

The Gnostic Gospel

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Vintage Books, 1979

1) "Orthodox Jews and Christians insist that a chasm separates humanity from its creator: God is wholly other. But some of the gnostics who wrote these gospels contradict this: self- knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical.

Second, the "living Jesus" of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance, like the Jesus of the New Testament. Instead of coming to save us from sin, he comes as a guide who opens access to spiritual understanding. But when the disciples attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal - even identical.

Third, orthodox Christians believe that Jesus is Lord and Son of God in a unique way: he remains forever distinct from the rest of humanity whom he came to save. Yet the gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* relates that as soon as Thomas recognizes him, Jesus says to Thomas that they have both received their being from the same source." page xx

2) "Contemporary Christianity, diverse and complex as we find it, actually may show more unanimity than the Christians churches of the first and second centuries. For nearly all Christians since that time, Catholics, Protestants, or Orthodox, have shared three basic premises. First. they accept the canon of the New Testament; second, they confess the apostolic creed; and third, they affirm specific forms of church institutions. But every one of these - the canon of Scripture, the creed, and the institutional structure - emerged in its present form only toward the end of the second century. Before that time, as Irenaeus and others attest, numerous gospels circulated among various Christian groups,