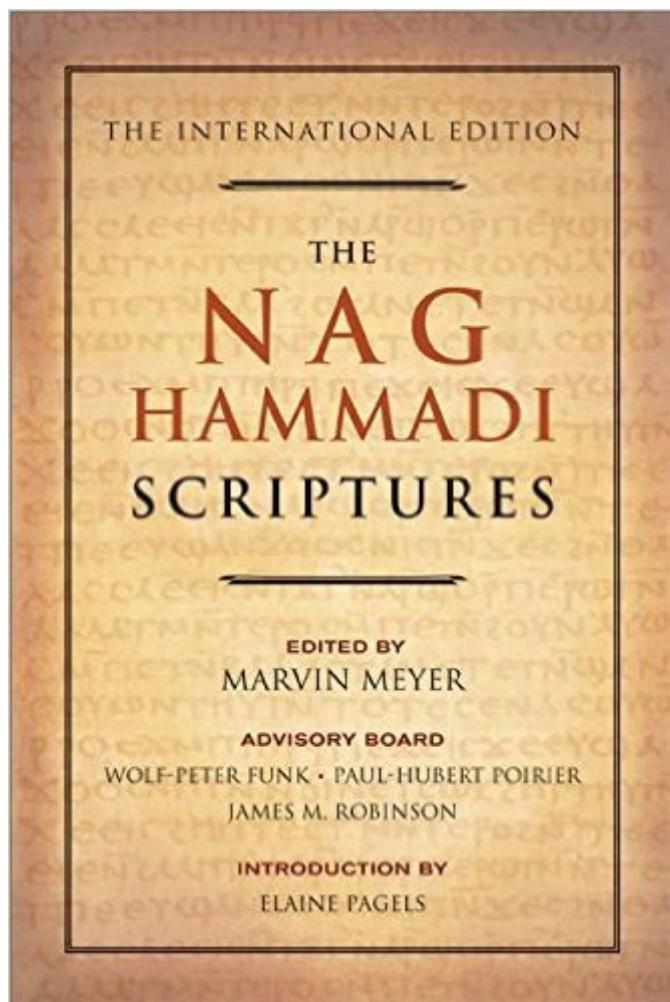


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The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition



Synopsis

The Definitive Collection of Gnostic WritingsThe year is 1945. At the foot of a cliff along the Nile River, near the city of Nag Hammadi, an Egyptian peasant unearths a large storage jar containing ancient manuscripts. The discovery turns out to be one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the past century. A treasure of fourth-century texts, the manuscripts are the scriptures of the ancient mystical tradition commonly called Gnosticism, from the Greek gnosis, that is, secret knowledge. It is a discovery that challenges everything we thought we knew about the early Christian church, ancient Judaism, and Greco-Roman religions. The Nag Hammadi Scriptures is the most complete and up-to-date English-language edition of these sacred texts from Egypt. It is full of treatises, testimonies, and secret books that had been lost for centuries. In addition to gospels purportedly by the apostles Thomas and Philip, and the revelations of James, Peter, and Paul, this collection also includes the Gospel of Mary and the controversial Gospel of Judas. The documents have been newly translated by a team of prominent international scholars. This volume also features introductory essays and extensive notes to help readers understand the context and significance of these texts that have revolutionized the study of early Christianity and ancient religious thought.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For the title of this review I chose an excerpt from "The Dialogue of the Savior" which belonged to NHC III,5. On my quest to better understanding 'gnosticism' I first read Andrew Phillip Smith's book titled, "The Gnostics". His brief treatise on the overall scope of what gnosticism is really all about provided me with a more concise understanding of this exhaustive, scholarly translation of the Nag

Hammadi text. This book is by far the most complete and in-depth translation to date and will probably never be equaled. Scholars such as Marvin Meyer, Elaine Pagels, Madeleine Scopello, Einar Thomassen and John D. Turner are just a few of the names involved with the translation of the Nag Hammadi scriptures. There is an array of backgrounds involved which ultimately provide very different interpretations of the text, but this diversity only helps the reader to draw his/her own conclusions as to interpretation. One positive aspect to this book is decision NOT to guess what the translation might have been. Quite frankly, much of the text within certain tractates were severely damaged and/or missing. Instead of guessing or including what the text may have said, Meyer and others, merely let the reader know that much of the text itself is missing. This is, of course refreshing, as many modern translations of either other Gnostic or Essene texts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, authors will simply insert modern lexicons assuming that it follows suit to what we have today. Meyer and company don't do this, instead they provide a well documented, heavily footnoted, scholarly work.

This book finds an honoured place on my shelves, next to the older edition of the Nag Hammadi scriptures assembled under the direction of James M. Robinson, who provides the preface (and much underlying research). According to Robinson, 'The Nag Hammadi Scriptures is a collection of thirteen papyrus codices - bound books, not scrolls - that were buried near the city of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt most likely in the second half of the fourth century CE.' The texts contained here are a fascinating collection, bringing to light literally dozens of texts that had previously been unknown for over a millennium, although about ten of them are in such fragmentary form that it still cannot be said that these have been recovered. It is supposed by many scholars that this is a collection that was buried by Gnostics, but this is not without controversy. This text has as a leader over the title the phrase 'The International Edition', for good reason. There have been three different projects, one in English, one in French, and one in German, over the past generation, the fruits of which have been brought together here in one volume. The representatives from each team are James M. Robinson, Wolf-Peter Funk, and Paul-Hubert Poirier, for the English, German, and French research projects respectively. The introduction is provided by Marvin Meyer and Elaine Pagels, both names known to people who study Gnostic and early biblical texts. In the introduction, Meyers and Pagels offer the caution that the title 'Nag Hammadi Scriptures' cannot imply a canon of scriptures similar to the Bible or Quran - these are texts that were less a sacred (and closed) collection and more of a general gathering of pieces that were considered inspired and inspirational.

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