each saying of Jesus.**" However, **they also admitted they hoped to "liberate the historical Jesus from the mythological Jesus of faith."** As the gnostics of New Testament times tried to destroy belief in The Eternal God and His Christ, the Jesus Seminar people reject that Jesus is God in the flesh and all miraculous happenings recorded in the Bible. They use the news media, TV, and movies to remove God from the public's minds and destroy the church.

Do you believe in the eternal God and that His Son put on flesh to die on the cross? Or would you remove the spiritual and miraculous portions of your Bible as Thomas Jefferson did?