



## Jesus, Gnosis and Dogma

By Riemer Roukema, Saskia Deventer-Metz

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In *Jesus, Gnosis and Dogma* Roukema investigates and assesses the various views of Jesus in early Christianity, basing his approach on a distinction between historical and theological statements about Jesus. Historical statements can be arrived at through a critical study of the earliest records, although Roukema recognizes that scholars differ widely here. Theological statements about Jesus are to do with what has been and is believed about him.

Roukema demonstrates that Gnostic traditions about Jesus mostly derive from the earlier traditions preserved in the New Testament writings and do not give a more accurate view of the historical Jesus. He shows that the view of Jesus as the divine Lord (Yahweh) and Son of God is inspired by an early Jewish pattern that was exploited by the very first Christians. In spite of some later dogmatic precisions, there is more continuity between the New Testament picture of Jesus and the Nicene creed than between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of early Gnosticism. Even the essence of the Trinitarian dogma appears to have Jewish roots.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

'The author is very well acquainted with gnostic literature, and manages to present a complex matter in a comprehensible way and at the same time to make his point: orthodox Christianity has a solid historical basis, and the gnostic variant is secondary.' - Gie Vleugels, Evangelical Theological Faculty, Louvain, Belgium  
(Gie Vleugels)

'This book covers both the New Testament and early Church history. The author appears to be an expert in both disciplines. This implies that the reader can trust to be expertly introduced into ancient gnostic texts like the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of Mary, Theodotus, Cerinthus, the Ophites and the Tripartite Tractate. Furthermore, he learns about Jewish Christian ideas from the beginning of Christianity such as those of the Ebionites, the Nazaraeans and the slightly later views of groups from Syria according to the Pseudo-clementine writings. ... I am convinced that this is a solid book for someone who wants to form a well founded opinion about Jesus.' - Huub van de Sandt, Faculty of Humanities, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands  
(Huub van de Sandt)

'Roukema offers a wide-ranging survey of early Christian texts, focusing on how they treat Jesus. His discussion is informed, up to date in engagement with other scholars, and offers sensible judgements on all the issues he addresses. Roukema makes clear his own sympathy with traditional Christian faith, but his handling of other positions is fair and accurate. The scope of evidence considered and the quality of his analysis combine to make this a valuable study.' — Larry W. Hurtado, School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, UK  
(Larry W. Hurtado)

'This is an ambitious attempt to compare the New Testament presentations of Jesus' identity, teaching, death, resurrection and exaltation, with the equivalent Gnostic presentations which have received so much attention in recent years, both scholarly and novelistic. It shows well how different was the former from the latter and goes on to examine the question whether Jesus gave secret teaching, and the development of Christianity's high christology within the context of early Judaism and in the debates of patristic Christianity. The impressive treatment sticks closely to the texts examined and makes clear why mainstream Christianity's evaluation of Jesus both moved on from the early Jewish Christian version and rejected the Gnostic alternatives. As a concise overview it will be a boon to many students and to those who do not have sufficient time to immerse themselves in the wide range of literature examined.' — James D.G. Dunn, Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, UK.  
(James D. G. Dunn)

"Roukema presents convincing arguments ... [and] helpfully distinguishes historical inquiries from theological ones."

*Methodist Recorder*, 24th June 2010

'Roukema operates with a distinction between what can be said about Jesus historically (on the basis of the oldest sources) and theologically (the faith or unbelief of the reader).'

'This book is relevant for our time ... and very useful for students and church leaders'

*Baptist Times*

(Piter J Lalleman)

'There is much to commend this book... It certainly deserves to be read along with the more sceptical texts of the various quests for the 'historical Jesus' and provides a helpful counter balance to their received wisdom.'

(goodbookstall.org.uk)

Roukema's book is a translation from the Dutch. He is interested in determining which are the earliest documents and which are the most reliable in reflecting the life and teaching of Jesus. He distinguishes between the work of the historian and the theologian.

Roukema does come down on the side of more traditional views but his arguments are good. - Donald A Bullen - Liverpool Hope University

(Donald A Bullen)

'A useful book and one that raises important issues for debate.'

*(Theological Book Review)*

'Would be especially effective in an introductory to New Testament class as a supplemental reading... Any scholar would know this material, but such material has not been made as accessible to the general public until *Jesus, Gnosis, and Dogma*.' <?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

(History and Sociology of Religion)

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About the Author

Riemer Roukema is Professor of New Testament at the Protestant Theological University, Kampen, The Netherlands.

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