

Introduction the nag hammadi discoveries comprised of scripts



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Introduction

Christianity is a historical religion that revolves around Jesus Christ as the Lord and savior of humankind. It claims its origin right from the Garden of Eden in the creation story where the first man and woman fell into sin. Jesus came to rescue man and reconnect him to God. Understanding of these facts and others has led to emergence of diverse spiritualism based on discoveries of historical documents like the Nag Hammadi discoveries in 1945. Such documents challenge the person and life of Jesus. It is important to note that the differences are not at all major but they are indeed very critical.

History

The Nag Hammadi discoveries comprised of scripts suspected to have been those of a religion in the early centuries.

They comprised of The Gospel of Truth, The Gospel of Thomas, and The Gospel of The Egyptian among others. The religion depicted in these documents show a sharp difference to what the bible says and evidence show that they were based on heresies. Most of the Christian bishops classified them as such and saw them as obstacles to the spread of the true gospel. The documents were written and circulated by people who purported to be spreading the true gospel of Jesus. It was hard to know the truth as they used Christian vocabularies and largely related to the Jewish customs. The scripts spread much faster than the other gospel mainly because they claimed to spread tradition about Jesus that was hidden from other people. However, the discovery of similar documents in different times of history and different places theologically, only serves to show the extent to which this

religion had spread (Robinson, 3). A campaign against these 'misleading' religious beliefs was started and it was not until the time of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century when Christianity became the official religion that the Christian bishops felt a relief and the battle was won.

Books and documents labeled as heretical were banned. Anyone found in possession of such books was charged and imprisoned on criminal offense. It is highly suspected that it was during this time that some supporters of this 'gospel' hid some manuscripts from destruction and survived until their discovery in the nineteenth century.

The Differences

God is the center of the differences many Christians hold. Many take God to be an 'out of this world' person who is all-powerful and all knowing. On the other hand, others regard it as blasphemous to consider human beings to be the image of God. Others still see God not as a human being but as a force beyond the confines of the universe. While some Christians claim that Jesus' death on the cross was to bring salvation, others believe that the most important thing about Him is the life he lived on earth.

They attach more importance on the wonderful moral teachings he taught. Some Christians think of the resurrection as the physical restoration of His body while some believe resurrection was only a symbol and not real. Hell is real for others and considers it the punishment that the unrighteous ones will receive after the present life. To others, hell remains a metaphorical expression of the life without God. Further issues include baptism and the Holy Communion. These are just the few differences that present the base

for spiritual diversity among Christians. Gnosticism is just one form of spiritual diversity.

Gnosticism

The word gnosis literary has the meaning of wisdom which according to its proponents, it is a divine form of wisdom; meaning that, it is an experience with a supernatural being, in this case, God.

This word may also mean learned or intellectual wisdom and this indicates clearly that Gnosticism is all about the pursuit of human wisdom, knowledge, or intellect and not about spiritual connection with God. The Gnostic tradition dates back to the Vedic philosophy, paganism, Greek traditions, and Zoroastrianism, which implies that it is beyond the Christian traditions. It assumes that, there was once a universal religion, which changed over time due to the spread of people across the world. The different cultures and environments also contributed to these changes. Therefore, there are people enshrined with these traditions and faith that are no longer their primary intellectual source.

The Gnosticism of coming of Jesus was because of the higher power needs; to restore the mystery traditions, therefore, Jesus is not at all superior but a rejuvenation of the old traditions. It is claimed that Jesus' Gnosticism united the older mysteries to form one larger and powerful system.

Feature of Gnosticism

Gnosticism has its own feature and characteristics that make it unique.

Gnosis is ' esoteric'; this means the inner teachings that are responsible of

the religious intellect. This knowledge is not available to everyone but only to a select few. The gnosis teachings are deemed mystical because of their ancient origin wisdom, which is claimed as the mother of today's religious system. They are termed occultism and religious at the same time, occultism because of their secrecy and hidden nature and, religious because they lead back to the world ideals. Ancient Gnostic teachers taught that, knowing God was the result of knowing oneself.

It involved knowing who they were, what they were to become, where they were, and where they were going, where they were coming from, and why they were being released from it, what birth is and what is rebirth. According to Gnosis, investigation of these matters would result to the knowledge of God. The Gnostic system viewed the world as having two entities meaning that, they had a dualistic view of the world where two equal divine forces are depicted. These forces are God and man where their respective governing of the world is put to measure (Jonas 17). The Gospel of Thomas further depicts the concept of dualism.

The Gospel of Thomas

This 'gospel' is one of the Gnostic gospels discovered in the Nag Hammadi discovery whereby, Jesus acknowledges having the same power as Thomas by refusing him to call him master. It is estimated to have been authored around 140 A. D. mainly because it is thought to have been written after the New Testament, which dates 60-140 A. D. Jesus is shown to claim that if anyone drunk from his mouth was bound to become as himself. The teachings here show Jesus as a spiritual guide only, and not as the Lord and the savior, the orthodox Christians regard him. This gospel has many <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-the-nag-hammadi-discoveries-comprised-of-scripts/>

similarities with eastern religions like Buddhism where the founder is only a spiritual leader and not in any way superior.

Historically, there are indications that Thomas the disciple of Jesus may have gone to India thus the emergence of suggestions of an influence of Indian tradition in the gospel.

The Creation Story

The Nag Hammadi discovery tells many stories differently from the commonly referred to, texts in the Bible. The origin of the human race found in the book of Genesis in the Bible was found in some manuscripts in the discovery. The story is vividly explained from the serpent's perspective.

The serpent is a representation of divine knowledge or wisdom in Gnostic circle. In this text, ' the Lord' is threatening Adam and Eve with death in a bid to prevent them from getting knowledge while the serpent is convincing them to obtain knowledge. Later, ' the Lord' expels Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden when they finally heed the words of the serpent to partake knowledge.

Women

Other scripts in the Nag Hammadi discovery seem to depict women as highly placed in the society, something very uncommon especially in those days. There are poems put across in feminine voice that seem to be of a divine power or a goddess.

Here is an example of such a poem: For I am the first and the last I am the honored one and the scorned one I am the whore and the holy one I am the

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wife and the virgin.... I am the barren one, and many are her sons.... I am the silence that is incomprehensible....

I am the utterance of my name (Robison, 3).

The Gospel of Mary

The Gospel of Mary is another indication of Gnostics' way of elevating women. It is not exactly clear which Mary is referred to here, but it is largely assumed she is Mary Magdalene. The first six pages of the gospel have not been found to date but the account begins with Christ and his disciples in a discussion after Christ had resurrected. The gospel shows Christ prohibiting his disciples from teaching spirituality as an external experience but instead instructs them to teach it as an internal experience (Robinson 17).

Later, Christ leaves the scene but his disciples are left confused and in great fear. In the text, Mary describes to the disciples her personal experience with Christ including the visions she had seen in a bid to encourage the disciples. She tells them things that the savior had told her when they were together alone.

Though Peter and Andrew acknowledge that Mary is spiritually superior to them, they differ with her sharply and claim that the savior could not have possibly said the words Mary claims He said. Mary depicts the Gnostic principle of inner experience here; it teaches that sin is an indication of the desperate cry of balance by the soul. This insight shows that sin results from the soul's imbalance and not from moral ignorance.

Conclusion

Spirituality is a matter of personal belief on a deity or superior being. It is mainly passed on from generation to generation by the documents left behind, parental guidance and the prevailing conditions in the society. The study above of the different spiritual diversities in Christianity serves as an indication of how small issues can end up separating people in the world. As such, there is bound to be differences in the way these documents are interpreted, which has resulted to diverse spirituality all through history.

Works Cited

Robinson, James. *The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures*. New York: Nag Hammadi Library, 1997.