

## The Lost Books

### You May Not Know

By James Bean, Maine, USA (Originally In English)



Spoken recently by James Bean on his radio program called *Spiritual Awakening*. Which features spiritual book reviews and readings from the writings of many mystics, saints and world scriptures of the East and West.

Recently Supreme Master Ching Hai made some amazing and insightful comments concerning the lost books of the Bible. She said, "Transmigration is another word for reincarnation. It is a very Eastern term. You don't hear it that often in the Bible, because the Bible is also not always complete, as all of you know. It has "transmigrated" for 2,000 years or some time, so some things may be missing there. The true Bible is locked up somewhere and we are never allowed to see it. But some of the newly-dug from ancient sites \_ the Bible in some part has come out, and some of it mentions reincarnation." (Supreme Master Ching Hai News #60)

Based on my exploration of the lost books of the Bible, I find her comments to be quite accurate. During the last 200 years many ancient Jewish and Christian documents have been rediscovered in the Middle East. And, I should mention that some Christians have been curious about apocryphal scriptures and have preserved some of these "other books" of the Bible for 2,000 years. Many other interesting collections of psalms, letters (epistles), gospels and revelations have survived the centuries, even though only a small number of open-minded seekers have valued their spiritual wisdom.

I want to share with you my encounter with the books of the other Bible. I want to impart to you information about books of mystical poetry, discourses on gaining enlightenment and

other amazing documents which might be very helpful to you on your spiritual journey. It's time that this knowledge is revealed so anyone can know how to find the lost or hidden books of the Bible!

A long time ago when I was involved in making a major study of the Bible (the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament), I noticed that Catholic Bibles contain several additional books that aren't in the Protestant Bible. These books are called "the Apocrypha" in the Protestant tradition. Although the original King James Version of 1611 AD did contain these books, it seems that Protestant Bible societies took them out of the Bible a couple hundred years ago to make smaller, cheaper Bibles available to the masses. Today most Protestants think of these disputed books as "Catholic" but, the truth of the matter is the books of "the Apocrypha" for millennia have also traditionally been included in the old Bibles of the Greek Orthodox, Syrian, Russian, Armenian, Egyptian and all other ancient churches.

Translations of most of these books were also found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls. The original Greek translation of the Old Testament made in Alexandria around 200 BC also included these other books -- books that have now vanished from the Protestant Bibles in the US!

From my perspective, the two most interesting books of "the Apocrypha" are The Wisdom of Solomon and The Wisdom of Sirach -- two very large collections of proverbs and wise sayings very comparable to the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu. Many people think that the Bible as we know it was put together by Jesus and the apostles during the 1st century AD but, that's definitely not so! For a longer period of time than the US has been a country -- for centuries -- the early Church had no such concept as a closed canon of scripture, a collection of books that they viewed as the "final" or "only" revelation concerning spiritual matters. Rather, Christians during that creative period felt free to compose new scriptures, psalms, odes, proverbs, letters that they felt were inspired, and other documents of a spiritual nature. This was during the early years when Christianity had living apostles and saints, and Christianity was a much more supernatural religion; a mystery religion that put a great deal of emphasis on experiencing the Kingdom of God, or the spiritual realm.



## RIGGING THE CURRICULUM

Christianity, like other religions, underwent the process of "mainstreaming" -- settling down or crystallizing -- into a standardized, organized faith. The mainstream consciousness came to believe that "the age of the apostles and prophets was now past." So, since masters and saints (who acted as oracles of the Divine) were no longer being recognized by the masses, some people started to look to past masters for guidance. Christianity entered the stage where the Book became the master, the Book became the guru. The state church of the Emperor Constantine created a fixed list of books which would serve for all time as the rule of faith. They also made lists of books that were to be weeded out of circulation, no longer to be considered as scripture. This process of canonization and censorship, for the most part, happened during the fourth century. It was during this time that most of the "other books"

lost their status as scripture. Only a small number of books made it into the this fourth century Bible and sadly, many important mystical books were left out.



## EXAMPLES OF DELETED SCRIPTURES

Many years ago when I was reading the New Testament book of Jude I discovered an amazing quote -- a quote which opened me up to the other books of the Bible. Jude, in verse 14 of this short book preserved in the New Testament, quoted from the book of First Enoch 1:9. He also quoted another found in the Hebrew scriptures called the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. I was amazed to find out about the existence of these other books and decided that if Jude, during the 1st century, had access to them, then I wanted to check them out myself! So I started to collect apocryphal writings once considered to be scripture.

The term "apocryphal books" has three basic definitions: 1) secret or hidden writings of an esoteric nature; 2) books not considered inspired by the church but are, nonetheless uplifting to read; or 3) fictitious writings or fantastic stories. In existence are hundreds of apocryphal books representing all three categories. I've tried to collect all of the available apocryphal writings and have found a number of important books amongst them that contain absolutely essential spiritual instruction.

The Books of Enoch were found in some Ethiopian Bibles and among the Dead Sea Scrolls. They describe the heavenly journeys of Enoch, the prophet, through the Seven Heavens! Like Hermes Trismegistus of Egypt and the great Medieval mystic Kabir from India, the Jewish prophet Enoch described his visions of the higher planes.



## THE ODES OF SOLOMON — NEW TESTAMENT PSALMS

Out of all the apocryphal writings I've collected, I think the Odes of Solomon is the most beautiful. It is the would-be book of New Testament psalms! The Book of the Odes has been described as the first known hymn book of early Christianity. One scholar said of the Odes, "Here are some of the most beautiful songs of peace and joy that the world possesses." Bentley Layton in *The Gnostic Scriptures* says that the Odes were considered to be inspired scripture and were chanted by Christians who lived in Syria and Mesopotamia about 2,000 years ago. A follower of the Unity School of Christianity published an edition of the Odes a few years back and created daily affirmations based on this ancient book. These ecstatic hymns remind me of Sufi love poetry in the tradition of "the lover and the Beloved". Many have adopted the practice of meditating upon the Odes and report being brought to a deeper level of devotion (bhakti); being caught up in a love-affair with God, the Ocean of Love. That's also been my experience.

"There is no hard way where there is a simple heart,  
Good thought finds no wounds,  
Nor is there any storm in the depths of illuminated thought.  
Surrounded on every side by the beauty of the open country,  
one is free of doubt.

Below  
is like above." (from Ode 34)

"Open your ears, and I shall speak to you;  
Give me yourself, so that I too may give you myself."(Ode 9)

"He filled me with words of truth  
that I may speak the same.

Like the flow of waters truth flows from my mouth,  
and my lips reveal its harvest,

and it gives me the gold of knowledge  
for the mouth of the Lord is the true Word  
and the Door of His Light.

And the highest one gave the Word to His worlds,  
which interpret His own beauty,  
recite His praise,  
confess His thought,  
are heralds of His mind,  
are instructors of His works.

For the swiftness of the Word is ineffable  
and like His statement are its swiftness and sharpness.

Its course knows no end,  
it never fails, it stands.  
Its descent and its way are incomprehensible.

Like His work is its end  
for it is the Light and the dawn of thought,

and through it worlds converse...

The mouth of the highest one spoke to them

and he was made clear by His Word.

The dwelling place of the Word is man  
and its truth is love." (Ode 12)

The Book of Odes even contains some passages which describe the  
feminine aspect of the Godhead! "

I rested on the Spirit of the Lord and She lifted me up to heaven,"



### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARY MAGDALENE

The Gospel of Mary was one of the ancient books found in 1945 near Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The preeminence of Mary Magdalene in this Gospel gives one example of the leadership roles of women in early Christianity. Mary is described as an apostle, equal in every way to the twelve apostles and part of the inner circle of Jesus. But more than that, Mary was a kind of spiritual successor to Christ, taking over His role as the spiritual teacher of the other disciples. In every way, the text affirms that her leadership of the other disciples is based upon superior spiritual understanding.

As a recipient of the secret teachings of the resurrected Christ, Mary, in her Gospel teaches the other disciples spiritual knowledge and gives detailed accounts of her visions and travels through the higher planes or heavens accompanied by the radiant form of her Master, the resurrected Christ. She relays to the other disciples the spiritual instructions, the words of Christ that she heard during these encounters, which probably took place during times of deep prayer -- long periods of meditation.



### THE ACTS OF PAUL AND THECLA

Speaking of women apostles and saints in early Christianity: The Acts of Paul and Thecla, is the record of the life and times of Thecla, a follower of Saint Paul, the apostle. This book is brimming with accounts of many supernatural and miraculous events during the life of Thecla, very much calling to mind the Desert Fathers and Mothers of Egypt.

This book describes Thecla as "an apostle of God," who, sometimes traveled and at other times lived a monastic life in a cave. She was also a spiritual leader and teacher who instructed people "in the oracles of God". The text records that "many of them abandoned

this world, and lead a monastic life with her." She was so highly esteemed that a temple was erected and dedicated to her!



### THE BOOK OF PISTIS SOPHIA (FAITH-WISDOM)

After studying the four Gospels of the New Testament I became very curious and puzzled about how each of them concluded. Each of them only devotes a short chapter or two to the teachings and activities of Christ after the resurrection. Logically, wouldn't you think that if someone rises from the dead, that this would immediately become the central, electrifying event that becomes the main focus, if not the obsession of the writers to record these events with extreme detail? Wouldn't you think that the words and deeds of the resurrected Christ would deserve to be the focus of many chapters, if not entire books? And yet, the New Testament simply (and cryptically) says that "there were many other things that Jesus did," and that "He continued to appear to the disciples and instruct them about the Kingdom of God."

Apparently the post-resurrection teachings of Christ were regarded by the disciples as private or advanced, meant only for those followers who were ready for a deeper commitment to contemplation and the spiritual journey. Though they are more difficult to find, there are other documents that do contain post-resurrection teachings including: The Book of the Resurrection, The Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Thomas, Dialogue of the Savior, The Gospel of James, The Books of Jeu, The Letter of Peter to Philip and The Book of Pistis Sophia (Faith-Wisdom).

The largest Gospel ever discovered, Pistis Sophia, was brought to London from Egypt and purchased in 1772 by A. Askew, a London doctor and collector of old manuscripts. The book was published and one of its most famous readers was the great poet-mystic William Blake, who was greatly influenced by it.

This text does document that there was a time when some Christians did believe in the concept of reincarnation and the preexistence of the soul. Like St. Paul's "Damascus Road experience" recorded in the New Testament, Christ is said to have appeared to His followers from inside an incredibly brilliant light and many rays of light. Many interesting dialogues between Christ and His initiates are recorded in this document -- about eleven years-worth! Pistis Sophia also contains many beautiful hymns and prayers. Though reincarnation is mentioned as a reality, the goal of the teachings was to liberate souls from material captivity, reincarnation, the wheel of fate and encumbrances of darkness. Ignorance of the spiritual world was to be replaced with spiritual freedom and souls were given the ability to travel from Earth to Heaven via the Holy Stream of Light: "Seek, all of you, after the Light, so that the power of your soul that is in you may live. Do not cease seeking day or night until you find the mysteries of the Kingdom of Light, which will purify you, make you into pure light and lead you into the Kingdom of Light." This inner vision took place during periods of solitude and contemplation (meditation).



## THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY UNEARTHED IN EGYPT!

A number of ancient mystical books were discovered near the city of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. This almost 2,000 year old "time capsule" (a large sealed storage jar containing parchments written in the Coptic language buried by monks during the fourth century) now known as the Nag Hammadi Library, has set in motion a spiritual revolution. Buried under the sands of Egypt for centuries, these censored and forgotten scriptures from the early years of Gnostic Christianity may impart to spiritual seekers of today, knowledge of several mystical traditions that once existed in the West. This ancient library contains spiritual discourses from Christian, Gnostic, Jewish, Pythagorean, Hermetic and other spiritual movements. What have been returned to us are the teachings of various mystics, Gnostics who initiated their students into the "Mysteries of the Kingdom of Light," and wrote down descriptions of their otherworldly journeys into inner space. One of the most talked about books of the Nag Hammadi Library is The Gospel of Thomas, a collection of the spiritual sayings of Jesus on gaining enlightenment.



## SAYINGS OF JESUS ABOUT THE LIGHT AND SOUND

The Gospel of Thomas is a "sayings Gospel," a collection of the proverbs and parables of Christ about discovering the Kingdom of God. The theme of these sutras of wisdom is that the Supreme Being is Light, our soul is made of Light, and that by contemplating the Living Light we can reenter paradise.

In the Book of Thomas it is recorded that Jesus was a Master who taught His disciples that "we have come from the Light, from the place where the Light came into being by itself...there is Light within a person of Light, and it shines on the whole world;" and "if one is whole, one will be filled with Light." Also, "He who will drink from my mouth will become like Me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to that person." The image of drinking from the mouth of Christ is describing the process of listening to the Sound, Word or Cosmic Voice of God which transforms the listeners, transporting them to the higher or hidden realities. The quotes are from The Gospel of Thomas, Marvin Meyer, published by Harper Collins.



## LIGHT MYSTICISM OF THE GNOSTICS, THEN AND NOW

One of the central teachings of Gnostic saints was the experience of the inner Light. In fact, having visions of divine Light is a universal experience. People around the world in all cultures have recorded visions of Heaven and encounters with "the Light within". Many have eloquently described in their sacred texts encounters with Light coming from beyond the

darkness. Many saints and mystics, including those who wrote various Nag Hammadi texts, describe God or the Supreme Being as a GOD OF ALL-ENCOMPASSING, PURE, BRILLIANT LIGHT. They also believe that we, as souls (our true spiritual identity) are "sparks of the Light," that we are, in reality, "Children of the Light".

The experience of Light mysticism (seeing inner Light) takes place during one's time of contemplative prayer, or meditation. "The rays of primordial Light that illumine purified souls with spiritual knowledge not only fills them with benediction and luminosity; they also, by means of contemplation of the inner essences of created things, lead them up to the Noetic heavens. For this reason Saint Neilos says, "The intellect's proper state is a noetic height, somewhat resembling the sky's hue, which is filled with the Light of the Holy Trinity during the time of prayer." (The Philokalia, Volume IV, writings of Greek Saints, Faber and Faber Books)

"God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness." And, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (The New Testament)

"Understand what the Great Light is." (Nag Hammadi Library In English, Harper Collins)

"I AM the Light that is over all things." (Gospel of Thomas)

"Then we went up to the sixth heaven. And I gazed up on high and saw a great Light shining down on the sixth heaven." ("The Apocalypse of Paul," Nag Hammadi Library In English)

It says in The Dead Sea Scrolls \_ A New Translation, Harper Collins, "From the Fount of His Knowledge has my Light shot forth; upon His wonders has my eye gazed."

Also, "Your Holy Spirit illuminates the dark places of the heart of your servant with Light like the sun."

Further to the East, the medieval Saint (Sant) Kabir said, "The light of the soul is equal to that of sixteen suns."

The Mandaean Religion of Iraq has many beautiful hymns and prayers to the Light, and visions of Heaven that often resemble NDEs (modern day near death accounts): "His Light illuminates and His radiance irradiates all the worlds, and the divine beings who stand before Him and shine in their radiance and in the radiance of the Great Light which rests upon them."

Pistis Sophia is published by E. J. Brill Books. Enoch, Odes of Solomon and Thecla are found in The Lost Books of the Bible and the Forgotten Books of Eden, Meridian, an imprint of Penguin Books. The Books of Thomas, Mary, James, and others are found in The Complete Gospels, Polebridge Press. An excellent anthology of apocrypha that I highly recommend is The Other Bible, published by Harper Collins! Other good books include: The New Jerusalem Bible (with the Apocrypha), Doubleday; and, The Nag Hammadi Library In

English, Harper Collins Books.

As you can see from this brief sampling of apocryphal scriptures, the books that were left out of the fourth century Bible tended to promote personal spiritual experience and contemplation. This earlier spiritual tradition was never fully embraced in the West and that is the reason, in my view, why these other books were left behind.

Long ago, a great poet-mystic said, "The god of time (maya) has put a cover over the teachings of saints and thus concealed them from humanity."

For more information and to receive a free book list of translations of these "lost books" of the Bible, write: James Bean, PO Box 7, Newport, Maine 04953-0007 USA.