

the gnostic bible

the gnostic bible is a fascinating collection of ancient texts that delve into the spiritual philosophies and mystical teachings of Gnosticism. In this article, readers will discover the origins, contents, and significance of the Gnostic Bible, exploring its historical context and the core beliefs of Gnostic thought. The discussion includes the major writings found within the Gnostic Bible, such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary, and examines how these texts differ from traditional Christian scriptures. Readers will also learn about the impact of the Gnostic Bible on modern spirituality, its rediscovery in the 20th century, and the ongoing scholarly debates surrounding its interpretation. By the end of this comprehensive guide, you'll have a deeper understanding of why the Gnostic Bible continues to intrigue theologians, historians, and spiritual seekers worldwide.

- Understanding the Gnostic Bible
- Origins and Historical Context of Gnostic Texts
- Major Writings in the Gnostic Bible
- Core Beliefs and Themes in Gnosticism
- Differences Between the Gnostic Bible and Traditional Christian Scriptures
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- Influence of the Gnostic Bible on Modern Spirituality
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Understanding the Gnostic Bible

The Gnostic Bible is not a single book but a compilation of ancient manuscripts that reflect the mystical and esoteric traditions of Gnosticism, a spiritual movement that emerged in the early centuries of the Common Era. These texts offer alternative perspectives on the nature of God, creation, and salvation, often emphasizing inner knowledge and spiritual enlightenment over external religious authority. Unlike the canonical Bible, the Gnostic Bible includes writings that were excluded from orthodox Christianity, providing insights into spiritual practices and beliefs that were once considered heretical. The term "Gnostic" comes from the Greek word "gnosis," meaning "knowledge," highlighting the central theme of personal spiritual discovery found throughout these works.

Origins and Historical Context of Gnostic Texts

Gnostic texts originated during the formative years of Christianity, roughly between the first and fourth centuries CE. Emerging in regions such as Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, Gnostic communities produced a diverse range of writings that challenged mainstream religious ideas. The historical context of the Gnostic Bible is intertwined with early Christian controversies and theological debates about the nature of divinity and salvation. Many Gnostic writings were suppressed or destroyed by orthodox authorities, leading to their obscurity until modern times. The rediscovery of these texts, particularly after the Nag Hammadi library was unearthed in Egypt in 1945, provided scholars with a wealth of information about early Christian diversity and spiritual thought.

- First to fourth centuries CE: Era of Gnostic writing
- Geographical centers: Egypt, Syria, Palestine
- Suppression by early church authorities
- Rediscovery in the 20th century

Major Writings in the Gnostic Bible

The Gnostic Bible encompasses a variety of texts, each offering unique insights into Gnostic theology and cosmology. Some of the most renowned writings include the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary, the Gospel of Philip, and the Secret Book of John. These texts often present alternative views of Jesus, salvation, and the nature of reality, diverging significantly from canonical Christian teachings. The Gospel of Thomas, for example, consists of sayings attributed to Jesus that focus on self-knowledge and spiritual awakening, rather than ritual or dogma. Other texts, such as the Pistis Sophia and the Apocryphon of John, explore complex mythologies involving divine beings, the creation of the world, and the soul's journey toward enlightenment.

1. Gospel of Thomas
2. Gospel of Mary
3. Gospel of Philip
4. Secret Book of John (Apocryphon of John)

5. Pistis Sophia

6. Gospel of Truth

Core Beliefs and Themes in Gnosticism

Central to Gnostic thought is the belief in a transcendent, unknowable God and the existence of a flawed, material world created by a lesser deity known as the Demiurge. Gnostics taught that human beings possess a divine spark or inner light, which can be awakened through gnosis—direct experiential knowledge of the divine. Themes of dualism, the contrast between spirit and matter, and the quest for liberation from material bondage recur throughout the Gnostic Bible. Salvation, according to Gnosticism, is achieved not through faith or obedience to religious authorities but through self-discovery and spiritual insight. These teachings often challenge conventional doctrines about sin, redemption, and the role of Jesus as a savior.

- Transcendent God vs. Demiurge
- Dualism: spirit vs. matter
- Divine spark within humanity
- Salvation through knowledge (gnosis)

Differences Between the Gnostic Bible and Traditional Christian Scriptures

The Gnostic Bible stands apart from the canonical Christian Bible in both content and theological emphasis. While the New Testament focuses on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as historical events with salvific implications, Gnostic writings often interpret these stories allegorically, emphasizing hidden meanings and spiritual transformation. Gnostic texts are frequently written in the form of dialogues or secret teachings, purportedly revealed to select disciples. The role of women, the nature of the divine, and the path to salvation are all treated differently in Gnostic literature, with a greater focus on individual experience and mystical revelation. The exclusion of these texts from the official canon contributed to their marginalization and eventual disappearance from mainstream Christian tradition.

The Rediscovery of the Gnostic Bible

The modern understanding of the Gnostic Bible owes much to the discovery of ancient manuscripts in the 20th century, most notably the Nag Hammadi library in 1945. This cache of thirteen codices, containing over fifty texts, revolutionized the study of early Christianity and shed light on previously unknown Gnostic teachings. The translation and publication of these writings made the Gnostic Bible accessible to a wider audience, sparking renewed interest in alternative spiritualities and esoteric wisdom. Today, scholars and seekers alike study these texts for their historical significance, theological insights, and influence on contemporary spiritual movements.

- Nag Hammadi library discovery (1945)
- Translation and publication of ancient manuscripts
- Impact on religious scholarship
- Influence on modern spiritual exploration

Influence of the Gnostic Bible on Modern Spirituality

The Gnostic Bible has had a profound impact on modern spirituality, inspiring movements that emphasize personal transformation, mystical experience, and inner wisdom. Its teachings resonate with those seeking alternatives to institutional religion, offering a path of self-realization and direct communion with the divine. Elements of Gnostic philosophy can be seen in contemporary practices such as meditation, holistic healing, and the exploration of consciousness. The Gnostic emphasis on questioning authority and seeking truth through personal experience continues to appeal to spiritual seekers and independent thinkers worldwide.

Ongoing Scholarly Debates and Interpretations

The study of the Gnostic Bible remains a dynamic field, marked by ongoing debates about the origins, meaning, and relevance of its texts. Scholars continue to discuss the relationship between Gnosticism and early Christianity, the authenticity of various manuscripts, and the implications of Gnostic teachings for understanding religious history. The interpretation of symbolic language, mythological motifs, and spiritual concepts within the Gnostic Bible poses challenges for researchers and theologians alike. Despite these complexities, the Gnostic Bible endures as a valuable resource for

exploring the diversity of spiritual thought and the quest for knowledge throughout history.

Q: What is the Gnostic Bible?

A: The Gnostic Bible is a collection of ancient religious texts associated with the spiritual movement known as Gnosticism. It includes manuscripts such as the Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mary, and the Secret Book of John, which offer alternative perspectives on Christian theology and emphasize spiritual knowledge (gnosis) over orthodox doctrine.

Q: How does the Gnostic Bible differ from the traditional Christian Bible?

A: Unlike the canonical Christian Bible, the Gnostic Bible contains writings that were excluded from mainstream Christianity, focusing on mystical teachings, allegorical interpretations, and inner spiritual awakening rather than external faith and religious authority.

Q: What are some of the major texts found in the Gnostic Bible?

A: Some of the major texts in the Gnostic Bible include the Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Philip, Secret Book of John, Pistis Sophia, and the Gospel of Truth, each offering unique insights into Gnostic beliefs and spiritual practices.

Q: What is the central theme of Gnosticism?

A: The central theme of Gnosticism is the pursuit of gnosis, or direct experiential knowledge of the divine, leading to spiritual awakening and liberation from the material world created by a lesser deity known as the Demiurge.

Q: Why were Gnostic texts suppressed by early Christian authorities?

A: Gnostic texts were suppressed because their teachings often contradicted orthodox Christian doctrines and challenged established religious authority, leading to their exclusion from the official biblical canon.

Q: How was the Gnostic Bible rediscovered?

A: The Gnostic Bible was largely rediscovered after the discovery of the Nag

Hammadi library in Egypt in 1945, which unearthed a significant cache of Gnostic manuscripts that had been hidden for centuries.

Q: What role does the concept of the Demiurge play in Gnostic teachings?

A: In Gnostic teachings, the Demiurge is considered a lesser deity responsible for creating and ruling the flawed material world, in contrast to the transcendent, unknowable true God.

Q: How has the Gnostic Bible influenced modern spirituality?

A: The Gnostic Bible has influenced modern spirituality by inspiring movements that focus on personal transformation, mystical experience, and inner wisdom, appealing to those seeking alternatives to institutional religion.

Q: Are women portrayed differently in the Gnostic Bible compared to traditional scriptures?

A: Yes, the Gnostic Bible often portrays women in more prominent spiritual roles, with texts such as the Gospel of Mary emphasizing female leadership and spiritual authority.

Q: What are the main challenges in interpreting the Gnostic Bible?

A: Scholars face challenges in interpreting the Gnostic Bible due to its symbolic language, mythological motifs, and the diversity of its texts, which require careful analysis to understand their theological and historical significance.

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The Gnostic Bible: Uncovering Hidden Gospels and Alternative Christianities

The term "The Gnostic Bible" doesn't refer to a single, unified book like the Christian Bible. Instead, it encompasses a vast and diverse collection of ancient texts, offering a fascinating glimpse into alternative Christianities that flourished alongside, and often in conflict with, orthodox Christianity. This blog post delves into the world of Gnostic texts, exploring their history, key themes, and enduring significance, shedding light on what makes them so intriguing and controversial. We'll unravel the mysteries surrounding these writings and explore their impact on our understanding of early Christianity and spirituality.

What is Gnosticism? Understanding the Core Beliefs

Before exploring the texts themselves, it's crucial to understand the core tenets of Gnosticism. Gnosticism wasn't a monolithic religion but a collection of related beliefs sharing common threads. Central to Gnostic thought is the concept of gnosis, meaning "knowledge." This knowledge, often secret and esoteric, was believed to be essential for salvation. Gnostics believed in a hidden, divine spark within each individual, a piece of the divine that needed to be awakened through spiritual insight and liberation from the material world, which they often viewed as inherently flawed and created by a lesser deity (the Demiurge). Unlike orthodox Christianity's emphasis on faith and grace, Gnosticism highlighted self-knowledge and spiritual awakening as the path to salvation.

Key Gnostic Beliefs:

Dualism: A sharp distinction between the spiritual realm (good) and the material world (evil).

The Demiurge: A flawed creator god, often distinct from the supreme, unknowable God.

Sophia: A feminine divine principle, often associated with the creation of the material world and its imperfections.

Redemption through Gnosis: Achieving salvation through secret knowledge and spiritual enlightenment.

Major Gnostic Texts: A Glimpse into the Collection

The "Gnostic Bible" isn't a canonized collection like the Christian Bible. Instead, it comprises numerous texts discovered in various locations, most notably the Nag Hammadi Library in Egypt (discovered in 1945). These texts offer varied perspectives and interpretations of Gnostic beliefs. Some key examples include:

The Gospel of Thomas: This collection of sayings attributed to Jesus offers a different perspective on his teachings compared to the canonical Gospels. It focuses on inner spiritual transformation and understanding rather than outward actions or adherence to specific doctrines.

The Gospel of Philip: This text explores esoteric interpretations of biblical narratives and focuses heavily on the relationship between Christ and the divine feminine. It offers insights into Gnostic understandings of sexuality and spiritual union.

The Apocryphon of John: This text presents a complex cosmological narrative, detailing the creation of the world and the fall of Sophia. It offers a rich tapestry of Gnostic mythology and cosmology.

The Significance of Gnostic Texts: Challenging Orthodox Narratives

The discovery and study of Gnostic texts have profoundly impacted our understanding of early Christianity. They challenge the dominant narrative of a unified and homogenous early church, revealing a much more complex and diverse religious landscape. These texts offer alternative perspectives on Jesus's life and teachings, challenging traditional interpretations and highlighting the fluidity of religious belief in the early centuries. The Gnostic texts also enrich our understanding of early Christian theological debates and the processes through which certain doctrines were solidified and others marginalized.

The Ongoing Debate and the Legacy of Gnosticism

The study of Gnosticism remains a vibrant field of research, with ongoing debates surrounding the interpretation and significance of these texts. Some scholars view Gnosticism as a heretical deviation from true Christianity, while others see it as a legitimate and significant religious movement in its own right. Regardless of one's perspective, the influence of Gnostic ideas can be traced throughout history, impacting various spiritual and philosophical movements. Certain themes found in Gnosticism resonate with modern spiritual seekers interested in esoteric knowledge, self-discovery, and the search for inner enlightenment.

Conclusion

The "Gnostic Bible," though not a singular entity, represents a treasure trove of ancient texts that provide a crucial counterpoint to the dominant narrative of early Christianity. These texts offer a rich tapestry of beliefs, cosmological perspectives, and spiritual practices, challenging our understanding of religious history and illuminating the complexities of faith and belief in antiquity. By exploring these texts, we gain a deeper appreciation of the diversity and dynamism of early religious thought and the enduring quest for spiritual understanding.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Where can I find translations of Gnostic texts? Many translations of Gnostic texts are readily available online and in academic bookstores. Reputable publishers often provide scholarly translations with accompanying commentary.
2. Are Gnostic texts considered canonical? No, Gnostic texts are not considered canonical by mainstream Christian churches. Their exclusion from the accepted canon reflects the early Church's rejection of Gnostic beliefs.
3. How did the Nag Hammadi Library influence our understanding of Gnosticism? The discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945 was a watershed moment in Gnostic studies. It provided a vast collection of previously unknown texts, significantly expanding our knowledge of Gnostic beliefs and practices.
4. What is the relationship between Gnosticism and modern spirituality? Some aspects of Gnostic thought, particularly the emphasis on self-knowledge and inner transformation, resonate with certain modern spiritual movements and practices.

5. Is Gnosticism still practiced today? While there isn't a single, unified Gnostic church, various groups and individuals draw inspiration from Gnostic ideas and incorporate them into their spiritual practices. However, these groups are often distinct and diverse in their beliefs and practices.

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Bible Willis Barnstone, Marvin W. Meyer, 2006 The most comprehensive collection of gnostic literature ever published, this volume is the result of a unique collaboration between a renowned poet-translator and a leading scholar of early Christian texts.

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Gospels Elaine Pagels, 2013-07-25 As discussed in The Da Vinci Code... Long buried and suppressed, the Gnostic Gospels contain the secret writings attributed to the followers of Jesus. In 1945 fifty-two papyrus texts, including gospels and other secret documents, were found concealed in an earthenware jar buried in the Egyptian desert. These so-called Gnostic writings were Coptic translations from the original Greek dating from the time of the New Testament. The material they embodied - poems, quasi-philosophical descriptions of the origins of the universe, myths, magic and instructions for mystic practice - were later declared heretical, as they offered a powerful alternative to the Orthodox Christian tradition. In a book that is as exciting as it is scholarly, Elaine Pagels examines these texts and the questions they pose and shows why Gnosticism was eventually stamped out by the increasingly organised and institutionalised Orthodox Church.

the gnostic bible: The Nag Hammadi Library in English James McConkey Robinson, 1984

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Bible: The Pistis Sophia Unveiled Samael Aun Weor, 2011-02-24 "It came to pass, when Jesus had risen from the dead, that he passed eleven years discoursing with his disciples, and instructing them." The Apostles wrote down what Jesus taught them during those eleven years, resulting in The Pistis Sophia, the most important Gnostic scripture. Includes an extensive commentary by Samael Aun Weor.

the gnostic bible: The Secret Book of John , 2005 The Secret Book of John: The Gnostic Gospel - Annotated & Explained decodes the principal themes, historical foundation, and spiritual contexts of this challenging yet fundamental Gnostic teaching. Drawing connections to Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, kabbalistic Judaism, and Sufism, Davies focuses on the mythology and psychology of the Gnostic religious quest. He illuminates the Gnostics' ardent call for self-awareness and introspection, and the empowering message that divine wholeness will be restored not by worshiping false gods in an illusory material world but by our recognition of the inherent divinity within ourselves.--BOOK JACKET.

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Scriptures, Second Edition Bentley Layton, David Brakke, John Collins, 2021-07-06 A collection of extra-biblical scriptures written by the gnostics, updated with three ancient texts including the recently discovered Gospel of Judas This definitive introduction to the gnostic scriptures provides a crucial look at the theology, religious atmosphere, and literary traditions of ancient Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism. It provides authoritative translations of ancient texts from Greek, Latin, and Coptic, with introductions, bibliographies, and annotations. The texts are organized to reflect the history of gnosticism in the second through fourth centuries CE. This second edition provides updates throughout and adds three new ancient texts, including the recently discovered Gospel of Judas.

the gnostic bible: Essential Gnostic Scriptures Marvin Meyer, Willis Barnstone, 2011-11-22 The people we've come to call gnostics were passionate advocates of the view that salvation comes through knowledge and personal experience, and their passion shines through in the remarkable body of writings they produced over a period of more than a millennium and a half. Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer have created a translation that brings the gnostic voices to us from across the centuries with remarkable power and beauty—beginning with texts from the earliest years of Christianity—including material from the Nag Hammadi library—and continuing all the way up to expressions of gnostic wisdom found within Islam and in the Cathar movement of the Middle Ages. The twenty-one texts included here serve as a compact introduction to Gnosticism and its principal

ideas—and they also provide an entrée to the pleasures of gnostic literature in general, representing, as they do, the greatest masterpieces of that tradition.

the gnostic bible: *The Gnostic Gospels* Alan Jacobs, Vrej N. Nersessian, 2016-11-15 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.

the gnostic bible: *The Gnostic Scriptures* Bentley Layton, 1995-01-08 This introduction to the gnostic scriptures takes a look at the theology, religious atmosphere and literary traditions of ancient Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism.

the gnostic bible: *The Gnostic Discoveries* Marvin W. Meyer, 2009-07-21 The Meaning of the Nag Hammadi, now in paperback opens the with the thrilling adventure story of the discovery of the ancient Papyri 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.

the gnostic bible: *The Secret Teachings of Jesus* , 2011-09-28 In December 1945, two Egyptian fellahin, digging for natural fertilizer in the Nile River valley unearthed a sealed storage jar. The jar proved to hold treasure of an unexpected sort: a collection of some fifty-two ancient manuscripts, most of which reflect the teachings of a mystical religious movement we call Gnosticism (from the Greek word gnosis, knowledge). The texts are also, with few exceptions, Christian documents, and thus they provide us with valuable new information about the character of the early church, and about the Gnostic Christians within the church. In this volume, Marvin W. Meyer has produced a new English translation for general readers of four of the most important and revealing of these early Christian texts -- the Secret Book of James, the Gospel of Thomas, the Book of Thomas, and the Secret Book of John.

the gnostic bible: *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus* Marvin W. Meyer, 2009-09-15 For all those readers curious to read the actual texts of the Gnostic Gospels, here is the definitive collection of all the Gnostic Gospels and Gospel-like texts. o Marvin Meyer, premier scholar of Gnostic and other Christian literature outside the New Testament, presents every Gnostic Gospel and Jesus text with a brilliant overall introduction, introductions to each text, and notes that explain everything the reader needs to know to understand the text. He includes his latest translations of not only the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Mary, but other texts such as the Secret Book of John, which some scholars regard as the second part of the New Testament Gospel of John. The material is largely from the discovery at Nag Hammadi, freshly translated and introduced, but also includes texts found elsewhere. The texts, especially taken together, present an image of Jesus as the

ultimate wisdom teacher, a kind of mysterious Jewish Zen master, who scandalized listeners by his radical egalitarianism (regarding women, slaves, the poor, the marginalized as of equal status, or more, with establishment male believers) and his insistence on living the message, spiritual experience, vs. outer observance only. o For those wanting to learn more after reading *The Da Vinci Code*. This book provides the definitive next book for those looking for expert presentation of the alternative Gnostic stream of Christianity, in which there is no talk of crucifixion and Mary Magdalene is presented as the disciple that Jesus loved best. Marv is one of the original secret gospels scholars who has done an enormous amount of work to bring these texts to light. All of his research on the Nag Hammadi texts is having an incredible impact on our knowledge of early Christian history--it is virtually redefining it. --Dr. Elaine Pagels, Princeton University

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Scriptures Joseph Lumpkin, 2006-01-01 To understand some of the basic beliefs of Gnosticism, let us start with the common ground shared between Gnosticism and modern Christianity. Both believe the world is imperfect, corrupt, and brutal. The blame for this, according to mainstream Christianity, is placed squarely on the shoulders of man himself. With the fall of man (Adam), the world was forever changed to the undesirable and harmful place in which we live today. However, Gnostics reject this view as an incorrect interpretation of the creation myth. According to Gnostics, the blame is not in ourselves, but in our creator. The creator of this world was himself somewhat less than perfect and in fact, deeply flawed and cruel, making mankind the children of a lesser God....The parallel between Sophia and Mary Magdalene in Gnostic theology cannot be overstated. Sophia was the handmaiden of the Supreme God, carrying the life force, which was the emanation of God. She carried the truth within her, which she offered to Adam. The truth was offered up to set him free. Mary was the consort of Jesus, carrying the imparted knowledge and possibly his life force in the form of a child. She revealed to the apostles the truth Jesus personally and intimately gave to her alone. We will see this stated clearly in *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* later in this book.

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic New Age April D. DeConick, 2016-09-27 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 mediation 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.

the gnostic bible: The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Gnostic Gospels J. Michael Matkin, 2005-09-06 The birth of the Christian Church—and what it means for modern religion and philosophy. This engaging guide presents an accessible overview of the birth of the Christian Church, using the historical works found at the famous Nag Hammadi site in Egypt. With chapters discussing each of the major and minor documents found at Nag Hammadi, this volume also includes an overview of Gnosticism and the major players, revealing not only what the texts say, but also what they mean. - Renewed interest in Gnosticism and the Gnostic gospels is driven by interest in the Nag Hammadi documents, *The Da Vinci Code*, the Matrix movies, the Kabbalah, renewed

interest in the divine feminine ideal, and the fact that many who've left the Church are looking for new answers in the early church. - Author is a scholar and expert who's studied with some of the top people in the field.

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Paul Elaine Pagels, 1992-03-01 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*.

the gnostic bible: Gnosis Kurt Rudolph, 2001-06-20 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.

the gnostic bible: The Secret History of the Gnostics Andrew Phillip Smith, 2015-11-24 Learn more about the myths, practices, history, and recent resurgence of Gnosticism as a Gnostic scholar seeks to answer why this Christian mystical movement has inspired the likes of Dan Brown and Philip Pullman *The Secret History of the Gnostics* offers long-awaited illumination on the mystical movement that teaches 'gnosis'—knowledge of God as opposed to unquestioning faith. Acclaimed author Andrew Phillip Smith delves into the myths and practices of this ancient movement, exploring its popularity during 2nd century AD, its subsequent decline under the weight of orthodoxy in the Church, and its present-day resurgence. Gnosticism has travelled a fascinating path—from the Manichaeans in Modern Persia between the 3rd and 7th centuries AD, to the triumphs and tragedies of the Cathars in Southern Europe between the 12th and 14th centuries, to, finally, today's Mandaean in Iraq. However, as the author points out, the revival of Gnosticism extends further than these narrow sects, offering inspiration to a legion of literary figures, including Dan Brown and Philip Pullman. Gnosticism's emphasis on personal over organized religion—in keeping with the doctrine of the early Christian era during which it thrived—has found particular resonance with today's multicultural world. In addition to discussing the Gnostic gospels and the sect's practical beliefs and customs, *The Secret History of the Gnostics* is also, in effect, a manifesto, an appeal to those inspired by or drawn to the Gnostic faith not to forget its origins.

the gnostic bible: The Gnostic Bible Willis Barnstone, Marvin Meyer, 2009-06-30 A collection of Gnostic texts spanning centuries, geographical locations, and cultural traditions—"a wonderful achievement" (Elaine Pagels, author of *The Gnostic Gospels*) Gnosticism was a wide-ranging religious movement of the first millennium CE—with earlier antecedents and later flourishings—whose adherents sought salvation through knowledge and personal religious experience. Gnostic writings offer striking perspectives on both early Christian and non-Christian thought. For example, some gnostic texts suggest that god should be celebrated as both mother and father, and that self-knowledge is the supreme path to the divine. Only in the past fifty years has it become clear how far the gnostic influence spread in ancient and medieval religions—and what a marvelous body of scriptures it produced. The selections gathered here in poetic, readable translation represent Jewish, Christian, Hermetic, Mandaean, Manichaean, Islamic, and Cathar expressions of gnostic spirituality. Their regions of origin include Egypt, the Greco-Roman world, the Middle East, Syria, Iraq, China, and France. Also included are introductions, notes, an extensive glossary, and a wealth of suggestions for further reading.

the gnostic bible: Reading Judas Elaine Pagels, Karen L. King, 2007-03-06 The instant New

York Times bestseller interpreting the controversial long-lost gospel The recently unearthed Gospel of Judas is a source of fascination for biblical scholars and lay Christians alike. Now two leading experts on the Gnostic gospels tackle the important questions posed by its discovery, including: How could any Christian imagine Judas to be Jesus' favorite? And what kind of vision of God does the author offer? Working from Karen L. King's brilliant new translation, Elaine Pagels and King provide the context necessary for considering its meaning. Reading Judas plunges into the heart of Christianity itself and will stand as the definitive look at the gospel for years to come.

the gnostic bible: Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger Gary Michuta, 2017-09-15 Some differences between Catholicism and Protestantism can be tricky to grasp, but one of them just requires the ability to count: Catholic bibles have seventy-three books, whereas Protestant bibles have sixty-six - plus an appendix with the strange title Apocrypha. What's the story here? Protestants claim that the medieval Catholic Church added six extra books that had never been considered part of the Old Testament, either by Jews or early Christians. Catholics say that the Protestant Reformers removed those books, long considered part of Sacred Scripture, because they didn't like what they contained. In *Why Catholic Bibles Are Bigger*, Gary Michuta presents a revised and expanded version of his authoritative work on this key issue. Combining the historical record from pre-Christian times to the Patristic era to the Reformation and its aftermath, he traces the canon controversy through the writings and actions of its major players.

the gnostic bible: Hidden Gospels Philip Jenkins, 2002-12-05 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.

the gnostic bible: The Gospel of Judas, Second Edition Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, Gregor Wurst, Francois Gaudard, 2008-06-17 For 1,600 years its message lay hidden. When the bound papyrus pages of this lost gospel finally reached scholars who could unlock its meaning, they were astounded. Here was a gospel that had not been seen since the early days of Christianity, and which few experts had even thought existed—a gospel told from the perspective of Judas Iscariot, history's ultimate traitor. And far from being a villain, the Judas that emerges in its pages is a hero. In this radical reinterpretation, Jesus asks Judas to betray him. In contrast to the New Testament Gospels, Judas Iscariot is presented as a role model for all those who wish to be disciples of Jesus and is the one apostle who truly understands Jesus. Discovered by farmers in the 1970s in Middle Egypt, the codex containing the gospel was bought and sold by antiquities traders, secreted away, and carried across three continents, all the while suffering damage that reduced much of it to fragments. In 2001, it finally found its way into the hands of a team of experts who would painstakingly reassemble and restore it. The Gospel of Judas has been translated from its original Coptic to clear prose, and is accompanied by commentary that explains its fascinating history in the context of the early Church, offering a whole new way of understanding the message of Jesus Christ.

the gnostic bible: The Secret History of the Gnostics Andrew Philip Smith, 2015-11-19 Gnosticism has travelled a fascinating path, from the Manichaeans in Persia between the 3rd and 7th centuries, to the triumphs and tragedies of the Cathars in southern Europe between the 12th and 14th centuries, to, finally, today's Mandaeans in Iraq. However the revival of Gnosticism extends further than these sects, offering inspiration to a legion of literary figures, including Dan Brown and

Philip Pullman. Gnosticism's emphasis on personal over organized religion, in keeping with the doctrine of the early Christian era during which it thrived, has found particular resonance with today's multicultural world. The Secret History of the Gnostics is not simply an authoritative account of one sect's practical beliefs and customs it is, in effect, a manifesto, an appeal to those inspired by or drawn to the Gnostic faith not to forget its origins.

the gnostic bible: What is Gnosticism? Karen L. King, 2003 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.

the gnostic bible: Why Christianity Must Change or Die John Shelby Spong, 2009-10-13 An important and respected voice for liberal American Christianity for the past twenty years, Bishop John Shelby Spong integrates his often controversial stands on the Bible, Jesus, theism, and morality into an intelligible creed that speaks to today's thinking Christian. In this compelling and heartfelt book, he sounds a rousing call for a Christianity based on critical thought rather than blind faith, on love rather than judgment, and that focuses on life more than religion.

the gnostic bible: The Secret Teachings of Jesus , 1986-05-12 In December 1945, two Egyptian fellahin, digging for natural fertilizer in the Nile River valley unearthed a sealed storage jar. The jar proved to hold treasure of an unexpected sort: a collection of some fifty-two ancient manuscripts, most of which reflect the teachings of a mystical religious movement we call Gnosticism (from the Greek word gnosis, knowledge). The texts are also, with few exceptions, Christian documents, and thus they provide us with valuable new information about the character of the early church, and about the Gnostic Christians within the church. In this volume, Marvin W. Meyer has produced a new English translation for general readers of four of the most important and revealing of these early Christian texts -- the Secret Book of James, the Gospel of Thomas, the Book of Thomas, and the Secret Book of John.

the gnostic bible: Gospel of Thomas Annotated & Explained , 2002 The recently discovered mystical sayings of Jesus, with facing-page commentary that brings the text to life for you. The Gospel of Thomas really is, I believe, the clearest guide we have to the vision of the world's supreme mystical revolutionary, the teacher known as Jesus. To those who learn to unpack its sometimes cryptic sayings, the Gospel of Thomas offers a naked and dazzlingly subversive representation of Jesus' defining and most radical discovery: that the living Kingdom of God burns in us and surrounds us at all moments. --from the Foreword by Andrew Harvey This ancient text can become a companion for your own spiritual journey. In 1945, twelve ancient books were found inside a sealed jar at the base of an Egyptian cliff. One of those texts was the Gospel of Thomas, one of the most important religious archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century. While illuminating the origins of Christianity, it raises the question whether the New Testament's version of Jesus' teachings is entirely accurate and complete. Written at the same time as the canonical Gospels, the Gospel of Thomas portrays Jesus as a wisdom-loving sage. The aphoristic sayings emphasize the value of the present, teaching that the Kingdom of God is here and now, rather than a future promise or future threat. It presents a new way of looking at the challenging and intriguing figure of Jesus, and reminds us that the Divine can be found right here on earth. Now you can experience the Gospel of Thomas with understanding even if you have no previous knowledge of early Christian history or thought. This SkyLight Illuminations edition offers insightful yet unobtrusive commentary that explains references and philosophical terms, shares the inspiring interpretations of famous spiritual teachers, and gives you deeper understanding of Thomas's innovative message: that self-knowledge and contemplation of the nature of this world are the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven.

the gnostic bible: The Gospel of Judas David Brakke, 2022-02-08 A new translation and commentary on the extracanonical Coptic text that describes Judas' special status among Jesus' disciples Since its publication in 2006, The Gospel of Judas has generated remarkable interest and debate among scholars and general readers alike. In this Coptic text from the second century C.E., Jesus engages in a series of conversations with his disciples and with Judas, explaining the origin of the cosmos and its rulers, the existence of another holy race, and the coming end of the current

world order. In this new translation and commentary, David Brakke addresses the major interpretive questions that have emerged since the text's discovery, exploring the ways that The Gospel of Judas sheds light on the origins and development of gnostic mythology, debates over the Eucharist and communal authority, and Christian appropriation of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. The translation reflects new analyses of the work's genre and structure, and the commentary and notes provide thorough discussions of the text's grammar and numerous lacunae and ambiguities.

the gnostic bible: Gnosticism Stephan A Hoeller, 2012-12-13 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 gnostic bible: The Everything Gnostic Gospels Book Meera Lester, 2007-02-12 The books of the Bible are not the only ancient writings to tell the stories of Jesus and his followers - other Gnostic texts have also been found as well. The Everything Gnostic Gospels Book provides an overview of Gnosticism and the historical figures who are believed to be the authors: Thomas, James, Mary Magdalene, and others. This accessible guide explores the following questions: What do Gnostics believe? Who were the authors of the Gnostic Gospels? How are the Bible scriptures and Gnostic Gospels different? How are they the same? How were official Christian texts chosen? Learn about the different versions of Christianity that battled for supremacy in the first centuries after the death of Jesus. This entertaining and educational book describes each of the Gnostic Gospels, providing insight into the turbulent times of early Christianity as well as the renewed contemporary interest in these mysterious writings.

the gnostic bible: The Hymn of Jesus G. R. S. Mead, 2005-11-01 These marvelous narratives may seem vastly fantastic to the modern mind, but to every shade of Christianity in those days, they were entirely credible.-from The Hymn of Jesus Lost words of Jesus? One of the greatest thinkers on the origins of Christianity and a renowned expert on Gnostic and Hermetic literature presents, in this snug volume first published in 1907, the lost teachings of Jesus. Not found in the canonical Gospels and, indeed, frequently dismissed as blasphemous or heretical or reworked by later editors to comply with perceived tradition, this beautiful hymn is not just of interest to Christian mystics but to anyone who values wise words well spoken. Also available from Cosimo Classics: Mead's *The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition* and *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.*? British scholar and philosopher GEORGE ROBERT STOW MEAD (1863-1933) was educated at Cambridge University. He served as editor of The Theosophical Society's *Theosophical Review*, and later formed The Quest Society and edited its journal, *The Quest Review*. He is also the author of *Notes on Nirvana* (1893) and an 1896 translation of *The Upanishads*.

the gnostic bible: The Evil Creator M. David Litwa, 2021-05-18 This book examines the origins of the evil creator idea chiefly in light of early Christian biblical interpretations. It is divided into two parts. In Part I, the focus is on the interpretations of Exodus and John. Firstly, ancient Egyptian assimilation of the Jewish god to the evil deity Seth-Typhon is studied to understand its reapplication by Phibionite and Sethian Christians to the Judeo-catholic creator. Secondly, the Christian reception of John 8:44 (understood to refer to the devil's father) is shown to implicate the Judeo-catholic creator in murdering Christ. Part II focuses on Marcionite Christian biblical interpretations. It begins with Marcionite interpretations of the creator's character in the Christian Old Testament, analyzes 2 Corinthians 4:4 (in which the god of this world blinds people from Christ's glory), examines Christ's so-called destruction of the Law (Eph 2:15) and the Lawgiver, and shows how Christ finally succumbs to the curse of the Law inflicted by the creator (Gal 3:13). A concluding chapter shows how still today readers of the Christian Bible have concluded that the creator manifests an evil character.

the gnostic bible: The Origin of Satan Elaine H. Pagels, 1997 This work is a social history of

the devil. The figure of Satan has been a standing puzzle in the history of religion. This study examines his origins and his shifting functions. Satan is not present in classical Jewish sources (and scarcely present in traditional Judaism to this day). Images of Satan began to develop and proliferate in later Jewish sources not included in the Hebrew Bible. The book explores this early history or invention of the devil, and traces Satan's subsequent transformations as one of society's most necessary fictions.

the gnostic bible: *The Haran Gawaita* E.S. Drower, The Haran Gawaita (Mandaic Inner Haran or Inner Hauran) is a Mandaean text which purports to tell the history of the Mandaeans and their arrival in Media as Nasoraeans from Jerusalem

the gnostic bible: The Lost Teachings of the Cathars Andrew Philip Smith, 2015-11-19 Centuries after their brutal slaughter by the northern French forces and their suppression by the inquisition, the Cathars continue to exert a powerful influence on both popular culture and spiritual seekers. But what did they really believe and practise? Tourists flock to the Languedoc to visit 'Cathar Country', yet few people know anything of the beliefs of the Cathars beyond vague notions that they believed in reincarnation, were vegetarians, were somehow Gnostic, and has some relation to Mary Magdalene. The Lost Teachings of the Cathars explores the history of this Christian dualist movement between the 12th and 14th centuries, offering a sympathetic yet critical examination of its beliefs and practices.

the gnostic bible: Ancient Gnosticism Birger Albert Pearson, 2007 * A brief and accessible introduction to Gnosticism

the gnostic bible: The Other Gospels , 2013-11-20 Bart Ehrman--the New York Times bestselling author of Misquoting Jesus and a recognized authority on the early Christian Church--and Zlatko Pleše--a foremost authority on Christian Gnosticism--here offer a valuable compilation of over 40 ancient gospel texts and textual fragments that do not appear in the New Testament. This comprehensive collection contains Gospels describing Jesus's infancy, ministry, Passion, and resurrection, and includes the controversial manuscript discoveries of modern times, such as the Gospel of Thomas and the most recent Gospel to be discovered, the Gospel of Judas Iscariot. Each translation begins with a thoughtful examination of important historical, literary, and textual issues in order to place the Gospel in its proper context. This volume is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in early Christianity and the deeper meanings of these apocryphal Gospels.

the gnostic bible: *Christless Christianity* Michael Horton, 2008-11-01 Is it possible that we have left Christ out of Christianity? Is the faith and practice of American Christians today more American than Christian? These are the provocative questions Michael Horton addresses in this thoughtful, insightful book. He argues that while we invoke the name of Christ, too often Christ and the Christ-centered gospel are pushed aside. The result is a message and a faith that are, in Horton's words, trivial, sentimental, affirming, and irrelevant. This alternative gospel is a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, self-improvement, and individualistic religion. It trivializes God, making him a means to our selfish ends. Horton skillfully diagnoses the problem and points to the solution: a return to the unadulterated gospel of salvation.

the gnostic bible: Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi Jacqueline Ann Williams, 1988-01

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