



The Beginnings of Christianity: Essene Mystery, Gnostic Revelation and the Christian Vision

Andrew Welburn

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Recent work on the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient documents have provided much new knowledge of the early Christian Church and the messianic sects in the Holy Land before, during and after the time of Christ. These recently discovered and deciphered texts suggest that the boundaries between early Christian belief, Jewish tradition and the ancient pagan mysteries are not as well defined as has usually been believed. The Gnostic gospels clearly reveal that early Christianity had a powerful esoteric current, which is also reflected in the New Testament writings of Mark, Paul and, above all, John. During the early centuries after Christ, Gnostic Christians tried to preserve this tradition, using the archaic mysteries as a way to knowledge (gnosis) of higher cosmic truths. The Gnostic sects were finally suppressed by an authoritarian Church which would not tolerate dissent or deviation from the established Christian teachings. Andrew Welburn reveals a kinship between our age and the early Christians, and shows how we now have the chance to rediscover the spiritual world and meaning of the early years of the Christian era.

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