The Gnostic Gospels

The Esoteric Christian Tradition
The entire history of Christian and pagan Gnosticism is shrouded in the deepest mystery and obscurity; for, while the Gnostics were undoubtedly prolific writers, little of their literature has survived. They brought down upon themselves the animosity of the early Christian Church, and when this institution reached its position of world power it destroyed all available records of the Gnostic cultus.

—Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*
Nag Hammadi Scriptures

A 13-volume library of Coptic texts discovered by two peasants beneath a large boulder in upper Egypt.
Dead Sea Scrolls

- Initially discovered by treasure-seeking Bedouins near Qumran, the northern end of the Dead Sea
- Excavations of various documents, papyri, and goat/sheep-skin scrolls mostly written in Hebrew, but also Greek and Aramaic (language of Assyria and Persia)
Dead Sea Scrolls

- Biblical Scriptures (מקרא): All except the Book of Esther; oldest existing copies
- Translation of Scripture (תרגום מקרא) in Greek and Aramaic
- Tefillin (תפילין): prayer parchment slips
- Mezuzot (מזוזה): prayers placed in doorposts of houses
- Apocrypha (אפוקרופה): Catholic / Eastern Orthodox canons not part of Hebrew and Protestant Bible; includes Ben Sira, the Book of Tobit, and the Epistle of Jeremiah
Dead Sea Scrolls

• Calendrical Texts (חיבורים קלנדריים): for solar rather than lunar calculations, documenting festivals, ceremonies, and priestly courses, sometimes written in cryptic script.

• Exegetical Texts (חיבורים פרשניים): explicit analysis and interpretations of Biblical works, including Pesher (פשת): biblical prophecies applied to history.

• Historical Texts (חיבורים היסטוריים): numerous historical events with theological and moral commentary.

• Legal Texts (חיבורים הלכתיים): Rabbinical Halakah, Biblical or religious laws.
Dead Sea Scrolls

- **Parabiblical Texts (חיבורים על המקרא):** re-telling, expansions, and embellishments of biblical stories or legal texts
- **Poetical/Liturgical Texts (חיבורים שיריים ווליטורגיים):** hymns, prayers, and Biblical poetry
- **Sapiential Texts (חיבורים חכמתיים):** Continuation of Wisdom tradition of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, some Psalms, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon
- **Sectarian Texts (חיבורים כיתתיים):** unique theology, worldview, and history of the Essenes or Yahad ("Community")
What is at stake in Gnostic Gospels?
There naturally sprang up a keen rivalry between the two types of Christians; those who had accepted the teaching of Our Lord without any previous Mystery-training depended entirely upon spiritual intuition and good works; those who were already accustomed to the methods of the Mysteries sought to express the Christian truths in the language of the esoteric philosophy of their day. The first chapter of the Gospel according to John is an excellent example of the process whereby men already highly trained in mystical knowledge correlated the new teaching with that which was already familiar to them. In this Gospel we see the influence of the Greek Schools of initiation, but in the Apocalypse we see the influence of Qabalistic thought.

The Gnostic Schools were the Christian Mysteries, made by initiates of other Mystery Schools who had become converted to Christianity and sought to establish within the Christian dispensation the methods to which they were accustomed.

—Dion Fortune, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*
In the struggle between the two types of Christians, the initiates and the non-initiates, the latter eventually gained the day, and forthwith the order for persecution and abolition went forth against the Mysteries of Jesus. The orthodox element then gradually developed, as was inevitable, something of a Mystery System of their own in the sacraments, which are ritual magic pure and simple, as is agreed even by such an authority as Evelyn Underhill.

But with the development of the sacramental system did not, unfortunately, go the metaphysical interpretation thereof. Superstition has been defined as the use of a form whose significance has been forgotten. The sacraments, instead of being the symbol-systems of the Mysteries of Jesus, approach perilously near to vain observance in the hands of those who regard them with superstitious awe rather than an understanding of their psychological and esoteric significance.

—Dion Fortune, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*
Consequently there is an unbridged gulf in our modern Christianity between the mysticism of its deep spiritual truths and the symbolic and magical ceremonial of its ritual. This gulf it is the task of the modern Mystery Schools to bridge. These, however, have in many cases re-illumined their fires at an Eastern altar, so that the bridge they build does not lead to the Christian contacts of the West. Those of their followers who seek initiation, instead of having revealed to them the deeper issues of their own faith, have to change their religion and follow other Masters.

—Dion Fortune, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*
How are we of the West, therefore, to bridge this gulf? We must do what the original gnostics did: seek to express in the metaphysical language of the Mysteries the teachings of Our Lord, and thereby establish an esoteric Christian School—the Initiation of the West. The Gnostics drew their inspiration from two main sources: the Mysteries of Greece and the Mysticism of Israel, the Qabalah, with which Our Lord was obviously very familiar. These are the sources wherein we shall find the mental and magical interpretation of our religion which shall supply the missing keys.

The elements which were discarded from Christianity must be replaced if it is to become a true Wisdom Religion, and unless it can answer to the needs of the intellect as well as of the heart, those who need the food of the intellect rather than the heart will seek it elsewhere, and we cannot blame them.

—Dion Fortune, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*
It [the Tree of Life] is a glyph, that is to say a composite symbol, which is intended to represent the cosmos in its entirety and the soul of man as related thereto; and the more we study it, the more we see that it is an amazingly adequate representation; we use it as the engineer or the mathematician uses his sliding-rule, to scan and calculate the intricacies of existence, visible and invisible, in external nature or the hidden depth of the soul. [...] 

The Qabalistic cosmology is the Christian Gnosis. Without it we have an incomplete system in our religion, and it is this incomplete system which has been the weakness of Christianity. The Early Fathers, in the homely metaphor, threw away the baby with the bath-water. A very cursory acquaintance with the Qabalah serves to show that here we have the essential keys to the riddles of Scripture in general and the prophetic books in particular.

—Dion Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah*
Nag Hammadi

- नाग naga: serpent
- גן gan: garden
- حمادي Hammadi: “praiseworthy,” “one who praises God,” with roots in أحمد or محمد Muhammad, “praised, commendable, laudable”
There is Gnosis in the Buddhist doctrine, in the Tantric Buddhism from Tibet, in the Zen Buddhism from Japan, in the Chan Buddhism of China, in Sufism, in the Whirling Dervishes, in the Egyptian, Persian, Chaldean, Pythagorean, Greek, Aztec, Mayan, Inca, etc., wisdom.

If we carefully study the Christian Gospels, we will find in them Pythagorean mathematics, the Chaldean and Babylonian parable, and the formidable Buddhist moral.

The system of teaching which was adopted by Jesus was the system of the Essenes. Certainly, the Essenes were one hundred percent Gnostic.

Therefore, the four Gospels are Gnostic Gospels, and they cannot be understood without the Maithuna (Sexual Magic).

It is absurd to adulterate Gnosis with different teachings, because the Christian Gospel prohibits adultery. It is absurd to conceive of Gnosis without the Maithuna.

We can drink the wine of Gnosis (divine wisdom) within a Greek, Buddhist, Sufi, Aztec, Egyptian, etc. cup, yet we must not adulterate this delicious wine with strange doctrines.

—Samael Aun Weor, “The Gnostic Institutions”
The same as the St. John Christians; called the Mendaeans or Sabeans. They designate Christ “a false Messiah” and only recognize John the Baptist, whom they call the “great Nazar.” —H.P. Blavatsky

The Nazarenes were known as Baptists, Sabians, and Christians of Saint John. Their belief was that the Messiah was not the Son of God, but simply a prophet who wanted to follow John.

—Samael Aun Weor, *The Three Mountains*

The Nazarenes were known as Baptists, Sabians, and Christians of Saint John. Their belief was that the Messiah [Jesus] was not the Son of God, but simply a prophet who wanted to follow John. In those days, there were disputes among the Baptists, the Essenes, and others.

—Samael Aun Weor, “Alchemical Symbolism of the Nativity of Christ”

The Gnostic must not be a fanatic. We must study everything in order to reject the useless and accept the useful. Gnosis is not against any religion, school, order, or sect. We have fought for the moral purification of many religions, schools, orders and sects. We have never been against any religion, school, or sect. We know that humanity is divided into groups and that each group needs its own system of particular instruction. All religions, schools, orders, and sects are precious pearls that are strung on the golden thread of divinity.

—Samael Aun Weor, *The Yellow Book: "Order and Esoteric Discipline"*
If the Lord had not been crucified, the destiny of the Western world would have been another. We would now have sublime enlightened rabbis everywhere, preaching Christic esotericism. The union of Christic esotericism, secret Jewish Kabbalah, and holy alchemy would have completely illuminated and transformed the entire world. Yes, the mysteries of Levi would have shone with the light of Christ. Gnosis (Da’ath) would have magnificently shone everywhere.

—Samael Aun Weor