



Jesus and the Lost Goddess: The Secret Teachings of the Original Christians

By Timothy Freke, Peter Gandy

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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.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

Timothy Freke (left) has a degree in philosophy, is the author of more than twenty books, and is an authority on world spirituality.

Peter Gandy (right) has an M.A. in classical civilization, specializing in the ancient mystery religions. They have coauthored three previous publications: *The Jesus Mysteries*, *The Complete Guide to World Mysticism*, and *Hermetica*.

For more information on the authors, their books, lectures, and seminars, visit their website:
www.jesusbymysteries.demon.co.uk

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'I will reveal to you what no eye can see,

what no ear can hear,

what no hand can touch,

what cannot be conceived by the human mind.'

Jesus, *The Gospel of Thomas*

Life is a Mystery. A Mystery so awesome that we insulate ourselves from its intensity. To numb our fear of the unknown we desensitize ourselves to the miracle of living. We perpetuate the nonchalant lie that we know who we are and what life is. Yet behind this preposterous bluff the Mystery remains unchanging, waiting for us to remember to wonder. It is waiting in a shaft of sunlight, in the thought of death, in the intoxication of new love, in the joy of childbirth or the shock of loss. One minute we are going about our

business as if life were nothing special and the next we are face to face with profound, unfathomable, breathtaking Mystery. This is both the origin and consummation of the spiritual quest.

Although the conditions of life have changed continually throughout history, the Mystery of life has remained the same. This is a book about a remarkable group of men and women who, some 2,000 years ago, were touched by the Mystery and dared to plumb its depths. Revolutionary

free-thinkers who synthesized the available wisdom of the world and articulated perennial truths in dynamic, innovative ways. Creative visionaries who encoded their teachings in extraordinary myths. Explorers of Consciousness whose mystical philosophy promised 'Gnosis' - experiential Knowledge of Truth. These forgotten spiritual pioneers could not have conceived of the unparalleled impact they would have on the history of humanity. Who were they? They called themselves 'Christians'.

It was these radical individualists who inadvertently created the most authoritarian religion in history. Their questioning mysticism was distorted, almost beyond recognition, into the dogmatic creed of what they called an 'imitation church'.² When this impoverished form of Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the brutal Roman Empire, the original Christians were violently suppressed, their scriptures burned and their memory all but erased. The Roman Church fabricated its own account of the origins of Christianity, still believed today, which dismisses the first Christians as a minor cult of obscure heretics. But it was these brilliant mythographers who authored a story which continues to dominate the spiritual imagination of the Western world. From the archaic allegory of a dying and resurrecting Son of God they fashioned a new and vibrant myth which has captured the hearts and minds of millions: the fable of a Jewish peasant who saved the world: the story of Jesus the Christ.

The Good News

For the original Christians, the Jesus story was a myth used to introduce beginners to the spiritual path. For those wishing to go deeper than the 'Outer Mysteries', which were only 'for the masses', there were secret teachings or 'Inner Mysteries'.³ These were 'the secret traditions of true Gnosis' which, according to the 'Church Father' Clement of Alexandria, were transmitted 'to a small number by a succession of masters'.⁴ Those initiated into these Inner Mysteries discovered that Christianity was not just about the dying and resurrecting Son of God. They were told another myth that few Christians today have even heard of - the story of Jesus' lover, the lost and redeemed Daughter of the Goddess.

Amongst the original Christians the divine was seen as having both

a masculine and feminine face. They related to the Divine Feminine as Sophia, the wise Goddess.⁵ Paul tells us, 'Among the initiates we speak of Sophia', for it is 'the secret of Sophia' that is 'taught in our Mysteries'.⁶ When initiates of the Inner Mysteries of Christianity partook of Holy Communion, it was Sophia's passion and suffering they remembered.⁷ Amongst the original Christians, priests and priestesses would offer initiates wine as a symbol of 'her blood'.⁸ The prayer would be offered: 'May Sophia fill your inner being and increase in you her Gnosis'.⁹ It was Sophia who was petitioned:

'Come, hidden Mother; come, you who are made manifest in your works, and give joy and rest to those who are bound to you. Come and partake in this Eucharist which we perform in your name, and in the love feast for which we have assembled at your invitation.'¹⁰

The eradication of this Christian Goddess by the patriarchal Roman Church has left us all motherless children. Women have been denied a sympathetic rapport with the Divine Feminine. Men have been denied a

love-affair with a female face of Deity. Spirituality has become part of the battleground which separates the sexes, when it should be the sanctuary of eternal

fellowship. The original Christians, however, practised 'partnership spirituality'. They valued men and women equally, as expressions of God and Goddess. They saw the division of the sexes as a correlate of that primal duality which is the source of creation, a duality that when made one, as in the act of love, brings the bliss of union that they called 'Gnosis'.

For the original Christians the Jesus story appears at the end of a cycle of Christian myths which begins with the ineffable Mystery manifesting itself as a primordial Father and Mother and culminates in the mystical marriage of Jesus and Sophia. The Inner Mysteries reveal these myths as allegories of spiritual initiation, symbolic stories which encode a profound philosophy with the power to transform an initiate from a Christian into a Christ.^{#11}

For the original Christians the 'gospel' or 'good news' is not a story written in a book. Rather they taught that: 'The gospel is the Gnosis.'^{#12} The good news is that a complete transformation of consciousness is

possible. The good news is that there is a way to transcend suffering. The good news is that there is a natural state of happiness which is our birthright. This is the gospel of absolute freedom. It is not a set of rules which we must follow to become 'good'. It is about discovering our own essential nature, which is good already, so that we can live spontaneously. This gospel holds out the extraordinary promise that those who understand it 'will not taste death'.^{13#} But immortality is not access to Heaven as reward for living an upright life. It is the immediate realization, here and now, of our true identity, which was never born and so can never die.

A Journey of Initiation

This book is an exploration of the gospel of Gnosis. Our aim has been to present a radical alternative to the traditional picture of who the original Christians were and what they believed. Like all spiritual movements, early Christianity covered a broad spectrum of individuals and schools with differing levels of perception, so we have chosen to focus on what we regard as their best and most enduring insights, which may still be valid for us today.

Why isn't the gospel of Gnosis common knowledge? First, because the Roman Church has spent over 16 centuries systematically destroying

the evidence that it ever existed. For much of this time, merely to possess Christian works unacceptable to the established Church was punishable by a cruel death. Thankfully some of these texts have nevertheless survived. In recent decades they have been augmented by fabulous archaeological finds such as the discovery of a library of 'heretical' Christian scriptures in a cave near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. The implications of this find, and the advances in our understanding of early Christianity that it has led to, have yet to be widely appreciated.

Inadequate translation has also played a significant role in disguis-

ing the secret teachings of Christianity encoded in the New Testament gospels and alluded to frequently by Paul in his letters. Rendering these works into familiar 'churchy' English lulls us into the reassuring illusion that we have understood what is being said, when in fact we have not even begun to scratch the surface of the real significance of the original Greek. The 'heretical' Christian gospels, on the other hand, are regularly rendered into unfamiliar English, making them sound strange and inaccessible. One translator was even in

the habit of remarking that such texts were 'not supposed to make any sense'.#14 Little wonder, then, that an artificial division has been created between the orthodox canon and other Christian gospels. However, when the New Testament Jesus story is understood in its original context, as part of the whole Christian myth cycle, and the 'heretical' gospels are interpreted sympathetically, they can, at last, be seen as expressions of one profound mystical philosophy.

In our examination of these texts we have made one assumption which other commentators often do not make: that our ancestors were not idiots. We have postulated that although they lived in very different physical conditions, they still faced the same great enigmas of existence as we do today and that their answers are potentially as valuable as contemporary views. We have, in short, approached the people we are studying with the respect which they deserve and which they have been denied for nearly two millennia.

Academics have often failed lamentably to understand the spirituality of the original Christians because they have lacked mystical insight. The Gnosis is not an intellectual theory. It is a state of being. It is an inner 'Knowledge' which can never be truly understood from the outside. Trying to comment on the Gnosis without ever having personally experienced its life-changing impact is like writing a travelogue for a country you have never visited. Any native would find it laughably absurd. We approach this work not only with a commitment to rigorous scholarship, but also as lifelong students of experiential mysticism. We are not, however, members of any cult or affiliated to any religious organization. This, we feel, makes us ideally placed to take up the challenge of recovering the ancient Gnosis for modern readers.

New ideas can take decades to travel from scholarly circles to the general public. We have attempted to circumvent this process by making the main text of the book as accessible as possible while offering notes for those who wish to see more detailed evidence in support of our ideas or to check our sources.

For us, putting together this book has been much more than an

academic study. It has been a revelation. For the original Christians, the process of initiation involved meditating on their myths to tease out

the allegorical significance. In writing this book we ourselves have had to undertake a similar in-depth study of Christian mythology. This has been an initiatory experience which has left us transformed in ways we did not anticipate.

It has been a philosophical journey of cosmic proportions. Yet at its conclusion we have found that the secret teachings of the original Christians, although seemingly arcane, are actually about understanding the miracle

of life just as it is. We have struggled to penetrate indecipherable riddles. Yet we have found that, although seemingly complex, these teachings

are in essence astonishingly simple. We have time-travelled back into

the ancestral mind. Yet although the gospel of Gnosis belongs to a so-called 'dead' spiritual tradition, we have found it to be as relevant and challenging today as it was two millennia ago. Our hope is that this book allows you to also taste something of the ancient and perennial Gnosis for yourself.

chapter two

The original Christians

'Much that is written in Pagan books is found also in the books of God's Church. What they share in common are the words which spring from the heart, the law that is inscribed on the heart.'

Valentinus, On Friends 1

It's a strange world. At the end of the nineteenth century the influential Hindu guru Vivekananda was sailing across the Mediterranean Sea on a return journey to England when he had a curious dream. A very old and venerable-looking sage appeared to him, saying:

'Do ye come to effect our restoration? I am one of the ancient order of Therapeutae. The truths preached by us have been given out by Christians as taught by Jesus; but for the matter of that, there was no personality by the name of Jesus ever born.#2

This extract from Vivekananda's autobiography was kindly sent to us by a reader of our previous book, *The Jesus Mysteries*, because it endorses the revolutionary view of the origins of Christianity that we presented there.

After years of painstaking research we concluded that the traditional history of Christianity was at best hopelessly inaccurate and at worst

a pack of lies. The evidence demanded that we think the unthinkable. Christianity was not the cult of a first-century Messiah, but a Jewish adaptation of the ancient Pagan Mystery religion. We could find no evidence that there had ever been an historical Jesus, because the gospel story was a Jewish reworking of ancient Pagan myths of a dying and resurrecting Son of God.#3 We even ventured an informed guess as to who may have authored the original Jesus myth - a sect of mystical Jews called the Therapeutae.4#

Is it possible that Vivekananda reached the truth by intuitive means

a century before us? Perhaps. The psychologist Carl Jung came to believe that the whole of human history could be reconstructed from the contents of one person's unconscious.#5 Yet it requires substantial evidence to validate such a shocking revision of received history. This we provided in

The Jesus Mysteries.

The main concern of that book was to uncover the true history of Christianity. The main concern of this book is to discern the true meaning of Christianity. But before we can embark on an exploration of the gospel of Gnosis we need an understanding of the historical context in which it was taught. In the light of our latest research, therefore, we will first review, clarify and expand upon the picture of Christian origins which we presented in detail in *The Jesus Mysteries*.

The traditional history of Christianity has managed to survive for so long, in part, because although it is utterly inadequate to the facts, it is fairly internally consistent and easy to grasp. We have found that the best way to open people to the idea that this supposed history is actually a complete fantasy is to present a rival picture of how Christianity and Christian mythology developed, which is more coherent and plausible. In this book, therefore, this is what we will attempt.

Fundamentally all we are suggesting is that we listen to the losers in the civil war that bedevilled Christianity in the third and fourth centuries between the Roman Church and those it branded heretics and did everything in its power to silence. The traditional history was written by the winners, but we have come to believe that

the account of the origins and meaning of Christianity given by those dissident Christians is far closer to the truth.

Gnostics and Literalists

Users Review

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Thomas Melendez:

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