

The Other 'Gospels' and Writings

- A. Introduction – Will the real Christian documents please stand up!
1. One of the central claims in DVC is that the biblical documents were doctored and that there were other, original, more accurate documents that tell the real story of Jesus. However, these documents were destroyed by Constantine, though a few have survived.
 2. What are these other documents? Were they really the original Christian Scriptures until Constantine banished them? Are they better sources than the documents of the New Testament?
- B. How many Gospels were written?
1. DVC – More than eighty gospels were written. “Jesus Christ was a figure of staggering influence... Understandably, His life was recorded by thousands of followers across the land... More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them.” (Page 231).
 2. Reality – far fewer than 80 “gospels”
 - a. “There are several historical errors in Teabing’s account. As we will see in a later chapter, Jesus’ words and deeds were by no means recorded ‘by thousands’ during his lifetime; on the contrary there is no evidence that *anyone* recorded the facts of his life while he was still living. Nor were there eighty Gospels considered for inclusion in the New Testament. And Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not ‘among’ those that were included in the New Testament – they were the *only* ones included.” (Bart Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*, page 48.)

- b. “As I’ve already indicated, Teabing is wrong to assert that there were eighty other Gospels vying for a place in the New Testament. The reality is we don’t even *know* how many other Gospels were written; we certainly do not have eighty available to us today, although there are at least a couple of dozen that we know about.” (Bart Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code*, pages 48-49.)

C. Q, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Texts

1. ‘Q’ –

- a. DVC – Q is a document written by Jesus Himself – “In those trunks are reputed to be the *Purist Documents* – thousands of pages of unaltered, pre-Constantine documents, written by the early followers of Jesus...Also rumored to be part of the treasure is the legendary “Q” document – manuscript that even the Vatican admits they believe exists. Allegedly, it is a book of Jesus’ teachings, possibly written in His own hand.” Writings by Christ Himself?” “Of course,” Teabing said. “Why wouldn’t Jesus have kept a chronicle of His ministry? Most people did in those days.” (page 256).
- b. Reality – Q is a hypothetical document that many scholars believe underlies the common sayings of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke.
 - i. ‘Q’ is an abbreviation for the German word ‘Quelle’, which means ‘source.’
 - ii. ‘Q’ is a hypothetical document
 - iii. ‘Q’ is not thought to have been written by Jesus
 - iv. ‘Q’ is thought to have been a collection of sayings of Jesus that circulated
 - v. Some scholars think it underlies many sayings found in Matthew and Luke

2. The Dead Sea Scrolls

- a. DVC – Dead Sea Scrolls contain Gospels Constantine tried to destroy and correct the New Testament. “Fortunately for historians,” Teabing said, “some of the Gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the 1950’s hidden in a cave near Qumran in the Judean desert...Of course the Vatican, in keeping with their tradition of misinformation, tried very hard to suppress the release of these scrolls.” (page 234).
- b. Reality – Dead Sea Scrolls contain no information about Jesus at all – they are Jewish – not Christian
 - i. The Dead Sea Scrolls were originally found in 1947 – not the 1950’s
 - ii. The Dead Sea Scrolls make no mention of Jesus or Christianity at all
 - iii. The Vatican in no way tried to suppress the release of the Dead Sea Scrolls

3. The Nag Hammadi Texts

- a. DVC – Nag Hammadi texts correct errors in NT that portray Jesus as divine. “Fortunately for historians,” Teabing said, “some of the Gospels that Constantine attempted to eradicate managed to survive... And, of course, the Coptic Scrolls in 1945 at Nag Hammadi. In addition to telling the true Grail story, these documents speak of Christ’s ministry in very human terms. Of course the Vatican, in keeping with their tradition of misinformation, tried very hard to suppress the release of these scrolls.” (page 234).
- b. Reality – Nag Hammadi texts contain ancient Gnostic writings that had been rejected by the church as obviously spurious long before the time of Constantine.
 - i. The documents at Nag Hammadi were books, not scrolls

- ii. Constantine did not try to destroy these texts – we have no record of imperial book burnings!
- iii. These documents make no mention of the Grail at all
- iv. The Vatican in no way tried to suppress the release of these documents
- v. These documents do not speak of Christ in “very human terms.” In fact, they were rejected by the early church because they denied the real humanity of Christ!

D. A Brief Overview of the Gnostic Gospels and Writings

1. The Gnostic Gospels and writings were not really a uniform collection. The term has been applied to these writings which have certain common beliefs, although the early groups producing these writings did not necessarily agree with one another on many key ideas.
2. Gnostic Gospels and writings include *The Gospel According to Thomas*, *The Gospel of Judas*, *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Peter*, *The Apocalypse of Peter*, *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Gospel of Philip*, etc.
3. Contrary to the claims of DVC, the Gnostic writings are clearly later than the writings of the New Testament. All of the books of the New Testament were written prior to 100 AD, while almost every Gnostic Gospel was a product of the 2nd or 3rd century.
4. The specific disciple or follower of Christ who are the “heroes” and “villains” in each of these writings differ from the specific disciples of followers who are the “heroes” or “villains” in the other Gnostic writings. For example, the “hero” who receives secret revelations in *The Apocalypse of Peter* is Peter, while in *The Gospel of Thomas* it is Thomas, and in *The Gospel of Judas* it is Judas. And Peter is the “villain” in *The Gospel of Mary*, while Mary Magdalene is the hero.
5. These writings did have a common overarching set of beliefs on the world, God, humanity, revelation, salvation, and Jesus Christ.
6. The Gnostic beliefs on these topics stood in sharp contrast to the beliefs of orthodox Christianity and the apostolic writings that had been accepted by the Church

E. A Closer Look at Gnostic vs. Christian Beliefs

1. The World

- a. Gnostic – the material world is inherently evil, and stands in unalterable opposition to the world of the spirit, which is good
- b. Christian – the material world was created by God and was good, but now struggles under the curse because of man's sin.

2. God

- a. Gnostic – The True God is completely spirit and can have no contact with matter, which is inherently sinful. In eternity past God created other divine emanations, who themselves paired off and produced offspring. Eventually one of these, usually called Sophia (wisdom) became separated and spontaneously produced another divine being, who with help of his minions created the material world and imprisoned Sophia within it.
- b. Christian – There is only One True God, the Triune Father, Son, and Spirit, Who made the material world, who loves that world, called it good, and Who became truly human to work salvation for fallen humanity.

3. Humanity

- a. Gnostic – Sophia is trapped within some human bodies, who thus have the divine spark within them and can be saved. Other humans who do not have this spark are simply material like animals and will cease to exist when they die.

- b. Christian – All humans are created in God’s image, and human bodies are an inherent part of what it means to be human. All humans are loved by God, and all humans will be bodily resurrected after death – some to eternal life and others to eternal destruction.

4. Revelation

- a. Gnostic – God had revealed secret knowledge to specific apostles, and this knowledge had been passed on in secret to the later Gnostics. Often the Old Testament played little or no part in Gnostic revelation.
- b. Christian – God had revealed Himself in both the writings of the Old Testament, and openly to all the apostles in the New Testament. This revelation was not “secret” but was given to the entire church to know and understand.

5. Salvation

- a. Gnostic – The divine spark can only be saved and escape this material world through knowledge. It must learn where it came from, how it got here, and it can be delivered through gnosis (knowledge).
- b. Christian – Salvation came through the very physical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man. Those who have true faith in Christ are saved, and will one day be bodily raised from the dead.

6. Jesus Christ

- a. Gnostic – Christ came from out of this world to bring this gnosis (knowledge) so that those with the divine spark could learn it and be saved. Some Gnostics were docetists, who believed that Jesus only appeared (from the Greek word dokeo – to appear) to be human, but was not really flesh and blood. Other Gnostics were adoptionists, who taught that the Divine Christ came upon or in the human Jesus at his baptism, and then taught his followers the truth. He then left Jesus prior to the crucifixion. The human Jesus suffered and died, but not the divine Christ.
- b. Christian – Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man. He was the Eternal Son of God, one with the Father, but was truly born of the virgin Mary and was true flesh and blood human. Jesus Christ was God Incarnate – God in human flesh.

F. Why Were Gnostics and Their Texts Rejected?

- 1. Their writings often contradicted one another and accepted Christian writings
 - a. Remember that the hero receiving revelation in one of these writings was

the villain in the writing of another group! Who really received the “secret” revelation?

- b. The writings also contradicted established Christian testimony received from ALL of the apostles.

2. The texts were not written by the apostles whose name they bear.

3. Their texts contained bizarre incidents and ideas

a. *The Gospel of Thomas* –

1. A number of sayings are very similar to those found in the canonical Gospels. For example:

The disciples said to Jesus, “Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like.” He said to them, “It is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky. (saying 20; compare with Mark 4:30-31)

Jesus said: No prophet is acceptable in his village, no physician heals those who know him. (saying 31; compare with Luke 4:24)

2. However, a lot of the sayings sound very strange:

Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female not be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in the place of a hand, and a foot in the place of a foot, and an image in the place of an image, then you shall enter the Kingdom (saying 22)

Simon Peter said to them: “Let Mary go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life.” Jesus said: “See I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of heaven (saying 114).

1. These texts are replete with Gnostic ideas about the body and this evil material world – this is what lies behind one becoming two, eyes replacing eyes, male and female being united, etc.
2. Note, however, the low view of women – they have to become male to be saved – hardly the height of feminism!

- b. *The Apocalypse of Peter* - When he had said those things, I saw him seemingly being seized by them. And I said "What do I see, O Lord? That it is you yourself whom they take, and that you are grasping me? Or who is this one, glad and laughing on the tree? And is it another one whose feet and hands they are striking?" The Savior said to me, "He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness. But look at him and me."... And he said to me, "Be

strong, for you are the one to whom these mysteries have been given, to know them through revelation, that he whom they crucified is the first-born, and the home of demons, and the stony vessel in which they dwell, of Elohim, of the cross, which is under the Law. But he who stands near him is the living Savior, the first in him, whom they seized and released, who stands joyfully looking at those who did him violence, while they are divided among themselves. Therefore he laughs at their lack of perception, knowing that they are born blind. So then the one susceptible to suffering shall come, since the body is the substitute. But what they released was my incorporeal body. But I am the intellectual Spirit filled with radiant light. He whom you saw coming to me is our intellectual Pleroma, which unites the perfect light with my Holy Spirit.

1. In this text, notice that the Christ is not on the cross, but rather a human substitute.
 2. Note that Peter is at the crucifixion, an assertion that the authentic Gospels all deny.
 3. Note that the shell, the body, belongs to Elohim, the Hebrew word for God in the Old Testament. He is the evil creator God. In the crucifixion Jesus is freed from this shell, and thus he laughs at those killing him, and ultimately at Elohim.
- c. *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* - When the boy Jesus was five years old, he was playing in a narrow part of a rushing stream. He was gathering the flowing waters into ponds, and immediately they were made clean, and he ordered these things with a single word. And after he made clay, he molded twelve sparrows from it. And it was the Sabbath when he did these things. But there were also many other children playing with him. Then, a certain Jew saw what Jesus was doing while playing on the Sabbath. Immediately, he departed and reported to Jesus' father, Joseph, "Look, your child is in the stream and he took clay and formed twelve birds and profaned the Sabbath?" And Joseph went to the area and when he saw him, he shouted, "Why are you doing these things that are not permitted on the Sabbath?" Jesus, however, clapped his hands and shouted to the sparrows, "Depart, fly, and remember me now that you are alive." And the sparrows departed shrieking. When the Jews saw this, they were amazed. After they had gone away, they described to their leaders what they had seen Jesus do. The son of Annas the scribe was standing there with Jesus. Taking a branch from a willow tree, he dispersed the waters which Jesus had gathered. When Jesus saw what had happened, he became angry and said to him, "You godless, brainless moron, what did the ponds and waters do to you? Watch this now: you are going to dry up like a tree and you will never produce leaves or roots or fruit." And immediately, this child withered up completely. Then, Jesus departed and returned to Joseph's house. The parents of the one who had been withered up, however, wailed for their young child as they took his remains away. Then, they went to Joseph and accused him, "You are responsible for the child who did this." Next, he was going through the village again and a running child bumped his shoulder. Becoming bitter, Jesus said to him, "You will not complete your

journey." Immediately, he fell down and died. Then, some of the people who had seen what had happened said, "Where has this child come from so that his every word is a completed deed?" And going to Joseph, the parents of the one who had died found fault with him. They said, "Because you have such a child, you are not allowed to live with us in the village, or at least teach him to bless and not curse. For our children are dead!"

1. Notice how Jesus performs a miracle simply to amuse himself. This is unlike His true miracles recorded in the Gospels, all of which serve some larger purpose.
2. Notice how moody, impatient, and vindictive Jesus is in these brief stories. Anyone who crosses the five year old Jesus is likely to end up physically deformed or dead!

4. The Gnostics and orthodox Christians had two sets of incompatible beliefs. Both sides recognized this.

G. When were the Gnostics and Their Texts Rejected?

1. This process began during the times of the New Testament

- a. 1 John 1:1 - ¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.
- b. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 - ²⁰ Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called **knowledge** (gnosis), ²¹ which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.
- c. 1 John 4:1-3 - ¹ Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: **Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,** ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.
- d. Colossians 2:8-9; 20-23 - ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in **bodily** form... ²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ "**Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!**"? ²² These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their **harsh treatment of the body**, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

2. This process was completed long before the time of Constantine
 - a. Justin Martyr – died c. 165 – He wrote several treatises against the Gnostics, but they have been lost and we only know of them through the writings of Tertullian and others.
 - b. Irenaeus – c. 180 AD – The Bishop of Lyons, France, who wrote *Against Heresies* to combat the Gnostics and their writings. Many of the Gnostics and their writings are refuted in this work, including the recently published *Gospel of Judas*, which was previously known primarily through this writing of Irenaeus.
 - c. Tertullian – c. 155-230 – wrote against a number of heresies, including the Valentinians, one of the leading Gnostic sects of the day.
 - d. Serapion – Bishop of Antioch

H. Conclusion

1. There are a lot fewer texts than DVC claims
2. These texts were written later than the NT texts, and were not written by apostles or their companions
3. These texts are not historically accurate, but contain bizarre and fanciful events
4. The ideas contained in these texts contradict orthodox Christianity
5. The Gnostics were consistently rejected from the middle of the first century on, long before the time of Constantine

