

What Is Gnosticism Now

Why Were the Teachings of the Original Christians Brutally Suppressed by the Roman Church? • Because they portray Jesus and Mary Magdalene as mythic figures based on the Pagan Godman and Goddess • Because they show that the gospel story is a spiritual allegory encapsulating a profound philosophy that leads to mythical enlightenment • Because they have the power to turn the world inside out and transform life into an exploration of consciousness Drawing on modern scholarship, the authors of the international bestseller *The Jesus Mysteries* decode the secret teachings of the original Christians for the first time in almost two millennia and theorize about who the original Christians really were and what they actually taught. In addition, the book explores the many myths of Jesus and the Goddess and unlocks the lost secret teachings of Christian mysticism, which promise happiness and immortality to those who attain the state of Gnosis, or enlightenment. This daring and controversial book recovers the ancient wisdom of the original Christians and demonstrates its relevance to us today.

A list of the one hundred most influential people in history features descriptions of the careers, contributions, and accomplishments of the political and religious leaders, inventors, writers, artists, and others who changed the course of history. Simultaneous.

* A brief and accessible introduction to Gnosticism

The Meaning of the Nag Hammadi, now in paperback opens the with the thrilling adventure story of the discovery of the ancient Papyrii at Nag Hammadi. Muhammad Ali, the fellahin, discovered the sealed jar, he feared that it might contain a jinni, or spirit, but also had heard of hidden treasures in such jars. Greed overcame his fears and when he smashed open the jar, gold seemed to float into the air. To his disappointment, it was papyrus fragmenst, not gold, but for scholars around the world, it was invaluable. Meyer then discusses the pre-Christian forms of wisdom that went onto influence what Christians believe today. In addition, some Nag Hammadi texts are attributed to Valentinus, a man who almost became Pope, and whose rejection changed the church in significant ways. Text by text, Meyer traces the history and impact of this great find on the Church, right up to our current beliefs and popular cultural fascination with this officially suppressed secret knowledge about Jesus and his followers.

In his book, poised to become a standard historical theology textbook, Roger Olson takes us on a journey of events ranging from the apostolic fathers to the Reformation to the present.

A study of gnosticism examines the various ways early Christians strove to define themselves in a pluralistic Roman society, while questioning the traditional ideas of heresy and orthodoxy that have previously influenced historians.

What is Gnosticism?Harvard University Press

Most anyone interested in such topics as creation mythology, Jungian theory, or the idea of "secret teachings" in ancient Judaism and Christianity has found "gnosticism" compelling. Yet the term "gnosticism," which often connotes a single rebellious movement against the prevailing religions of late antiquity, gives the false impression of a monolithic religious phenomenon. Here Michael Williams challenges the validity of the widely invoked category of ancient "gnosticism" and the ways it has been described. Presenting such famous writings and movements as the Apocryphon of John and Valentinian Christianity, Williams uncovers the similarities and differences among some major traditions widely categorized as gnostic. He provides an eloquent, systematic argument for a more accurate way to discuss these interpretive approaches. The modern construct "gnosticism" is not justified by any ancient self-definition, and many of the most commonly cited religious features that supposedly define gnosticism phenomenologically turn out to be questionable. Exploring the sample sets of "gnostic" teachings, Williams refutes generalizations concerning asceticism and libertinism, attitudes toward the body and the created world, and alleged features of protest, parasitism, and elitism. He sketches a fresh model for understanding ancient innovations on more "mainstream" Judaism and Christianity, a model that is informed by modern research on dynamics in new religious movements and is freed from the false stereotypes from which the category "gnosticism" has been constructed.

This eye-opening collection of texts sheds light on the esoteric knowledge of Gnosticism, revealing intimate conversations between Jesus and his Disciples In 1945, several gospels, hidden since the first century, were found in the Egyptian Desert at Nag Hammadi. This discovery caused a sensation as the scrolls revealed the mysteries of the Gnostics—a movement which emerged during the formative period of Christianity. 'Gnosis', from the Greek, broadly meaning 'hidden spiritual knowledge', was associated with renouncing the material world, and focusing on attaining the life of the Holy Spirit. Many Christian sects are derived from the esoteric knowledge of Gnosticism. The gospels selected here by Alan Jacobs reveal intimate conversations between Jesus and his Disciples. The Gospel of Mary Magdalene sheds new light on his relationship with his favorite follower, while the Gospel of Thomas consists of mini-parables of deep inward and symbolic meaning—many of which are not found in the New Testament. The wisdom in this inspiring collection of texts is wholly relevant to our lives today, addressing the questions of good and evil, sin and suffering, and the path to salvation.

Cormac McCarthy is a writer informed by an intense curiosity. His interests range from the natural world, to philosophy and religion, to history and culture. *Cormac McCarthy in Context* offers readers the opportunity to understand how various influences inform his rich body of work. The collection explores the relationship McCarthy has with his favourite authors, writers such as Herman Melville, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway. Other contexts are tremendously informative, including the American Romance tradition of the nineteenth century as well as modernity and the modernist literary movement. Influence and context are of absolute importance in understanding McCarthy, who is now being understood as one of the most significant authors of the contemporary period.

From the Nag Hammadi Library with the different times of day and days of the week. She reveals for us the macrocosm of human experience in the microcosm of the passing hours and days. Reverent introspection in the moment yields recognition of the sacredness and eternity of who we are and what our lives mean. Book jacket.

Tells the story of the devolution of God from perfect Oneness down to imprisonment in the material world. Original.

Gnosticism developed alongside Judeo-Christianity over two thousand years ago, but with an important difference: It emphasizes, not faith, but direct perception of God--Gnosticism being derived from the Greek word gnosis, meaning "knowledge." Given the controversial premise that one can know God directly, the history of Gnosticism is an unfolding drama of passion, political intrigue, martyrdom, and mystery. Dr. Hoeller traces this fascinating story throughout time and shows how Gnosticism has inspired such great thinkers as Voltaire, Blake, Yeats, Hesse, Melville, and Jung.

The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity

Essays on the feminine face of God in Gnostic philosophy and theology are collected in a fascinating introduction to this early and often persecuted strand of Christian thought. Original.

This incisive critique thoroughly and convincingly debunks the claims that recently discovered texts such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary, and even the Dead Sea Scrolls undermine the historical validity of the New Testament. Jenkins places the recent controversies surrounding the hidden gospels in a broad historical context and argues that, far from being revolutionary, such attempts to find an alternative Christianity date back at least to the Enlightenment. By employing the appropriate scholarly and historical methodologies, he demonstrates that the texts purported to represent pristine Christianity were in fact composed long after the canonical gospels found in the Bible. Produced by obscure heretical movements, these texts have attracted much media attention chiefly because they seem to support radical, feminist, and post-modern positions in the modern church. Indeed, Jenkins shows how best-selling books on the "hidden gospels" have been taken up by an uncritical, drama-hungry media as the basis for a social movement that could have powerful effects on the faith and practice of contemporary Christianity.

Gnosticism is a countercultural spirituality that forever changed the practice of Christianity. Before it emerged in the second century, passage to the afterlife required obedience to God and king. Gnosticism proposed that human beings were manifestations of the divine, unsettling the hierarchical foundations of the ancient world. Subversive and revolutionary, Gnostics taught that prayer and meditation could bring human beings into an ecstatic spiritual union with a transcendent deity. This mystical strain affected not just Christianity but many other religions, and it characterizes our understanding of the purpose and meaning of religion today. In *The Gnostic New Age*, April D. DeConick recovers this vibrant underground history to prove that Gnosticism was not suppressed or defeated by the Catholic Church long ago, nor was the movement a fabrication to justify the violent repression of alternative forms of Christianity. Gnosticism alleviated human suffering, soothing feelings of existential brokenness and alienation through the promise of renewal as God. DeConick begins in ancient Egypt and follows with the rise of Gnosticism in the Middle Ages, the advent of theosophy and other occult movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and contemporary New Age spiritual philosophies. As these theories find expression in science-fiction and fantasy films, DeConick sees evidence of Gnosticism's next incarnation. Her work emphasizes the universal, countercultural appeal of a movement that embodies much more than a simple challenge to religious authority.

Translated by R. McL. Wilson A full-scale study based on the documents of the Coptic Gnostic library found at Nag Hammadi providing a comprehensive survey of the nature, the teachings, the history and the influence of this religion.

Gnostic Return in Modernity demonstrates the possibility that Gnosticism haunts certain modern discourses. Studying Gnosticism of the first centuries of the common era and utilizing narrative analysis, the author shows how Gnosticism returns in a select b

An eminent French scholar examines the fascinating myths and ideas of Gnosticism, discussing all of its doctrines and themes. Petrement's analysis of these and other Gnostic documents constitutes a comprehensive new introduction to the ideas of the Gnostics that sheds fresh light on New Testament studies.

THE GNOSTIC BIBLE is by far the most comprehensive compilation of gnostic texts ever published - and the first aimed at rendering the texts in poetic, readable prose. The gnostics were religious thinkers engaged in the quest for wisdom and knowledge, and they proclaimed a salvation to be found through mystical knowledge and intuition. As the Gospel of Thomas puts it, "Know what is in front of your face and what is hidden from you will be disclosed. There is nothing hidden from you that will not be revealed." Dating from the first to the thirteen centuries, these gnostic texts represent Jewish, Christian, Hemitic, Mandaean, Manichaean, Islamic and Cathar forms of gnostic spirituality, and they derive from Egypt, the Greco-Roman world, the Middle East, Syria, Iraq, China, France and elsewhere. These texts show that gnosticism was a world religion that sought truths in a wide variety of religious traditions and expressed those truths in powerful and provocative mystical poetry and prose. The impact of gnosticism upon other religions of the world was considerable, and the influence of gnosticism continues to the present day. This volume represents the first time that such a diverse collection of gnostic texts is published in a single volume and some of the texts are translated into English for the first time here. The texts are accompanied by introductions and notes and additional study aids describe gnosticism, elucidate gnostic terms and suggest further readings.

Selected by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best nonfiction books of all time *The Gnostic Gospels* is a landmark study of the long-buried roots of Christianity, a work of luminous scholarship and wide popular appeal. First published in 1979 to critical acclaim, winning the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award, *The Gnostic Gospels* has continued to grow in reputation and influence over the past two decades. It is now widely recognized as one of the most brilliant and accessible histories of early Christian spirituality published in our time. In 1945 an Egyptian peasant unearthed what proved to be the Gnostic Gospels, thirteen papyrus volumes that expounded a

radically different view of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ from that of the New Testament. In this spellbinding book, renowned religious scholar Elaine Pagels elucidates the mysteries and meanings of these sacred texts both in the world of the first Christians and in the context of Christianity today. With insight and passion, Pagels explores a remarkable range of recently discovered gospels, including the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, to show how a variety of "Christianities" emerged at a time of extraordinary spiritual upheaval. Some Christians questioned the need for clergy and church doctrine, and taught that the divine could be discovered through spiritual search. Many others, like Buddhists and Hindus, sought enlightenment—and access to God—within. Such explorations raised questions: Was the resurrection to be understood symbolically and not literally? Was God to be envisioned only in masculine form, or feminine as well? Was martyrdom a necessary—or worthy—expression of faith? These early Christians dared to ask questions that orthodox Christians later suppressed—and their explorations led to profoundly different visions of Jesus and his message. Brilliant, provocative, and stunning in its implications, *The Gnostic Gospels* is a radical, eloquent reconsideration of the origins of the Christian faith.

"Gnosticism" has become a problematic category in the study of early Christianity. It obscures diversity, invites essentialist generalisations, and is a legacy of ancient heresiology. However, simply to conclude with "diversity" is unsatisfying, and new efforts to discern coherence and to synthesise need to be made. The present work seeks to make a fresh start by concentrating on Irenaeus' report on a specific group called the "Gnostics" and on his claim that Valentinus and his followers were inspired by their ideas. Following this lead, an attempt is made to trace the continuity of ideas from this group to Valentinianism. The study concludes that there is more continuity than has previously been recognised. Irenaeus' "Gnostics" emerge as the predecessors not only of Valentinianism, but also of Sethianism. They represent an early, philosophically inspired form of Christ religion that arose independently of the New Testament canon. Christology is essential and provides the basis for the myth of Sophia. The book is relevant for all students of Christian origins and the early history of the Church.

An extensive examination of the history of gnosticism and how its philosophy has influenced the Western esoteric tradition • Explains how the Gnostic understanding of self-realization is embodied in the esoteric traditions of the Rosicrucians and Freemasons • Explores how gnosticism continues to influence contemporary spirituality • Shows gnosticism to be a philosophical key that helps spiritual seekers "remember" their higher selves Gnosticism was a contemporary of early Christianity, and its demise can be traced to Christianity's efforts to silence its teachings. The Gnostic message, however, was not destroyed but simply went underground. Starting with the first emergence of Gnosticism, the author shows how its influence extended from the teachings of neo-Platonists and the magical traditions of the Middle Ages to the beliefs and ideas of the Sufis, Jacob Böhme, Carl Jung, Rudolf Steiner, and the Rosicrucians and Freemasons. In the language of spiritual freemasonry, gnosis is the rejected stone necessary for the completion of the Temple, a Temple of a new cosmic understanding that today's heirs to Gnosticism continue to strive to create. The Gnostics believed that the universe embodies a ceaseless contest between opposing principles. Terrestrial life exhibits the struggle between good and evil, life and death, beauty and ugliness, and enlightenment and ignorance: gnosis and agnosis. The very nature of physical space and time are obstacles to humanity's ability to remember its divine origins and recover its original unity with God. Thus the preeminent gnostic secret is that we are God in potential and the purpose of bona fide gnostic teaching is to return us to our godlike nature. Tobias Churton is a filmmaker and the founding editor of the magazine *Freemasonry Today*. He studied theology at Oxford University and created the award-winning documentary series and accompanying book *The Gnostics*, as well as several other films on Christian doctrine, mysticism, and magical folklore. He lives in England.

In this highly original work, Elaine Pagels demonstrates how evidence from gnostic sources may challenge the assumption that Paul writes his letters to combat "gnostic opponents" and to repudiate their claims to secret wisdom. Drawing upon evidence from the gnostic exegesis of Paul, including several Nag Hammadi texts, the author examines how gnostic exegetes cite and interpret key passages in the letters they consider Pauline—1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews. Besides offering new insight into controversies over Paul in the second century, this analysis of gnostic exegesis suggests a new perspective for Pauline study, challenging students and scholars to recognize the presuppositions—hermeneutical and theological—involved in their own reading of Paul's letters. Elaine H. Pagels is the Harrington Spear Paine Professor of Religion at Princeton University. She is the author of *The Gnostic Gospels*, which won the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis*, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, and the best-selling *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*.

Why is religion still around in the twenty-first century? Why do so many still believe? And how do various traditions still shape the way people experience everything from sexuality to politics, whether they are religious or not? In *Why Religion?* Elaine Pagels looks to her own life to help address these questions. These questions took on a new urgency for Pagels when dealing with unimaginable loss—the death of her young son, followed a year later by the shocking loss of her husband. Here she interweaves a personal story with the work that she loves, illuminating how, for better and worse, religious traditions have shaped how we understand ourselves; how we relate to one another; and, most importantly, how to get through the most difficult challenges we face. Drawing upon the perspectives of neurologists, anthropologists, and historians, as well as her own research, Pagels opens unexpected ways of understanding persistent religious aspects of our culture. A provocative and deeply moving account from one of the most compelling religious thinkers at work today, *Why Religion?* explores the spiritual dimension of human experience.

The Gnostic World is an outstanding guide to Gnosticism, written by a distinguished international team of experts to explore Gnostic movements from the distant past until today. These themes are examined across sixty-seven chapters in a variety of contexts, from the ancient pre-Christian to the contemporary. The volume considers the intersection of Gnosticism with Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Indic practices and beliefs, and also with new religious movements, such as Theosophy, Scientology, Western Sufism, and the Nation of Islam. This comprehensive handbook will be an invaluable resource for religious studies students, scholars, and researchers of Gnostic doctrine and history.

A Dictionary of Gnosticism is a scholarly yet accessible guide that covers the people, mythology, movements, scripture, and technical terms related to this pre-Christian Western religion. It contains nearly 1700 entries, from Achiaram, an angel in the 'Secret Book of John to Zostrianos', a third-century Gnostic text, and is a reliable reference for the Nag Hammadi library and other Gnostic texts. An introduction

explains who the Gnostics were and provides a whirlwind tour through the history of this captivating movement.

In this important contribution to the scholarly study of Egyptian Gnosticism, Pearson situates Gnosticism in its historical context and describes its manifold relationships to Judaism, early Christianity, and ancient Platonism. Birger Pearson gives special attention to the controversial issue of the impact of Gnosticism on early Egyptian Christianity up to the Muslim conquest of the seventh century.

In this introductory handbook, Riemer Roukema explores the meaning of the "gnosis" phenomenon and sets forth the relationship between Gnosticism and the church.

An examination of Gnostic religion in Late Antiquity within its historical and religious context, using Greek, Latin and Coptic sources.

The publication of the King James version of the Bible, translated between 1603 and 1611, coincided with an extraordinary flowering of English literature and is universally acknowledged as the greatest influence on English-language literature in history. Now, world-class literary writers introduce the book of the King James Bible in a series of beautifully designed, small-format volumes. The introducers' passionate, provocative, and personal engagements with the spirituality and the language of the text make the Bible come alive as a stunning work of literature and remind us of its overwhelming contemporary relevance.

For what is it that the All lacked, if not the knowledge of the Father?' - Gnostic text from the Gospel of Truth Long before there was a system of belief called Gnosticism there were those who reached for a special intimate knowledge of God and His mysterious ways. The possession of such knowledge, they believed, would bring salvation from s...

Valentinus was a popular, influential, and controversial early Christian teacher. His school flourished in the second and third centuries C.E. Yet because his followers ascribed the creation of the visible world not to a supreme God but to an inferior and ignorant Creator-God, they were from early on accused of heresy, and rumors were spread of their immorality and sorcery. Beyond Gnosticism suggests that scholars approach Valentinians as an early Christian group rather than as a representative of ancient "Gnosticism"-a term notoriously difficult to define. The study shows that Valentinian myths of origin are filled with references to lifestyle (such as the control of emotions), the Christian community, and society, providing students with ethical instruction and new insights into their position in the world. While scholars have mapped the religio-historical and philosophical backgrounds of Valentinian myth, they have yet to address the significance of these mythmaking practices or emphasize the practical consequences of Valentinians' theological views. In this groundbreaking study, Ismo Dunderberg provides a comprehensive portrait of a group hounded by other Christians after Christianity gained a privileged position in the Roman Empire. Valentinians displayed a keen interest in mythmaking and the interpretation of myths, spinning complex tales about the origin of humans and the world. As this book argues, however, Valentinian Christians did not teach "myth for myth's sake." Rather, myth and practice were closely intertwined. After a brief introduction to the members of the school of Valentinus and the texts they left behind, Dunderberg focuses on Valentinus's interpretation of the biblical creation myth, in which the theologian affirmed humankind's original immortality as a present, not lost quality and placed a special emphasis on the "frank speech" afforded to Adam by the supreme God. Much like ancient philosophers, Valentinus believed that the divine Spirit sustained the entire cosmic chain and saw evil as originating from conspicuous "matter." Dunderberg then turns to other instances of Valentinian mythmaking dominated by ethical concerns. For example, the analysis and therapy of emotions occupy a prominent place in different versions of the myth of Wisdom's fall, proving that Valentinians, like other educated early Christians, saw Christ as the healer of emotions. Dunderberg also discusses the Tripartite Tractate, the most extensive account to date of Valentinian theology, and shows how Valentinians used cosmic myth to symbolize the persecution of the church in the Roman Empire and to create a separate Christian identity in opposition to the Greeks and the Jews.

Brakke writes a pioneering study of the way the demon role relates to religious thinking and to cultural anxieties. The author's sources include biographies of exceptional monks, collections of monastic sayings and stories, letters from ascetic teachers to their disciples, sermons, community rules, and biblical commentaries. When monks imagined the resistance that they had to overcome in cultivating their selves or the temptation that offered an easier path, they saw supernatural beings that could take the shapes of animals, women, boys, and false angels in their attempts to seduce monks away from their devotion to God. And when they considered the inclinations in their own selves that opposed their best intentions, they concluded that demons introduced such problematic "thoughts" to their minds. Although the last twenty years has seen an explosion of scholarship on early Christian asceticism, producing brilliant explorations of the body, sexual renunciation, fasting, and gender, combat with demons has been left relatively unexplored.

An exploration of the sexual practices and doctrinal secrets of Gnosticism • Reconstructs the lost world of Gnostic spiritual-erotic experience through examination of every surviving text written by heresiologists • Investigates the sexual gnosis practices of the Barbelo Gnostics of the 2nd century and their connections to the Gnostic Aeon Sophia, the Wild Lady of Wisdom • Explains the vital significance of "the seed" as a sacrament in Gnostic practice Examining every surviving text written by heresiologists, accounts often ignored in favor of the famous Nag Hammadi Library, Tobias Churton reveals the most secret inner teaching passed down by initiated societies: the tradition of sexual gnosis--higher union with God through the sacrament of sex. Discovering actual sex practices hidden within the writings of the Church's authorities, he reconstructs the lost world of Gnostic spiritual-erotic experience as taught by initiated masters and mistresses and practiced by Christian couples seeking spiritual freedom from the world. Churton explores the practices of the "first Gnostic," the historical Simon Magus, and explains the vital significance of "the seed" in Gnostic practice, showing it to be the sacramental substance par excellence. He illuminates the suppressed truth of why the name "Valentine" came to be associated with ennobling erotic love and reveals profound parallels between sexual gnosis and Tantra, suggesting that gnosis lies at the root of the tantric path. Solving a millennia-old riddle regarding the identity and secret symbol of Sophia, the mysterious Gnostic "Aeon," Churton investigates Sophia's connections to Barbelo, also known as Pruneikos, the Wild Lady of Wisdom, and the central focus of the Barbelo Gnostics of the 2nd century, whose religious sex practices so shocked orthodox Christian contemporaries that they were condemned, their cults of spiritual gnosis and "redemption by sin"

driven underground. Churton exposes the mystery of Sophia in the philosophy of the medieval Troubadours and explores William Blake's inheritance of secret Renaissance sexual mysticism through the revolutionary English poet Andrew Marvell. Showing how Blake's sexual and spiritual revolution connects to modern sexual magic, Churton also examines the esoteric meaning of the free-love explosion of the 1960s, revealing how sex can be raised from the realm of guilt into the highest magical sacrament of spiritual transformation.

First presents the basic ideas of the Christian Kabbalah--which is about experiencing God and moving toward God--then goes to a more in-depth exploration of the Tree of Life. Original.

"An emerging field of study that explores the Hispanic minority in the United States, Latino Studies is enriched by an interdisciplinary perspective. Historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, demographers, linguists, as well as religion, ethnicity, and culture scholars, among others, bring a varied, multifaceted approach to the understanding of a people whose roots are all over the Americas and whose permanent home is north of the Rio Grande. Oxford Bibliographies in Latino Studies offers an authoritative, trustworthy, and up-to-date intellectual map to this ever-changing discipline."--Editorial page.

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