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and these are designated by scholars as Q¹, Q² and Q³. Q¹, like the earliest layer of *Thomas*, is thought to have been written around 50 C. E. Q² and Q³ were written sometime later—but probably before 70 C.E.

If Q¹, and the earliest layer of *Thomas*, represent what Jesus' earliest followers believed about him, then orthodox Christian dogma is in trouble. Neither of these earliest of all Gospels show any interest in Jesus as the Messiah, nor do they propose in any way that Jesus was divine.⁷ Additionally, the Jesus of *Thomas* and Q¹ does not make apocalyptic pronouncements of any kind.⁸ Only in the later layers of Q (Q² and Q³) do we find the first evidence of believers putting apocalyptic statements into the mouth of Jesus.⁹

Most shocking of all, the Jesus people who originally compiled these texts gave no theological meaning to Jesus' death, much less to his "resurrection". The two earliest Gospels have no stories at all about the life or death of Jesus. Jesus' earliest followers seemed to have been interested only in preserving his teachings, and none of those teachings had anything to do with later Christian theology.

Earliest Christianity (or as many scholars refer to it today, the Christ cult) did not emerge out of the Jesus movement. It was an entirely separate movement, and one of its leaders—if not its very founder—was the self-proclaimed apostle of Christ, Paul. Christianity as we know it today was founded on the theology of Paul, not on Jesus or his teachings.

HERETICS AND HIDDEN BOOKS

Belief in Jesus as the Messiah, Savior and son of God were the theological products of Hellenistic Christians who, for the most part, were also gentiles. But Hellenistic Christianity was not a cohesive movement, it was a collection of different faiths that found different expressions in different locations throughout the Roman Empire.¹⁰ While all of these forms of Christianity held some beliefs in common—that Jesus was the Messiah, a world savior and the son of God—they widely disagreed on what these terms actually meant.

Contrary to the claims of the Church throughout history, a single

Christian doctrine did not exist until the fourth century when “orthodox” Christianity became the state religion of Rome under Constantine. “Orthodox” Christianity did not become the only Christianity until Constantine outlawed all other versions of the faith.

Prior to the fourth century, Christianity was an incredibly diverse religion. While many religions begin with a single theology that eventually evolves into different forms, quite the opposite was the case with Christianity. And since so many different forms of Christianity once existed, so did hundreds of different gospels, epistles, apocryphons (hidden books) and apocalypses.

Many early Christian texts had a wide circulation, while others were specific to certain locations and groups of believers. Whatever their specific beliefs, all of these Christians had two things in common: They all believed that they represented the only authentic form of Christianity, and that their scriptures represented the one, true and original Christian doctrine.

Each form of Christianity also traced its origins to the historical Jesus, and each claimed authority to preach and teach in his name. Contrary to the claims of the early Church, many of these widely disparate versions of Christianity came into being at precisely the same moment “orthodox” Christianity did. To this extent, they could all claim to be the “original” form of Christian faith.

We find in the writings of Paul to his churches in Corinth and Galatia, his complaints against “false apostles” who were preaching “false gospels” in his churches whenever he was absent. According to Paul, these wolves in sheep’s clothing were having a certain amount of success in stealing his own converts. Many scholars now believe that the “false” apostles Paul describes in his letters to the Corinthians and Galatians were, in fact, Gnostic-Christians .

This being the case, the Church’s claim that Gnosticism was a late heresy and perversion of “original” Christian faith is entirely false. In fact, two of the founding fathers of Gnosticism are mentioned in the *New Testament* book, *Acts of the Apostles*.

Thanks to Constantine’s purge of Christian “heretics”, however, Paul’s

*This is the Book of the Knowledge
of the Invisible God;*

*it is the Book of the Knowledge
of Jesus the Living One,*

*by means of which all the hidden mysteries
are revealed to the elect.*

*Jesus is the Savior of Souls,
the Word of Life,*

*sent by the Father from the Light-world
to humanity,*

*who taught His disciples
the one and only doctrine saying,*

*“This is the doctrine
in which all Knowledge dwells.”*

(The Book of the Great Logos)

*So when He had seen the Grace
with which the hidden Father
had endowed Him,
He himself desired to lead back
the Universe to the hidden Father,
for the Father's will is this:
that the Universe should return
to Him.*

(Untitled Apocalypse)



*From the place of Light
have I gone forth.
From Thee, bright habitation.
I come to feel the hearts,
to measure and try all minds,
to see in whose heart I dwell.
In whose mind I repose.
Who thinks of Me, of him I think:
Who calls my name, his name I call.
Who prays my prayer from down below,
his prayer I pray from the place of Light . . .*

*I came and found the truthful
and believing hearts.
Even when I was not dwelling
among them, my name was on their lips.
Thus, I took them and guided them up
to the world of Light. . .*

(Mandaean liturgy)



*I am the Light
which shines everywhere.*

I Am the All.

*All things have gone forth from Me,
and all things shall return to Me.*

*Cleave the wood,
and I am there.*

*Turn the stone,
and you will find Me.*

(The Gospel of Thomas)



*The Kingdom is within you,
and whoever knows oneself
will find it.*

*All those who find the Kingdom
will know that they are
heirs of the Father,
Know that you are in God,
and God is in you.*

(Papyrus Oxyrhynchus)

*If one does not understand
the nature of fire,
he will burn in it . . .*

*If one does not understand
the nature of water,
he drown in it . . .*

*If one does not understand
the nature of blowing wind
he will blow away with it.*

*If one does not understand
how the body, which he bears,
came into existence,
he will die along with it.*

*And if someone
does not know the Son
how will he know the Father?*

*And to those who do not understand
the nature of all things,
they remain hidden.*

*If one does not understand
how he came into existence,
he will not understand
how he ceases to exist.*

(Dialogue of the Savior)