

Gnosticism

Robert C. Newman

from Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism
and Irenaeus, Against Heresies*



Gnosticism Characterized

- This world is unredeemably bad.
- Salvation is escape from the world, by means of self-knowledge.
- God is completely transcendent.
- Between God & the world are numerous intermediate spirit beings, called aeons, one (or more) of whom made this world.
- Somehow, some of the divine spark was trapped in the world in (some) humans.
- The Redeemer came down to give knowledge by which humans may be saved.

Gnosticism Characterized

- Humans are divided into 3 classes:
 - *Hulic* – earthly, material
 - Incapable of salvation
 - *Psychic* – animal, soulish, spiritual
 - Capable of salvation
 - Need to accept Gnostic gospel
 - Usually orthodox Christians are put in this class
 - *Pneumatic* – spiritual
 - Already saved by nature
 - Typically, the Gnostic leaders

Origin of Gnosticism

Very controversial

- From ancient Oriental religion?
 - Zoroastrian, Mesopotamian, Indian?
- From heterodox Judaism?
 - Apocalyptic, mystical?
- From heterodox Christianity?
- From late Hellenistic philosophy?
 - Neoplatonism?

Early "Christian" Gnostics

Lots of Gnostic "gurus" and groups:

- Simon Magus
- Menander
- Saturninus
- Basilides
- Carpocrates
- Cerinthus
- The Ebionites
- Valentinus
- The Nicolaitans
- Cerdo
- Marcion
- The Encratites
- The Barbelo-Gnostics
- The Sethian-Ophites
- The Cainites

Gnostic "Aeons"

in system of Valentinus

THE OGDOAD:

- Proarche
- Ennoea
- Nous
- Aletheia
- Logos
- Zoe
- Anthropos
- Ecclesia

THE DECAD:

- Bythius
- Mixis
- Ageratos
- Henosis
- Autophyes
- Hedone
- Acinetos
- Syncrasis
- Monogenes
- Macaria

Gnostic "Aeons"

in system of Valentinus

THE DUODECAD:

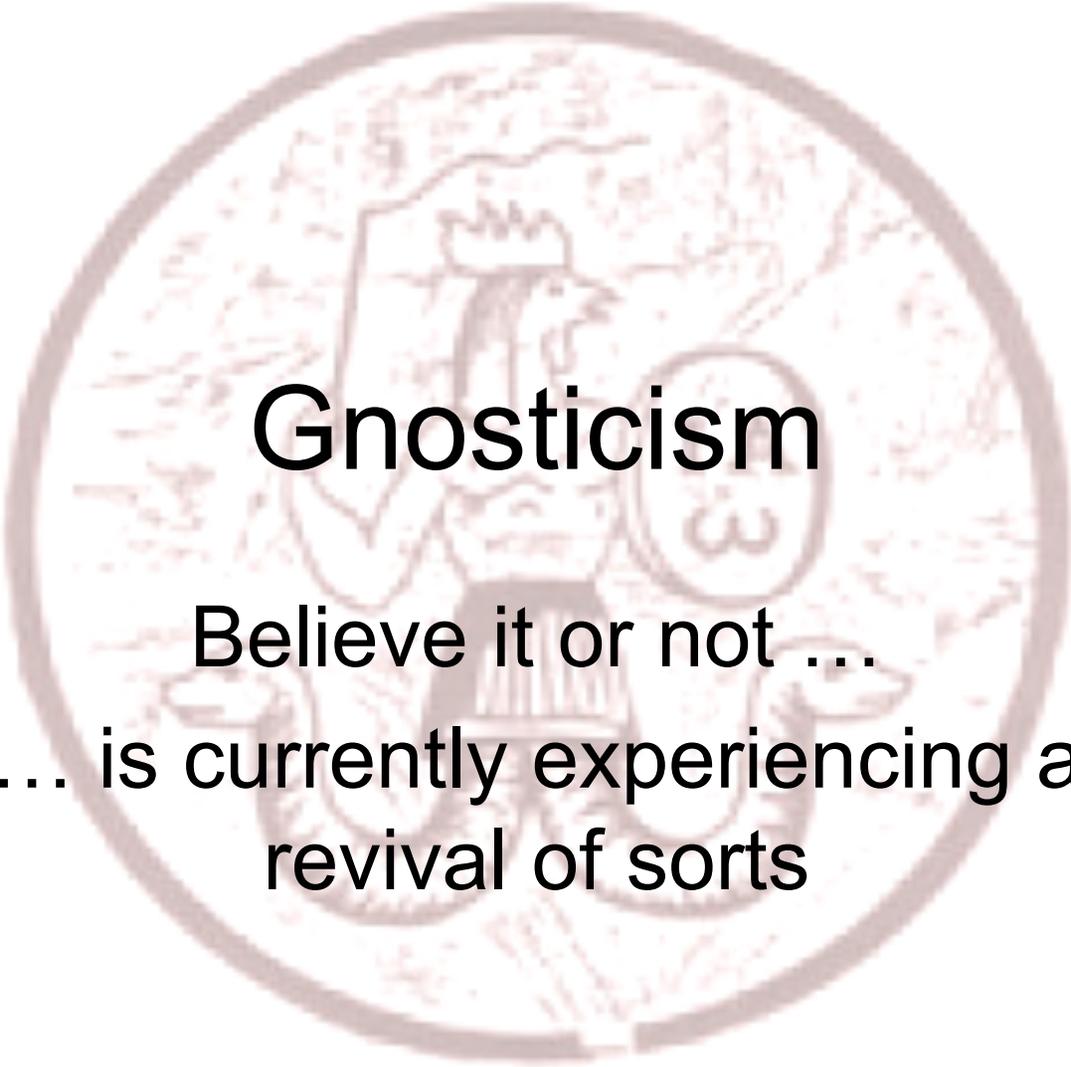
- Paracletus
- Pistis
- Patricos
- Elpis
- Metricos
- Agape
- Ainos
- Synesis
- Ecclesiasticus
- Macariotes
- Theletos
- Sophia

Gnostic "Aeons"

in system of Valentinus

- The Ogdoad, Decad, & Duodecad make up the PLEROMA.
- Sophia, also called Acamoth (Wisdom), consists of spirit, animal, and matter.
- Her child is the Demiurge, the God of everything outside the Pleroma, the Creator in Genesis.





Gnosticism

Believe it or not ...
... is currently experiencing a
revival of sorts