

SILVANUS AND THE HIDDEN NT

The Teachings of Silvanus tell us that nobody knew the gospels. It is very important for Christians to pretend that there is good evidence that the gospels were well-known instead of being written and kept secret. The secrecy would imply that the gospels were outrageous lies. The way Silvanus writes is that if the gospels were known then people knew they were fiction. But when the book does not mention gospels at all it is probable that the first option is correct. It does not try to refute them because it does not know of them. Some would say it just states that they are wrong but that is not refuting - refuting is based on evidence. But Silvanus was writing for disciples who accepted his doctrine and their inclination was philosophical and intellectual in tone. That they had the evidence and it was correct is assumed in his work.

The Teachings of Silvanus is a heretical work that was discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1945. There is no real proof that it is Gnostic theology so we dare not dismiss it as Gnostic madness and fantasy.

The author paraphrases some New Testament material. Silvanus is dated to from about the late second century on for its philosophical ideas match some trends at that time and because it centres on Christ as the word or wisdom of God and on his descent into Hell. But all of this can be explained by the author thinking for himself and by the fact that many doctrines are often explained in similar wording when they are descriptive and by the fact that his New Testament had Christ as the word who descended. Silvanus could be older. The Book of Wisdom which predates the gospel could have been the inspiration for this material for its talk about wisdom or the word like it was a person is similar to the thought in Silvanus.

Silvanus dates sometime from the end of the first century to the middle of the second for it shows the gospels were hidden.

The Teachings claim to be inspired by God for they forbid a person to stray from what they lay down.

Jesus Christ is said to be the true light and the true light is reason - Gnostics did not like reason. But I don't see Silvanus as a Gnostic work at all. It is a Christian work.

Silvanus contradicts Jesus' command that we should have friends and trust people. He tells us to trust nobody.

He says that man is a part of God (page 385) while Jesus said that man was not God or a bit of him.

Silvanus urged his hearers to despise those who denied the truth while Jesus emphasised that that was a very wrong attitude.

He says, "How many likenesses did Christ take on because of you? Although he was God, he [was found] among men as man (page 389). This suggests that Jesus Christ had incarnated many many times contrary to the New Testament. This implies that the people he wrote to knew who these incarnations were. Most probably, they were Old Testament figures.

The Bible says that Jesus went to the underworld after he died but the Teachings say it was before (page 389). It says Jesus went to the underworld and released the children of death and then he broke the chains in that world causing its powers to flee so that he was able to die as a ransom for our sins. The demons were stopping him from dying for sinners which means he perished and rose again in the underworld for sinners. The underworld does not mean this world but the world Jesus went to which is called the Abyss meaning something like Hell. Silvanus denies that Jesus lived and suffered and rose on earth like the gospels say.

Silvanus taught that Christ copied the Devil so that "he might destroy him by deceit" (Nag Hammadi Library, page 386). His Christ was a liar. So Silvanus was opposed to the New Testament which says that Christ never lied. If Jesus needed to get down in the dirt and act evil to ruin the Devil then Jesus is not all-powerful and cannot do miracles. Silvanus never attributes miracle power to Jesus. Silvanus would not have denied the miracles unless he was sure they never happened for it would have been to his advantage to say Jesus ruined the Devil by doing miracles.

Silvanus says that God does not need to put any man to the test for he knows what is inside a person already (page 394). This contradicts the gospels where God permits temptation and even Jesus is tormented by the urge to sin. If we are put to the test and God is good then it follows that Silvanus believed that our mind and reason are God and that there is no literal God out there in the cosmos. That is why he is able to say that God lives in every place and yet in no place. Minds are everywhere for conscious beings are and yet in no place for they are spiritual or without parts. If God is everywhere he would be a spirit that is in every place.

The heretical Teachings of Silvanus says that Christ became man and attacked the tyrants and died for sin. These tyrants are

not angels of evil but human rulers for Silvanus never speaks of evil angels ruling the world. So Jesus died at a time when the rulers of the world were dethroned. Jesus must have lived a long time ago – perhaps at the time of the tower of Babel or the flood when rulers were brought down. The Bible says that Jesus went to the underworld after he died but the Teachings say it was before (page 389, The Nag Hammadi Library in English). It says Jesus went to the underworld and released the children of death and then he broke the chains in that world causing its powers to flee so that he was able to die as a ransom for our sins. The demons were stopping him from dying for sinners which means he perished and rose again in the underworld for sinners. The underworld does not mean this world but the world Jesus went to which is called the Abyss meaning something like Hell. Silvanus denies that Jesus lived and suffered and rose on earth like the gospels say. Silvanus is from the late first century at the very earliest. It shows that many Christians did not believe Jesus lived in Palestine in the first century. Silvanus had no reason at all to say Jesus was put to death for sinners in Hell for he could have still done that on earth. That is why he should be believed that there is no evidence. He stressed reason which makes him a damn sight more reliable than anybody else in the first century.

The Teachings of Silvanus challenge the spiritual and the historical and the theological veracity of the New Testament. The resurrection or life of Jesus Christ is not even mentioned. Silvanus recommends reason only and that is significant. The theme of the teachings is the way to wisdom so it would not have left anything that guides one to wisdom out unless it was regarded as worthless.