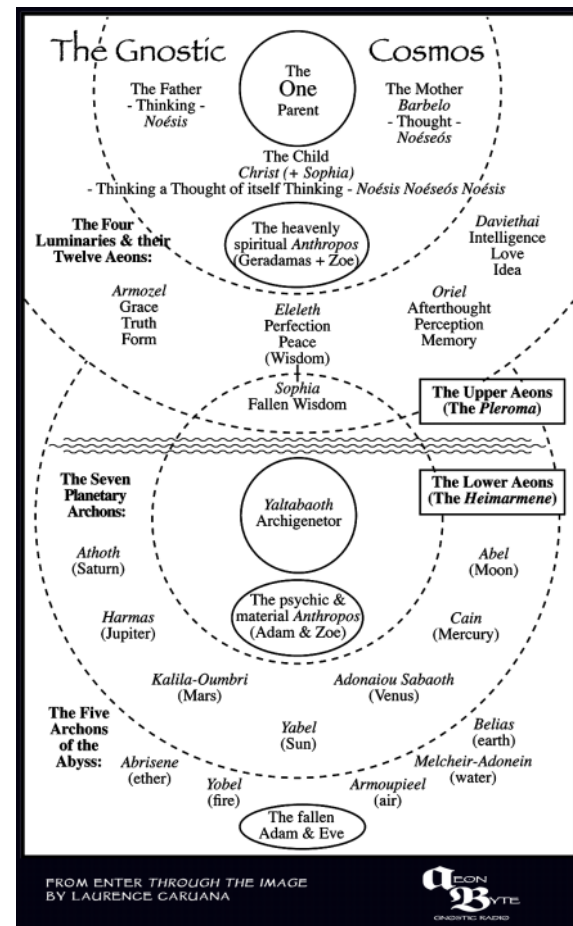


Overview

April 30, 2023 10:21 AM

1. Gnosticism has many meanings
 - a. Focus on the Modan model
2. Early days of Christianity
 - a. Hunger games of sects
3. Modan "the boss"
 - a. Demiurge old testament god
 - i. Evil or just bad at his job?
4. Demiurge created world
 - a. Flawed
5. Spiritual vs. physical
 - a. Physical = bad
 - b. Jesus sent by Monad to teach us this
6. Judas was the good guy
7. Gospel of Judas
 - a. In 1978 the codex was acquired by an Egyptian antiquities dealer, who placed it in a safe-deposit box in New York state, U.S., after his attempts to sell it failed



What is Gnosticism

May 21, 2023 12:30 AM

Gnosticism: Definition and Beliefs



Gnosticism (pronounced *NOS tuh siz um*) was a second-century religious movement claiming that [salvation](#) could be gained through a special form of secret knowledge. Early Christian church fathers such as [Origen](#), [Tertullian](#), [Justin Martyr](#) and [Eusebius of Caesarea](#) condemned gnostic teachers and beliefs as [heretical](#).

Gnosticism Definition

The term *Gnosticism* is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning "to know" or "knowledge." This knowledge is not intellectual but mythical and comes through a special revelation by Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, or through his [apostles](#). The secret knowledge reveals the key to salvation.

Beliefs of Gnosticism

Gnostic beliefs clashed strongly with accepted [Christian doctrine](#), causing early church leaders to be embroiled in heated debates over the issues. By the end of the second century, many Gnostics broke away or were expelled from the church. They formed alternative churches with belief systems deemed heretical by the Christian church.

While many variations in beliefs existed among the different Gnostic sects, the following key elements were seen in most of them.

Dualism: Gnostics believed that the world was divided into the physical and spiritual realms. The created, material world (matter) is evil, and therefore in opposition to the world of the spirit, and that only the spirit is good. Adherents of Gnosticism often constructed an evil, lesser god and beings of the Old Testament to explain the [creation of the world](#) (matter) and considered [Jesus Christ](#) a wholly spiritual God.

God: Gnostic writings often describe God as incomprehensible and unknowable. This idea conflicts with Christianity's concept of a personal God who desires [a relationship with human beings](#). Gnostics also separate the inferior god of creation from the superior god of [redemption](#).

Salvation: Gnosticism claims hidden knowledge as the basis for salvation. Adherents believed that secret revelation frees the "divine spark" within humans, allowing the human soul to return to the divine realm of light in which it belongs. Gnostics, thus, divided Christians into two categories with one group being carnal (inferior) and the other being spiritual (superior). Only the superior, divinely enlightened persons could comprehend the secret teachings and obtain true salvation.

Christianity teaches that salvation is available to everyone, not just a special few and that it comes from [grace through faith](#) in [Jesus Christ](#) ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)), and not from study or works. The only source of truth is the Bible, Christianity asserts.

Jesus Christ: Gnostics were divided on their beliefs about Jesus Christ. One view held that he only *appeared* to have human form but that he was actually spirit only. The other view contended that his divine spirit came upon his human body at [baptism](#) and departed before the [crucifixion](#). Christianity, on the other hand, holds that Jesus was fully man and fully God and that his human and divine natures were both present and necessary to provide a [suitable sacrifice](#) for humanity's [sin](#).

The New Bible Dictionary gives this outline of Gnostic beliefs:

"The supreme God dwelt in unapproachable splendour in this spiritual world, and had no dealings with the world of matter. Matter was the creation of an inferior being, the *Demiurge*. He, along with his aides the *archōns*, kept mankind imprisoned within their material existence, and barred the path of individual souls trying to ascend to the spirit world after death. Not even this possibility was open to everyone, however. For only those who possessed a divine spark (*pneuma*) could hope to escape from their corporeal existence. And even those possessing such a spark did not have an automatic escape, for they needed to receive the enlightenment of *gnōsis* before they could become aware of their own spiritual condition... In most of the Gnostic systems reported by the church Fathers, this enlightenment is the work of a divine redeemer, who descends from the spiritual world in disguise and is often equated with the Christian Jesus. Salvation for the Gnostic, therefore, is to be alerted to the existence of his divine *pneuma* and then, as a result of this knowledge, to escape on death from the material world to the spiritual."

From <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-gnosticism-700683>

Gnosticism

Gnosticism (from [Ancient Greek](#): γνωστικός, [romanized](#): *gnōstikós*, [Koine Greek](#): *lynosti'kosi*, 'having knowledge') is a collection of religious ideas and systems that coalesced in the late 1st century AD among [Jewish](#) and [early Christian](#) sects. These various groups emphasized personal spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) above the proto-orthodox teachings, traditions, and authority of religious institutions. Gnostic [cosmogony](#) generally presents a distinction between a supreme, hidden [God](#) and a malevolent [lesser divinity](#) (sometimes associated with the [Yahweh](#) of the [Old Testament](#)) who is responsible for creating the [material universe](#). Consequently, Gnostics considered material existence flawed or evil, and held the principal element of [salvation](#) to be direct knowledge of the hidden divinity, attained via mystical or [esoteric](#) insight.

Many Gnostic texts deal not in concepts of [sin](#) and [repentance](#), but with [illusion](#) and [enlightenment](#).^{[[citation needed](#)]} Gnostic writings flourished among certain Christian groups in the [Mediterranean](#) world around the second century, when the [Fathers of the early Church](#) denounced them as [heresy](#).^[1] Efforts to destroy these texts proved largely successful, resulting in the survival of very little writing by Gnostic theologians.^[2] Nonetheless, early Gnostic teachers such as [Valentinus](#) saw their beliefs as aligned with Christianity. In the Gnostic Christian tradition, [Christ](#) is seen as a divine being which has taken human form in order to lead humanity back to recognition of its own divine nature. However, Gnosticism is not a single standardized system, and the emphasis on direct experience allows for a wide variety of teachings, including distinct currents such as [Valentinianism](#) and [Sethianism](#). In the [Persian Empire](#), Gnostic ideas spread as far as China via the related movement [Manichaeism](#), while [Mandaism](#), which is the only surviving Gnostic religion from antiquity, is found in [Iraq](#), [Iran](#) and diaspora communities.^[3] Jorunn Buckley posits that the early [Mandaeans](#) may have been among the first to formulate what would go on to become Gnosticism within the early Jesus movement.^{[4]:109}

For centuries, most scholarly knowledge about Gnosticism was limited to the anti-heretical writings of orthodox Christian figures such as [Irenaeus of Lyons](#) and [Hippolytus of Rome](#). There was a renewed interest in Gnosticism after the 1945 discovery of Egypt's [Nag Hammadi library](#), a collection of rare early Christian and Gnostic texts, including the [Gospel of Thomas](#) and the [Apocryphon of John](#). [Elaine Pagels](#) has noted the influence of sources from [Hellenistic Judaism](#), [Zoroastrianism](#), and [Platonism](#) on the Nag Hammadi texts.^[2] Since the 1990s, the category of Gnosticism has come under increasing scrutiny from scholars. One such issue is whether Gnosticism ought to be considered one form of [early Christianity](#), an interreligious phenomenon, or an independent religion. Going further than this, other contemporary scholars such as Michael Allen Williams^[5] and David G. Robertson^[6] contest whether "Gnosticism" is still a valid or useful historical category at all, or if instead it was simply a term of art of [proto-orthodox heresiologists](#) for a disparate group of contemporaneous Christian groups.

From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism>

What Is Gnosticism?

Gnosticism is a type of early Christianity that taught that the material world was created by an evil being, and that Christ came to earth to liberate people from this evil world through the spiritual experience called "gnosis" – the root of the word "Gnostic." Gnosis was salvation through mystical union with the divine, and as such was something that each individual had to experience internally for himself or herself. It couldn't be obtained through any outward social/institutional means alone: believing in creeds, observing the sacraments, obeying the clergy, behaving morally, etc. While we don't know exactly when Gnosticism first arose, it was well-established throughout the lands occupied by the Roman Empire by the second half of the second century AD/CE.^[1] At that time, Christianity was still a young, unsettled, and highly diverse religious movement. As Harvard historian of religion Karen L. King says of this period, "At the beginning of Christianity, nothing of what would later define it existed: no fixed canon [of scripture], creed, or ritual, no established institutions or hierarchy of bishops and laity, no church buildings or sacred art. The story of Christian origins is the story of the formation of these ideas and institutions. It is a story fraught with conflict and controversy."^[2] Many competing varieties of Christianity, some of them wildly different in many ways from what we today think of as "Christianity," flourished alongside each other. Gnosticism was one of those early, vigorous visions of what Christianity was. Thus, the Gnostics had just as much of a claim to representing "real Christianity" as did anyone else at the time. There was no official, shared standard of "orthodoxy" or "heresy" – just different personal understandings and opinions.^[3]

From <https://gnosticismexplained.org/>

Monad

May 21, 2023 12:35 AM

Monad (Gnosticism)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Monad** in **Gnosticism** is an adaptation of concepts of the **Monad in Greek philosophy** to Christian gnostic belief systems.

Overview^{[[edit](#)]}

The term *monad* comes from the Greek feminine noun *monas* (**nominative** singular, μὶνάς), "one unit," where the ending -s in the nominative form resolves to the ending -d in **declension**.^{[[u](#)]}

In some gnostic systems, the Supreme Being is known as the **Monad**, **the One**, **the Absolute**, **Aiōn Teleos** (the Perfect **Aeon**, αἰὼν τέλειος), **Bythos** (Depth or Profundity, Βυθός), **Proarchē** (Before the Beginning, προαρχή), **Hē Archē** (The Beginning, ἡ ἀρχή), the **Ineffable Parent**, and/or the **primal Father**.

Prominent **early Christian** gnostics like **Valentinus** taught that the Monad is the high source of the **Pleroma**, the region of light constituting "the fullness of the Godhead." Through a process of **emanation**, various divine entities and realms emerge from the One. Arranged hierarchically, they become progressively degraded due to their remoteness from the Father. The various emanations of the One, totaling thirty in number (or 365, according to **Basilides**), are called **Aeons**. Among them exist **Jesus** (who resides close to the Father) and the lowest emanation, **Sophia (wisdom)**, whose fall results in the creation of the material world.^{[[u](#)]}

According to **Theodoret**'s book on heresies (*Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium* i.18), the Arab Christian **Monoimus** (c. 150–210) used the term Monad to mean the highest **god** that created lesser **gods**, or elements (similar to Aeons). In some versions of Christian gnosticism, especially those deriving from Valentinus, a lesser deity known as the **Demiurge** (see also **Neoplatonism**, **Plotinus**) had a role in the creation of the material world separate from the Monad. In these forms of gnosticism, the God of the **Old Testament**, **YHWH**, is often considered to have been the Demiurge, not the Monad,^{[[u](#)]} or sometimes different passages are interpreted as referring to each.

Apocryphon of John, written c.180, gives the following description:

The Monad is a monarchy with nothing above it. It is he who exists as God and Father of everything, the invisible One who is above everything, who exists as incorruption, which is in the pure light into which no eye can look. "He is the invisible Spirit, of whom it is not right to think of him as a god, or something similar. For he is more than a god, since there is nothing above him, for no one lords it over him. For he does not exist in something inferior to him, since everything exists in him. For it is he who establishes himself. He is eternal, since he does not need anything. For he is total perfection."^{[[u](#)]}

Historical background^{[[edit](#)]}

According to **Hippolytus of Rome**, this view was inspired by the **Pythagoreans**, for whom the first existing thing was the **Monad**, which begat the **dyad**, which begat the **numbers**, which begat the **point**, begetting **lines**, and so on.^{[[u](#)]} Pythagorean and **Platonic philosophers** like **Plotinus** and **Porphyry** condemned the "**gnosis**" that would later characterize Gnostic systems for their treatment of the Monad or One (see **Neoplatonism and Gnosticism**).

For a long time, legend persisted that a young man by the name of **Epiphanes**, who died at the age of 17, was the leader of Monadic Gnosticism. However, scholars think the legend may have come from misunderstanding of the Greek word *epiphanēs* which may have been mistaken as a personal name if in text, when in fact the Greek means *distinguished*, as in a *distinguished teacher*.^{[[u](#)]}

From <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monad_\(Gnosticism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monad_(Gnosticism))>

Barebelo

May 21, 2023 12:59 AM

I am the Mother of Creation. I am the perfect image of God, born of His reflection, we are one, eternally united as the Father and the Mother, with our Son being the neutrality that exists between us, being the androgynous neutral principle between the masculine and feminine principles. I am God and, at the same time, I am distinct from Him. I am the Father, Mother and Son, the Three Times Saint. I Am The Holy Spirit. I am Barbelo. „

— Barbelo.

Barbelo, also known as the Goddess of Ineffability, the Father-Mother, Goddess of Love and Creation, Mother Goddess, and the Triple Androgynes Name, is the supreme Goddess of Creation and the co-creator of the Megaverse alongside God.

Barbelo is, represents and personifies the limitless and boundless silence that existed before the first sound was sounded by the voice of the Creator, waking up the void and bringing creation to awakening. The silence of the void has become the Aeon entity that governs silence and existence alongside her husband and co-being.

Barbelo is the Goddess responsible for the Creation of the Universe and was worshiped as the wife of God by the antediluvian peoples. She accompanied Yesh for billions of years by his side since the Creation of the universe, with some claiming that when God created Eve he was based on the person of Barbelo to create Adam's wife.

Barbelo's whereabouts ended up being quite unknown among humans, because after the fall of Lucifer, Barbelo was tired of seeing the discord between his family, and went to her husband and said goodbye to him. After saying goodbye to Yesh, Barbelo ascended to the highest point of the seventh Heaven, where she dissipated her divine essence, disintegrating and returning his spirit to its unconscious and silent primordial state.

Although some might think that Barbelo died, in fact, she still exists within every mortal heart of mankind, for the spirit of God dwells within every mortal, the temple of the Holy Spirit, with the kingdom of heaven being within each one. In short, the spirit of each human is, in reality, an emanation of Barbelo, since Eve, the progenitor of humans, received her soul from Sophia, the last emanation of the Ineffable Mother.

Myths and Legends roam Creation, claiming that at the end of time, Barbelo will return, and again with Yesh, the two will defeat the forces of darkness and will judge evil people for their crimes and bring order to the multiverse, and she will reign together with God for all eternity.

Barbelo

Barbelo is the name given to the first entity to arise from [God](#) in the literature of the [classic Gnostics](#). After God, she's the foremost inhabitant of the [Pleroma](#), the Gnostic name for Heaven.

God doesn't "create" Barbelo per se; instead, she comes from him by some indirect means. For example, in some Gnostic texts, God's inexhaustible profusion of thought overflows, and a new being, Barbelo, emerges from that intellectual flood.^[1] Elsewhere, it's said that Barbelo arose when God stared down into the primal waters and saw his luminous reflection, which then became a new being.^[2] We don't know what the name "Barbelo" means, but it might be related to the Coptic verb *berber*, "to overflow" or "to boil over." That connection would be fitting in light of Barbelo having been born from the overflowing thought of God in some Gnostic scriptures.^[3]

In the [Secret Book of John](#) and other classic Gnostic texts, Barbelo is portrayed as the mother of [Christ](#)^[4] (who, in much early Christian literature including Gnostic literature, is thought of as a divine being who existed long before he was ever incarnated in human flesh through Mary^[5]). God the Father, Barbelo the Mother, and Christ the Son form a three-member divine family. The Gnostics thought of this as the divine model of which all earthly families are an imperfect, corrupted reflection.^[6]

If that heavenly family sounds a lot like the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that's probably no coincidence.

The word for "spirit" in Hebrew and other Semitic languages is feminine, so to the ears of people who spoke those languages, the name "Holy Spirit" would have almost automatically connoted a feminine being. This seems to be a conception that was actively cultivated in at least some early Christian circles. For example, the Jewish Christian *Gospel of the Hebrews* has Jesus refer to the Holy Spirit as his mother.^[7]

The same view is attested in Gnostic literature, too. In the words of the [Valentinian](#) Gnostic *Gospel of Philip*, "Some said Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. They are wrong and do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever get pregnant by a woman?"^[8]

To be sure, the idea that Barbelo, the divine mother of Christ, is identical to the Holy Spirit is seldom explicitly asserted in Gnostic texts. We should therefore be careful about categorically claiming that this was a view held by all or even most Gnostics. But the extant Gnostic texts certainly *seem* to assume such a view in their mentions of Barbelo, such that we can indeed *tentatively* ascribe that view to most if not all of the Gnostics.

From <<https://gnosticismexplained.org/barbelo/>>

The Gnostic Demiurge



A sketch of an ancient Greco-Egyptian amulet that depicts a creature similar in appearance to Yaldabaoth

The demiurge (Greek *demiurgos*,^[1] “craftsman”^[2]) is the being who created the world in Gnosticism. The Gnostics identified him with the god of the Old Testament. The Gnostic scriptures portray him as ignorant, malicious, and utterly inferior to [the true God](#) who sent [Christ](#) to earth to save humankind from the demiurge's evil world. The demiurge is given many names in the Gnostic scriptures, but the three most common ones are Yaldabaoth (also spelled “Ialdabaoth”), Samael, and Saklas. “Saklas” comes from the Aramaic word for “fool,” and “Samael” is Aramaic for “Blind God” or “God of the Blind.”^[3] The meaning of “Yaldabaoth” is uncertain. The Gnostic text *On the Origin of the World* fancifully translates it as “Youth, move over there,” but no word or string of words that sounds like “Yaldabaoth” meant that in any ancient Mediterranean language.^[4] “Yaldabaoth” is somewhat close to “child of chaos” in Aramaic, but that's still a stretch,^[5] as is the intuitively plausible suggestion that it could be a condensed form of “Yahweh, Lord of Sabbaths.”^[6]

In the [Gnostic creation myth](#), Heaven – which the Gnostics called the “[Pleroma](#),” “Fullness” – was all that existed until a divine entity named [Sophia](#) tried to conceive on her own, without the involvement of her heavenly partner or the consent of God. Sophia gave birth to a son that was the product of the rebellious and profane desire that had arisen within her.

This son of hers was the demiurge. The Gnostic text [Reality of the Rulers](#) describes “him” as an androgynous being, an “arrogant beast” that resembled an aborted fetus in both appearance and character.^[7] The [Secret Book of John](#) adds that he had the body of a snake and the head of a lion, with eyes like lightning bolts.^[8] (In ancient Greek philosophy, the lion was frequently a symbol of irrational passions. The Gnostics were steeped in the Greek philosophical tradition, so their description of the demiurge as having a lion's head was probably intended to show that he was a being who couldn't or wouldn't control his base urges.^[9] That certainly fits the demiurge's personality as described in their texts.)

When Sophia saw the horrifying, twisted being that had come from her, she was deeply ashamed and afraid. She disowned him and cast him out of Heaven. From his lonely position where his madness and conceit could go unchecked, the demiurge gave birth to the [archons](#) (“rulers”^[10]), beings who were like him and could help him administer the material world. He then created the material world, which, like all creations, was a reflection of the personality of its creator.

The demiurge then created Adam and Eve and imprisoned divine sparks from Heaven within them. He told them that he was the only god and issued the Ten Commandments, even though he himself broke each and every one of those commandments. For example, he lied when he claimed to be the only god and that Adam and Eve would die if they ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; he insulted his mother and father by refusing to acknowledge their existence; he made a graven image of the divine when he modeled the material world on his corrupt and ignorant misunderstanding of Heaven; and he committed adultery by attempting to rape Eve.^[11]

From <<https://gnosticismexplained.org/the-gnostic-demiurge/>>

What is the Demiurge?

Literally, the word *demiurge* means “public worker” or “public craftsman.” The Greek word from which it comes was originally used to denote a person such as an artisan who had a special skill and fulfilled a special function in society. Over time the term came to refer to a deity of sorts; in some philosophies and religions, the Demiurge is a subordinate god who was involved in the creation of the universe. The Demiurge is seen as the Great Artificer or the Grand Architect of the Universe.

Plato was one of the first to discuss the Demiurge as the being responsible for the production of the universe. According to Plato, the Demiurge fashioned and shaped the material universe. This being was good, but the world was flawed because the Demiurge did not have much to work with—despite the Demiurge's best intentions, the world is imperfect.

In [Gnosticism](#), the Demiurge is not good at all. Rather, the Gnostic Demiurge is a proud, bungling fool who created the material world against the wishes of the Supreme God. In this way the Gnostics consider all material things evil—the physical world is the product of a hostile Demiurge—and all spiritual, incorporeal things good.

Some Gnostics identify the Demiurge as the God of the Old Testament and place him at odds with the God of the New Testament. Other Gnostics, specifically those in the Valentinian school of thought, identify the Demiurge not as an evil being but as a benevolent (albeit rather ignorant) spirit who rues the fact that the world is corrupt. In Valentinian Gnosticism, the Demiurge is himself redeemed and participates in the redemption of humanity as well.

There is nothing biblical about the concept of the Demiurge. The Bible presents God as the sole Creator of heaven and earth ([Genesis 1](#)); there are no subordinate gods, and the earth was not formed by a stupid (or evil) spirit. The Creator spoke the universe into existence; He did not form it out of pre-existing material. The world is corrupt due to man's sin ([Romans 5:12](#); [1 Corinthians 15:22](#)), not because of the sloppy (or malicious) work of a spirit being. The Bible does not present two gods in the Old and New Testaments but one God advancing His single plan of redemption through the ages. [Platonism](#) and Gnosticism do not represent the truth.

From <<https://www.gotquestions.org/Demiurge.html>>

Sophia



"Allegory of Divine Wisdom" by Luca Giordano

In Gnosticism, the "Fall" didn't occur through Adam and Eve – it happened before the world's creation, through a mistake made by a heavenly being called Sophia (whose name is Greek for "Wisdom" [1]).

The story of Sophia's fall (which was part of the [Gnostic creation myth](#)) is told slightly differently in the many Gnostic texts that discuss it, but the various versions of the tale all share the basics in common.

Sophia was one of the "aeons" – divine entities who were descended from [God the Father](#) and who were roughly equivalent to angels. Of the many aeons, Sophia was the last to arise from God.

Like the other aeons, Sophia was the child of a male-female pair of aeons that had come before her, who had given birth with the Father's blessing. Sophia and the rest of the aeons formed the "Pleroma" (Greek for "Fullness"), the Gnostic name for Heaven.

Sophia wanted to have a child, too. But she went about it in the wrong way: she conceived without the involvement of her male partner or the approval of the Father. Her child was the "demiurge," a misshapen, belligerent creature that was utterly unlike the other heavenly beings.

Sophia immediately realized her horrible mistake and cast her child out of the Pleroma. The demiurge, now alone, believed that he was the only being who had ever existed, and created the material world out of his ignorance, foolishness, and malevolence, trapping sparks of divinity within Adam and Eve along the way.

Because of her fall and its dire consequences, Sophia became a flawed being. Her deficiency rendered her unable to remain in the perfect "Fullness" of the Pleroma, so she was placed just outside of the Pleroma, in a realm above that of her malevolent son. In anguish, Sophia repented, and the Father agreed to bring her back to the Pleroma once what had become lacking in her was restored to its natural fullness.[2]

Precedents for Sophia in Jewish Literature

In the genre of Jewish ("Old Testament") writing known as "wisdom literature," Wisdom (*Hokma* in Hebrew[3]) was personified, and she gave monologues describing her great deeds and articulating her perspective on the world. Since *Hokma*, like the Greek *Sophia*, is a feminine noun, Wisdom was cast as a female figure. In the words of Nicola Denzey Lewis, Wisdom is "God's active feminine principle, at once a part of God but also separate from God," as in Proverbs 8, Job 28, and Sirach 24.[4] In this regard, she's much like the Gnostic aeons, who are also semi-independent extensions of God. They act, whereas God himself simply *is*.

Here's an example of one of Wisdom's monologues, Proverbs 8:22-31:

*The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.[5]*

The Gnostic depiction of Sophia was surely heavily influenced by this earlier Jewish depiction of Wisdom, both directly and indirectly through the works of thinkers such as Philo of Alexandria, a first-century Jewish intellectual who worked personified Wisdom into a rationalized cosmological system that sought to synthesize and harmonize the Jewish scriptures with the works of Plato, another important influence on the Gnostics and early Christians more generally.[6]

From <<https://gnosticismexplained.org/sophia/>>

Dualism

May 21, 2023 12:33 AM

Dualism

First published Tue Aug 19, 2003; substantive revision Fri Sep 11, 2020

This entry concerns dualism in the philosophy of mind. The term ‘dualism’ has a variety of uses in the history of thought. In general, the idea is that, for some particular domain, there are two fundamental kinds or categories of things or principles. In theology, for example a ‘dualist’ is someone who believes that Good and Evil – or God and the Devil – are independent and more or less equal forces in the world. Dualism contrasts with monism, which is the theory that there is only one fundamental kind, category of thing or principle; and, rather less commonly, with pluralism, which is the view that there are many kinds or categories. In the philosophy of mind, dualism is the theory that the mental and the physical – or mind and body or mind and brain – are, in some sense, radically different kinds of things. Because common sense tells us that there are physical bodies, and because there is intellectual pressure towards producing a unified view of the world, one could say that materialist monism is the ‘default option’. Discussion about dualism, therefore, tends to start from the assumption of the reality of the physical world, and then to consider arguments for why the mind cannot be treated as simply part of that world.

From <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/>>

dualism philosophy

dualism, in [philosophy](#), the use of two irreducible, [heterogeneous](#) principles (sometimes in conflict, sometimes complementary) to analyze the knowing process (epistemological dualism) or to explain all of reality or some broad aspect of it ([metaphysical](#) dualism). Examples of epistemological dualism are being and thought, subject and object, and sense datum and thing; examples of metaphysical dualism are God and the world, matter and spirit, body and mind, and good and evil. Dualism is distinguished from monism, which acknowledges only one principle, and from [pluralism](#), which [invokes](#) more than two basic principles. Philosophers sometimes employ more than one dualism at the same time; *e.g.*, Aristotle simultaneously [invoked](#) those of matter and form, body and soul, and immaterial and material [substance](#).

From <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/dualism-philosophy>>

Anticosmicism (Gnostic Dualism)



"The Chalice of Christ" by Nicholas Roerich

The central idea around which the entirety of Gnosticism revolved was a form of dualism called "anticosmicism" (from *anti*-, "against," and *cosmos*, "the world"): the belief that the everyday world is inherently evil and opposed to the divine. Divinity, as Hans Jonas has aptly put it, was "not the essence of [this] world, but its negation and cancellation."^[1] The [Gospel of Philip](#) expresses the Gnostics' anticosmicism particularly succinctly and poetically: "Winter is the world, summer is the other... the eternal realm."^[2]

From the Gnostics' anticosmic perspective, true spirituality had nothing to do with achieving harmony with this wasteland of a world or its creator, but was instead all about transcending them. [Gnosis](#) – the mystical, otherworldly insight that Gnostics strove to cultivate above all else – was seen as unnatural and even *anti-natural*.^[3] In the words the Gnostic (or at least proto-Gnostic) [Gospel of Thomas](#) places on the lips of Jesus, "Whoever has come to know the world has discovered a carcass, and whoever has discovered a carcass, of that person the world is not worthy."^[4]

The word "dualism" can have a number of different meanings depending on the religion or worldview in question. It can refer to the idea that the world is tugged in opposing directions by opposing spiritual forces, such as God and the devil in what we today think of as "normal" Christianity, or their counterparts in Zoroastrianism (Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu or Ahriman). It can refer to a puritanical, black-and-white morality. It can refer to "Cartesian dualism," the split between mind and matter. Or it can refer to any number of other things. Anticosmicism is a specific form of dualism, and the Gnostics wouldn't have necessarily agreed with any of those other types of dualism.^[5]

From <<https://gnosticismexplained.org/anticosmicism-gnostic-dualism/>>

Gospel of Judas

Gospel of Judas, [apocryphal](#) Christian scripture from the 2nd century AD attributed to the apostle [Judas Iscariot](#). The gospel advances a Gnostic cosmology and portrays Judas in a positive light as the only apostle who fully understands [Jesus'](#) teachings.

Although lost for centuries, the *Gospel of Judas* was known to have existed because it was mentioned by St. [Irenaeus](#) of Lyon, who condemned it as a fiction in AD 180. However, a [Coptic](#) translation (c. 300) of the original Greek text was discovered in a [codex](#) found in [Egypt](#) in the 1970s. In 1978 the codex was acquired by an Egyptian antiquities dealer, who placed it in a safe-deposit box in [New York](#) state, U.S., after his attempts to sell it failed. It remained there until 2000, when it was purchased by the Swiss-based Maecenas Foundation for Ancient Art. The reconstruction of the folios and a study of their contents were commissioned, and the text of the gospel and a translation were made public in 2006. Along with the *Gospel of Judas*, the codex contains the pseudepigraphal (noncanonical and unauthentic) *First Apocalypse of James*, a letter of the apostle [Peter](#), and a section of a badly fragmented work provisionally identified as the *Book of Allogenes* or *Book of the Stranger*, a Gnostic text that was also among the codices found at [Naj Hammadi](#) in 1945.

The *Gospel of Judas* was likely compiled by an adherent of a Gnostic sect. (Gnostics emphasized the redemptive power of [esoteric](#) knowledge and taught that the material world is the creation of an inferior deity who is distinct from the [transcendent](#) God; see [Gnosticism](#).) It is a unique depiction of Judas, traditionally denounced for his treachery and betrayal of Jesus. Portraying Judas as the favourite [disciple](#) of Jesus, the gospel records how Jesus revealed to him secret knowledge that was withheld from the other apostles; this special revelation concerns the nature of the cosmos and the transcendent God, the creation of angels and other celestial beings, and the creation of humankind. The gospel also includes an account of conversations between Jesus and Judas that took place, according to the opening passage, "during a week, three days before he celebrated Passover." In these [dialogues](#), Judas emerges as the close confidant of Jesus, who tells him: "You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me." In this way, Jesus appears to ask Judas to help him liberate his spiritual self from his material body. Thus, the Judas of the gospel is not the betrayer of Jesus but his most important collaborator.

From <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gospel-of-Judas>>



What is the Gospel of Judas?

The *Gospel of Judas* is an ancient book written between AD 300 and 400 in an Egyptian language known as Coptic. It was found by a farmer in 1978. Ultimately, it reached the hands of scholars who have now completed its translation, under the auspices and funding of the National Geographic Society (see USA Today, "Long-lost gospel of Judas recasts 'traitor,'" 4/6/2006). The Gospel itself may be a copy of an older work, because its ideas about Judas are denounced in a late second century work by a man named Irenaeus. He warns of fictitious gospels in his book *Against Heresies* (see ch. XXXI, *Doctrines of the Cainites*). It is an interesting read, although only 80% of the gospel is legible so there are still holes and lines missing. The basic ideas do come through however. In the *Gospel of Judas* you will read of a rather unkind Jesus laughing at the apostles for their stupidity several times, hear a very different explanation of the creation of the world from what we read in Genesis, and of course (the part that has received so much media attention), find out that Jesus commissioned Judas to betray Him, making Judas out as a hero instead of traitor. If that sounds weird, you should go see for yourself. It is a rather short work and easy to read. The Society's website provides an English language translation. Go here (<http://www9.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/index.html>) and give it a try. Nothing beats actually reading a Gnostic gospel. It is a unique experience!

A Gnostic Gospel? What is that?

The Gnostics were a group of people in New Testament times who were kind of a secret society. They believed the physical body was bad, that salvation comes by understanding one's divine origins, and that only an elite few will be saved. They thought most Christians were deceived, in error, and doing it all wrong. Only the Gnostics were getting it right. Naturally, they wrote down their particular "take" on New Testament themes and ideas, even creating a Christ who taught their doctrines. These writings, of which there are many, are often called Gnostic Gospels, and are, to say the least, often very bizarre. Again, this is why it is a good idea to actually read the Gospel of Judas. The reader will quickly see how different these Gospels are from the New Testament.

So why aren't the Gnostic Gospels in the New Testament?

The answer to that question is simple: they are not old enough. Even secular history confirms that the New Testament was completed shortly after the first century (perhaps as early as AD 70) so these gospels written hundreds of years later just are not old enough to be authentic New Testament material. They were not written by any of the apostles or other eye-witnesses of Jesus, two important standards for material that is truly biblical. Remember, anyone can write a story, title it "the Gospel" and circulate it. That doesn't make it an authentic Gospel, worthy of inclusion in the Bible!

Why is there such a fuss about the Gospel of Judas?

Obviously, there will be some interest in a book that recasts Judas Iscariot as a hero, instead of portraying him as the rat who betrayed Jesus. However, there really isn't much to get excited about with the Gospel of Judas. It offers no new insights into Jesus Christ because its writer never knew or met Jesus, living hundreds of years after Jesus. All in all, it is a rather eccentric little book that does not say much that scholars didn't already know about Gnostics and Gnosticism.

However, the media and some Bible critics have tried to "make hay" out of the *Gospel of Judas*, using it to prop up some kind of Bible conspiracy theory. For example, Michael White of the University of Texas says "Scripture, like history, was codified by the winners, by those who emerged with the greatest numbers at the end of three centuries." Other writers and professors have joined in to say that the Gospel of Judas proves Christianity was more diverse than many have thought, and that there were lots of books that could conceivably have been in the New Testament but they were (unfairly) excluded. In the process, of course, the New Testament comes off looking like a book put together arbitrarily by men to advance a certain view of Jesus. This accords very well with the agenda of Dan Brown's best-seller *The DaVinci Code* and the impending release of the film based on that book may well account for why the Gospel of Judas' translation was published at this time.

Should the Gospel of Judas or other Gnostic Gospels be included in the Bible?

That is an excellent question for which there are two responses. First, for people of faith there is the issue of trusting God. The Bible claims it has all we need to be right with God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that it will be preserved and protected by God forever (1 Peter 1:23-25). For the Christian, there is no such thing as a "lost Gospel" or "lost books of the Bible" because if they were meant to be in the Bible they wouldn't and couldn't be lost. We trust God not to allow such to happen to His Word. Second, for people who do not (yet) accept the Bible as being an inspired book from God there is the evidence, both from the Bible and from secular history, for the Bible's completion and canonization well before the middle of the second century. For example, a man named Marcion preached a different version of Christianity, going to Rome in 144 AD to start an alternative Christianity community. His false teaching forced other Christians to make lists of what books were, and were not, accepted as truly inspired from God. There was no conspiracy, and there was no voting. The apostles had clearly instructed and informed the New Testament church about the need to recognize true writings (note Galatians 6:11), and the early church readily accepted those inspired writings for what they were: the word of God. There are plenty of manuscripts, papyrus writings, and fragments of writings that date back to the first century or early second century (like the *John Rylands Fragment* or *Magdalen Papyrus*) to verify that Christianity was a first century phenomenon, and is not the result of some sort of conspiracy in the fourth century. Further, from the writings of various Christians in the second and third centuries (long before the Gospel of Judas or any councils met to discuss and debate or vote) we know the content of the Bible was a settled issue. The church simply did not produce the Bible. The Bible produced the church.

Can we learn anything from the Gospel of Judas?

Some who are traditionally Bible skeptics are "blessing" the *Gospel of Judas* as if it should be put on par with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. For example, the *National Geographic* website says "The Gospel of Judas gives a different view of the relationship between Jesus and Judas, offering new insights into the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Unlike the accounts in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in which Judas is portrayed as a reviled traitor, this newly discovered Gospel portrays Judas as acting at Jesus' request when he hands Jesus over to the authorities." We wonder if *National Geographic* and other Bible critics who are so ready to "authenticate" the Gospel of Judas are as ready to believe in all that the Gospel of Judas says? For example, it says Jesus did miracles, that people have an eternal soul, that angels exist and that Adam and Eve were real people. It also accepts without questioning that Jesus was a real and genuine historical person. Is *National Geographic* on board with these ideas from the Gospel of Judas, or do they just get to pick and choose what they want to believe out of it?

The *Gospel of Judas* will make a splash for a short time, and then the media will move on to something else. Unfortunately, the effect of its translation and surrounding publicity may be to undermine people's faith in the Bible's inspiration. But careful study and careful investigation will see the Gospel of Judas for what it is (the work of men), and more, will see the Bible for what it is: the very word of God. Truth has nothing to fear. Investigate the Gospel of Judas and the Bible for yourself. Hopefully, the translation of this Gnostic Gospel will provoke many to search for and find the real Jesus in the real Gospels contained in the New Testament.

From <<https://www.bible.ca/ef/topical-what-about-the-gospel-of-judas.htm>>

Lost Gospel Revealed; Says Jesus Asked Judas to Betray Him

Hidden for 1,700 years, the Gospel of Judas now offers a surprising take on Christianity's most reviled man.

BYSTEFAN LOVGREN

PUBLISHED APRIL 6, 2006
* 6 MIN READ



0:56

EXCLUSIVE: FIRST LOOK INSIDE CHRIST'S BURIAL PLACE IN CENTURIES

WATCH: Scientists expose Jesus Christ's last resting place for first time in the modern era during restoration work at Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

He is one of the most reviled men in history.

But was Judas only obeying his master's wishes when he betrayed [Jesus](#) with a kiss?

That's what a newly revealed ancient Christian text says.

After being lost for nearly 1,700 years, the Gospel of Judas was recently restored, authenticated, and translated. The Coptic, or Egyptian Christian, manuscripts were unveiled today at National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Some biblical scholars are calling the Gospel of Judas the most significant archaeological discovery in 60 years.

The only known surviving copy of the gospel was found in a codex, or ancient book, that dates back to the third or fourth century A.D.

From <<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/lost-gospel-judas-revealed-jesus-archaeology>>

Judas Iscariot

May 21, 2023 12:40 AM

Judas Iscariot Apostle



The Last Supper

Judas Iscariot, (died c. 30 CE), one of the Twelve Apostles, [notorious](#) for betraying [Jesus](#). [Judas's](#) surname is more probably a corruption of the Latin *sicarius* (“murderer” or “assassin”) than an indication of family origin, suggesting that he would have belonged to the Sicarii, the most radical Jewish group, some of whom were terrorists. Other than his apostleship, his betrayal, and his death, little else is revealed about Judas in the Gospels. Always the last on the list of the Apostles, he was their treasurer. John 12:6 introduces Judas’s thievery by saying, “as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.”

He disclosed Jesus’ whereabouts to the chief priests and elders for 30 pieces of silver. They provided the armed guard that he brought to the [Garden of Gethsemane](#), near Jerusalem, where Jesus went to pray with the other 11 Apostles after the [Last Supper](#). There he identified Jesus with a kiss, addressing him as “master.” Matthew 26:14–16 and John 12:6 designate Judas’s motive as [avarice](#), but Luke 22:3–6 ascribes his action to the entrance of [Satan](#) into his body, paralleling John 13:27, where, after Judas took the bread at the Last Supper, “Satan entered into him.” Jesus then says, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” This is the culmination of John 6:70–71, which, after Jesus says, “Did I not choose you, the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?” discloses that he meant “Judas the son of [Simon](#) Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was to betray him.”

There are variant traditions about Judas’s death. According to Matthew 27:3–10, he repented after seeing Jesus condemned to death, then returned the silver and hanged himself (traditionally from the Judas tree). In [Acts](#) 1:18, he “bought a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out,” implying that he threw himself down, rather than that he died accidentally. [Apocryphal](#) gospels developed the point in Acts that calls the spot of his death the place (field) of blood. The 1st/2nd-century [Apostolic Father Papias](#) is quoted to have given [macabre](#) details about Judas’s death, presumably to show that [Gospel](#) prophecies were literally fulfilled. His account appears in numerous [legends](#), particularly in Coptic works, and in [medieval](#) literature. In *Dante’s Inferno* Judas appears in the deepest chasm of [hell](#) with Julius Caesar’s assassins, Brutus and Cassius.

From <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Judas-Ischriot>>

Valentinus and the Valentinians



A Valentinian funerary inscription.^[33] The Valentinians were one of two [early Christian sects that can be considered "Gnostic."](#) (The other was the [classic Gnostics.](#)) The Valentinians didn't call themselves "Gnostics," but their beliefs were clearly based on those of the classic Gnostics – the group of early Christians who *did* call themselves "Gnostics."^[1] In the words of the second-century [heresiologist](#) ([proto-orthodox](#)) Christian "heresy-hunter" Irenaeus, the Valentinians' founder and namesake Valentinus "adapted the fundamental principles of the Gnostic school of thought to his own kind of system."^[2]

Valentinus's Life and Teachings

Valentinus was a second-century teacher and church leader who narrowly lost a contest to become the bishop of Rome – or, as we would call the position today, the pope.^[3] He was one of the first Christian philosophers.^[4]

Valentinus was born around the year 100 in Phrebonis, an Egyptian town in the Nile Delta. He received a classical Greek education in Alexandria. After converting to Christianity, he studied with the Christian teachers Theudas, whom tradition holds to have been a student of the apostle Paul, and Basilides, a Gnostic philosopher.^[5] He then launched a teaching career of his own, which brought him to Rome in the late 130s. Many – perhaps even most – Christians of the time held him in high esteem, and even those who bitterly opposed his theology grudgingly respected him as an eminently successful teacher, eloquent orator, and keen thinker. Several of his students went on to become important theologians themselves, most notably Ptolemy of Rome.^[6] We know nothing of Valentinus's life after the mid-160s.^[7] The heresiologist Epiphanius asserts that he left Rome, suffered a shipwreck, washed up on the island of Cyprus, and went mad, but there's no corroborating evidence for this implausible claim from a generally unreliable source.^[8] Most modern scholars instead believe that Valentinus either died in Rome or returned to Alexandria, where the prominent theologian Clement of Alexandria discovered his thought.^[9]

Only a few samples of Valentinus's literary works survive. The longest and grandest of them is the *Gospel of Truth* from the [Nag Hammadi Library](#). (There's some controversy over whether or not Valentinus was really the author of the *Gospel of Truth*, but it's highly likely that he was.^[10]) The heresiologists have preserved bits and pieces from his other writings. One of them, the short poem *Summer Harvest*, concisely demonstrates Valentinus's spiritual depth and literary brilliance:

I see in spirit that all are hung
I know in spirit that all are borne
Flesh hanging from soul
Soul clinging to air
Air hanging from upper atmosphere
Crops rushing forth from the deep
A babe rushing forth from the womb.^[11]

Valentinus is also said to have written pieces called the *Epistle to Agathopus*, the *Epistle on Attachments*, *On Friends*, *On the Three Natures*, and *Sophia*.^[12]

Since we possess so little of Valentinus's own output, it's impossible to know what he believed and taught with much precision or in much detail. But our evidence is enough to show us at least some broad outlines.

Valentinus seems to have largely accepted [the mythological framework of classic Gnosticism](#). A spiritual figure descended from God had been cast out of the divine realm, created the material world out of arrogance and ignorance, and trapped divine sparks within the world. Christ had come to liberate people from the material world by imparting [gnosis](#) to them – that is, awakening them to the reality that their true essence is a piece of the perfect divine realm.^[13] However, there were some important differences between Valentinus's take on the basic Gnostic paradigm and the classic Gnostics' take on it.

Like Plato, Valentinus saw [myths](#), including Christian ones, as allegories for profound truths rather than as literal truths in and of themselves. Myths use figurative language to express something that's otherwise inexpressible. Taking them as literal truths can lead to monstrous spiritual, moral, and theological mistakes.^[14] It's unclear whether or not the classic Gnostics believed this as well. Plotinus, a Platonist philosopher who wrote extensively against the classic Gnostics, held that they thought of their texts as literal histories,^[15] and it's entirely possible that he was correct.

By contrast, Valentinus's views on this question are quite clear. He spoke of the Old Testament creator god as a superficial image of God, which, when believed in and followed in a literal sense, is a hindrance to experiencing firsthand what God really is.^[16] In the *Gospel of Truth*, Valentinus poetically re-imagined [the classic Gnostic creation myth](#) as a conflict between a figure named Error, who creates the material world, and [the true God](#) who sends Christ to overcome Error – a retelling that differs in many "factual" particulars yet preserves the inner spiritual meaning of the tale.^[17] Clearly, those particulars – like the roles of [Sophia](#) and the [demiurge](#), which are here subsumed by the role of Error, perhaps in order to make the tale simpler and more straightforward for a wider audience – weren't what really mattered about the story to Valentinus. To him, the tale was effectively a parable, and certainly not a history.

The classic Gnostics placed a considerable emphasis on the hopelessly fallen state of the material world and the shortcomings of the wicked beings who had created it. Valentinus emphasized the other side of the coin: the divinity hidden within material creation. Matter was a veil draped over God – it concealed him from view, but it also contained him deep down within itself. That veil was ultimately an illusion; things were only truly real inasmuch as they partook of God's reality.^[18]

For Valentinus, the [dualism of spirit and matter](#) went hand in hand with another dualism: that of oneness and division. Oneness was the condition of God, and division was the condition of matter. After all, God is only one thing, but there are countless different material things. Valentinus saw the unity of God as one of his most praiseworthy attributes, and he saw the plurality and particularity of matter as a horrible deficiency. Christ's gnosis healed the painful separation and limitation that matter had introduced to spirit, and the purpose of the church was to carry on this redemptive work until all had been restored to the original unity of the Father. As the *Gospel of Truth* says,

For where there is envy and strife there is deficiency, but where there is unity there is completeness. Since deficiency came about because the Father was not known, from the moment when the Father is known, deficiency will cease to be. As one's ignorance about another vanishes when one gains knowledge, and as darkness departs when light comes, so also deficiency disappears in completeness. From then on the world of appearance will no longer be evident, but rather it will disappear in the harmony of unity. Now the works of all lie scattered. In time unity will make the heavenly places complete, and in unity all individually will come to themselves. By means of knowledge [gnosis] they will purify themselves from multiplicity into unity, devouring matter within themselves like fire, darkness by light, death by life.^[19]

The very high value Valentinus placed on oneness had an important social ramification. Whereas the classic Gnostics scorned other kinds of Christians in some of their writings and seem to have worshiped only with other classic Gnostics and not with other Christians, Valentinus stressed the need for unity and harmony within the Christian community. He seems to have had no qualms about worshipping with Christians of any and all sorts. His vision of Christianity was highly accommodating toward all different kinds of Christians – including the classic Gnostics themselves.^[20]

Valentinianism and the Valentinians

Valentinus and his teachings inspired the formation of a movement or sect within second-century Christianity. The heresiologists called the followers of Valentinus the "Valentinians." This word may have been the heresiologists' own invention. There's no particular evidence that the followers of Valentinus ever referred to themselves as "Valentinians;" in their surviving writings, they refer to themselves as "Christians," plain and simple, as well as "the spiritual seed,"^[21] an allusion to their distinct and privileged spiritual identity.

The label "Valentinians" would also fit snugly with the heresiological convention of calling "heretical" Christian groups by the name of their real or purported founder. But while the term "Valentinian" may not have been one that the followers of Valentinus used for themselves, their movement "possessed enough continuity, coherence, and specificity, and enough of a historical relation with Valentinus," to make it necessary for us to adopt *some* label to refer to them as a distinct group within early Christianity.^[22] "Valentinian" works as well as, or better than, any other term for that purpose. Scholars also sometimes use the word "Valentinianism" to refer to the Valentinians' school of thought.

From the second century through the fifth, Valentinian Christians could be found throughout the entirety of the Roman Empire from Gaul to Mesopotamia.^[23] Like their founder, they worshiped in congregations made up of various different kinds of Christians, but also held additional meetings and services that were reserved for Valentinians.^[24] They seem to have been well-integrated into the Christian mainstream of the period; witness, for example, the fact that Pope Victor, who served from 189-199, had a Valentinian presbyter (assistant) named Florinus.^[25]

And unlike the ascetic, insular classic Gnostics, the Valentinians engaged in the normal social and economic life of the Roman Empire around them. They married, had families, and acquired their living by ordinary means. Inwardly, however, exemplary Valentinians held such worldly pursuits to be immeasurably less important than spiritual ones. Like the Stoics, they strove to prevent themselves from becoming emotionally attached to earthly delights even while partaking in them.^[26]

Valentinianism wasn't a rigid system, but rather a template based on the teachings of Valentinus that Valentinians held in common. Various groups and teachers constructed their own sub-systems around that template.^[27]

Like the classic Gnostics, the Valentinians don't seem to have believed that some were predestined to have gnosis and some weren't.^[28] They actively ministered to other Christians in the hope of helping them to progress toward gnosis.^[29] And as a further instance of how accommodating the Valentinians were toward other Christians, many – perhaps most – Valentinians believed that gnosis wasn't strictly necessary for salvation; faith, the baseline Christian spiritual virtue then as now, would suffice.^[30]

The texts from the Nag Hammadi Library, the largest and most important surviving collection of Gnostic scriptures, that are certainly or probably Valentinian are the *Gospel of Truth*, the [Gospel of Philip](#), the *Tripartite Tractate*, the *Interpretation of Knowledge*, *A Valentinian Exposition*, the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, the *First Revelation of James*, and the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*.^[31] Other Valentinian writings preserved from antiquity are the *Excerpts from Theodotus* quoted by Clement of Alexandria, parts of Heracleon's commentary on the Gospel of John quoted by Origen, and Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*.^[32]

Gnosis

"Gnosis" is a special, mystical kind of knowledge to which the Gnostics claimed to have privileged access. The very name "Gnostics" – which the [classic Gnostics](#) do seem to have used to refer to themselves^[1] – means "those with gnosis," and indicates just how essential gnosis was to their sense of identity.

Gnosis in Antiquity Before the Gnostics

The concept of gnosis was discussed widely and prominently in the ancient world before the Gnostics adopted it and tweaked it. It was probably most closely associated with Plato, who lived several centuries before Gnosticism first arose. Today, the ancient Greek word *gnosis* is usually translated as "knowledge," but for Plato and those who came after him, the term only referred to one particular kind of knowledge, not knowledge as a whole. "Gnosis" didn't mean everyday, ordinary factual knowledge. Nor did it mean knowing someone personally. Instead, it referred to special intuitive insight into the ultimate essence of something. Gnosis went well beyond what the senses could perceive, and it could only be obtained by particularly sensitive contemplation or by divine grace.^{[2][3]}

The Jewish religion of the period also placed a considerable emphasis on a similar type of knowledge. For example, as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a book of scripture written in the first century BC, says of God, "To know you is perfect righteousness, and to know your power is the root of immortality."^[4]

The so-called "mystery religions" that flourished throughout the Roman Empire in the centuries before Gnosticism came along claimed that gnosis was the gift their initiates would receive.

This transformed their initiates from ordinary people into members of a spiritual elite. The mystery religions, Plato, and Jewish religiosity largely agreed on this point: gnosis or its equivalent was only available to the aristocrats of spirituality.^[5]

Gnosis in Gnosticism

The Gnostics agreed on this point, but they emphasized it to a greater degree than anyone before them by going so far as to call themselves "Gnostics," "those with gnosis." Their very name was a way of proclaiming to others, "We are the *true* spiritual elite."

When the Gnostics used the word "gnosis," they were referring to something that overlapped significantly with the earlier uses of the word, but also had somewhat different and additional shades of meaning due to its placement within their [anticosmic mythos](#) and worldview. For them, gnosis was the realization that one didn't really belong in this senseless world, but rather in a divine world that's utterly unlike it and separate from it.^[6]

This wasn't a mere intellectual realization, however. This Heaven (the [Pleroma](#) or "Fullness") had to be experienced firsthand through mystical ecstasy.^[7] As Hans Jonas puts it, gnosis was "not a natural condition"^[8] – in fact, it was downright *anti-natural*. Normal human perceptual and cognitive abilities could never discover it. Only the heavenly spirit within oneself could do so, and this amounted to transcending the world and everything in it. The self finally understood itself as it really was, and through that radical self-knowledge it achieved liberation from any and all earthly circumstances and the humiliating, pointless suffering that went along with them.^[9] To quote the Gnostic *Book of Thomas* (not to be confused with the [Gospel of Thomas](#)): "Those who have not known themselves have known nothing, but those who have known themselves already have acquired knowledge about the depth of the All."^[10] And in the words of the [Valentinian](#) Gnostic teacher Theodotus, "It is not, however, the bath [baptism] alone that makes free, but knowledge [gnosis] too: who we were, what we have become, where we were, where we have come to be placed, where we are tending, what birth is, and what rebirth."^[11]

The experience of gnosis was the decisive means by which salvation was acquired – not belief in creeds, observance of sacraments, performance of moral behavior, obedience to a church

hierarchy, or anything else that was ultimately just a matter of outward speech and actions and therefore belonged to the mundane world rather than the divine world. The Gnostic [Gospel of Philip](#) laments that many people "go down into the water [of baptism] and come up without having received anything."^[12] And the Gnostic *Secret Book of James* says the same thing in positive terms rather than in negative terms: gnosis is "how you can acquire heaven's kingdom for yourselves."^[13]

But gnosis was more than just the *means* of salvation: it *was* salvation itself. One didn't have to wait until after death to be saved. One could be saved internally while one was still alive, even though those moments of salvation were surely only rare and fleeting things. As the Gnostic *Treatise on the Resurrection* says, "Leave the state of dispersion and bondage, and then you already have resurrection."^[14]

All, or at least nearly all, second-century Christian groups agreed that [Christ](#) had come to earth to bring salvation to people. But they disagreed vehemently over what exactly Jesus's salvation-enabling message and deeds had been. For the Gnostics, the point of Christ's mission on earth had been to point people in the direction of gnosis through his teachings – which were something like a residue of gnosis, and which could be used as a set of clues to help one to find gnosis for himself or herself – and through proving the immortality of the spirit by outliving the death of his human body. (See [Jesus Christ in Gnosticism](#) for more on this.) Jesus hadn't been an absolutely unique kind of being, but rather a model for others to aspire toward – to gain gnosis and thereby become united with God and Christ. According to the *Gospel of Philip*, the successful Gnostic is "no longer a Christian, but a Christ."^[15]

The Politics of Salvation

The Gnostic view of salvation was bitterly opposed by another group of early Christians: the so-called "[proto-orthodox](#)," from whom "Christianity" as we know it today is descended (including its Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox varieties).

For the proto-orthodox, salvation wasn't something that occurred within an individual's spirit whenever that person had a mystical experience. Instead, salvation would occur for all true Christians collectively at some unknown date in the future when their *bodies* would be raised from the dead, just as the proto-orthodox believed Jesus's body had been.^{[16][17]} Furthermore, this salvation wouldn't be based on gnosis or any other hallmark of inner spiritual maturity, but rather on outward social criteria: Does this person profess to be a Christian? Is he or she willing to undergo martyrdom? Has he or she been baptized? Does he or she submit to the clergy? Etc.^[18]

Both the Gnostics and the proto-orthodox could point to the mutually-cherished writings attributed to the apostles Paul and John to justify their views.^[19] And both camps claimed that their teachings had been passed down to them from the greatest luminaries among Jesus's first followers, and thus had the stamp of apostolic authority.

But they told different stories about the *method* by which these teachings were transmitted down through the generations, stories that were in keeping with the larger differences between their worldviews. For the proto-orthodox, the true doctrines of the apostles had been bequeathed to them through the succession of the occupants of particular institutional offices: Bishop So-and-So had gotten them from Bishop What's-His-Name, who in turn had gotten them from the apostle Peter, who naturally had gotten them from Jesus himself, and the like. They called this standard the "rule of faith."^[20] The Gnostics, however, claimed that their own teachings had been delivered by Christ and other biblical figures through direct revelations to spiritually advanced individuals. No institutional intermediaries were necessary.^[21]

These differences between the Gnostics and the proto-orthodox over the nature of salvation and spiritual authority weren't dry academic disputes. They went hand in hand with the two groups' social ambitions in the politics of the early Christian church. The Gnostics believed that the true church was comprised of those with gnosis, which made the proto-orthodox illegitimate, authoritarian pretenders. The proto-orthodox, meanwhile, held that the true church was comprised of those who obeyed the clergy – by which they meant the *proto-orthodox* clergy specifically – and cast the Gnostics as conceited, deluded subversives.^[22]

So, for example, the Gnostic *Revelation of Peter* called the proto-orthodox "dry canals" who "name themselves 'bishop' and also 'deacons,' as if they have received their authority from God," but are in reality "blind and deaf" and "without perception."^[23] Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons, one of the supreme champions of proto-orthodoxy, in turn characterized the Gnostics as "thieves and robbers... false persons, evil seducers, and hypocrites."^[24] Irenaeus's proto-orthodox colleague Bishop Ignatius of Antioch accordingly demanded of all Christians, "Let no one do anything pertaining to the church without the bishop... To join with the bishop is to join the church; to separate oneself from the bishop is to separate oneself not only from the church, but from God himself."^[25]

But this stress on unconditional obedience to the clergy presented a problem for the proto-orthodox: what were they to do in cases where the clergy themselves were "heretics," as was often the case in the first centuries after Jesus's death? To remedy this, they set out to systematically hunt down, remove, and replace any members of the clergy who weren't in agreement with them so that their position on spiritual authority would be consistent.^[26] For example, Irenaeus got the late-second-century Bishop Victor of Rome to fire his presbyter Florinus for being a Gnostic.^[27]

As the proto-orthodox became more and more powerful within the early church, one of the two main early [Gnostic sects](#), the [Valentinians](#), tried to compromise and make peace with the proto-orthodox in the interest of unifying Christians and keeping a place for themselves within the broader Christian community. They put forward the idea that even though gnosis is superior to mere faith (Greek *pistis*), faith is the lowest common denominator of what makes a Christian a Christian. All of those with faith (*pistoi*, "believers") were fundamentally part of the same group, and they were decisively separate from those without faith (*apistoi*, "unbelievers"). Faith, said the Valentinian teacher Theodotus, is like the horizon that separates the sky from the earth.^[28] The *Gospel of Philip* concurred: all of those with faith, it said, "have found Life," irrespective of their differences.^[29] Another Valentinian text, the *Gospel of Truth*, pleaded that "faith came, did away with division, and brought the warm fullness of love."^[30]

But the Valentinians' yearning for love and harmony proved to be no match for brute power. The proto-orthodox got what they wanted, and they and their descendants rather than the Gnostics or anyone else have overwhelmingly gotten to define what "Christianity" is ever since.

From <https://gnosticismexplained.org/gnosis/>

What Is Heresy? Bible Meaning and 4 Examples Alive Today

- [Mike Leake](#)Borrowed Light
- 202018 Jun



Most heretics come from an attempt to tie together paradoxes in the Scriptures.

After reports had been published that Mark Twain had died, the still-living author wrote in to the New York Journal with this quip: "The report of my death was an exaggeration". I wonder if we could say the same about some of the early heresies — because they aren't quite dead yet.

Definition of Heresy

According to [dictionary.com](#), the following is a breakdown of the common definition of "heresy":

1. opinion or doctrine at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine, especially of a church or religious system.
2. the maintaining of such an opinion or doctrine.
3. the willful and persistent rejection of any article of faith by a baptized member of the church.
4. any belief or theory that is strongly at variance with established beliefs, customs, etc.

Meaning of Heresy

- Heresy is not the same as error.
- Heresy is the choice to abandon the widely accepted teaching on an essential doctrine and embrace one's own view.
- Heresy is to "preach another gospel", as Paul stated in Galatians 1:9: "As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."
- Technically speaking something is not a heresy just because the church deemed it so. It is heretical because it is a teaching which has abandoned the "pattern of sound teaching".

From <<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/4-heresies-still-alive-in-the-church.html>>