

## The Influence of Gnostic Teaching on the New Testament (1<sup>st</sup> Century),

**INCIPIENT GNOSTICISM**  
Jewish/Pagan myths

Battle for Supremacy of "Church Fathers"

Background Context for Writing of New Testament

<p>Persian Gnosticism <a href="#">Mandaeism</a> <a href="#">Manichaeism</a></p> <p>Christian Gnosticism <a href="#">Ebionites</a> <a href="#">Cerdonians</a> <a href="#">Marcionism</a> (not entirely Gnostic) <a href="#">Apelliacos</a> <a href="#">Lucianists</a><sup>[1]</sup></p> <p><a href="#">Colorbasians</a> <a href="#">Simonians</a> <a href="#">Menandrians</a><sup>[2]</sup> <a href="#">Dositheans</a> (could be offshoot of Simonianism or proto-Gnostic)</p> <p>Syrian-Egyptic Gnosticism <a href="#">Bardesaites</a> <a href="#">Basilidians</a> <a href="#">Hermeticism</a> <a href="#">sethians</a> <a href="#">Valesians</a> <a href="#">Satornilians</a><sup>[3]</sup> <a href="#">Thomasines</a> (Also called <a href="#">Thomaseses</a>) <a href="#">Valentinianism</a> <a href="#">Heracleonites</a><sup>[4]</sup> <a href="#">Ptolemaeans</a><sup>[5]</sup></p>	<p><a href="#">Al-Davhuri's Sect</a> <a href="#">Albanenses</a> <a href="#">Astarti</a> <a href="#">Austrianism</a> <a href="#">Shinang's Sect</a> <a href="#">Sabians</a> (also called <a href="#">Sampsaeans</a>) Others <a href="#">Abelionians</a><sup>[6]</sup> <a href="#">Agapetae</a> <a href="#">Alogians</a> <a href="#">Angelici</a><sup>[7]</sup> <a href="#">Antitactae</a> <a href="#">Aquarii</a> <a href="#">Archontics</a> <a href="#">Ascodrouetes</a> <a href="#">Barbellotae</a> <a href="#">Borborties</a> <a href="#">Coddians</a> (also called <a href="#">Koddians</a>)<sup>[8]</sup> <a href="#">Stratiotici</a> <a href="#">Levitics</a> (Also called <a href="#">Leviticici</a>)<sup>[9]</sup> <a href="#">Phibionites</a><sup>[10]</sup> <a href="#">Cainites</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Carpocratians</a> <a href="#">Cerinthians</a> <a href="#">Adamites</a> (also called <a href="#">Adamians</a>) <a href="#">Marcellianus</a> <a href="#">Cleobians</a><sup>[11]</sup> <a href="#">Docetae</a> <a href="#">Elcesaites</a> <a href="#">Encratites</a> <a href="#">Severians</a> <a href="#">Apotactics</a> (also called <a href="#">Apostolics</a>) <a href="#">Marcosians</a> <a href="#">Messalians</a> <a href="#">Nicolaiism</a> <a href="#">Ophites</a> <a href="#">Naassenes</a> <a href="#">Perates</a> <a href="#">Priscillianism</a> <a href="#">Secundians</a><sup>[12]</sup> <a href="#">Seleucians</a></p>
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**gnōsis, knowledge** - Inner Knowing  
**LOGOS** - word (symbolic)      **SOPHIA** - Wisdom  
**pleroma** - fullness of creation      **kephale** - held all things in creation together - head

## Sources Prior to 1945

- Allusions to their teachings in the New Testament
- Refuted by early "church fathers" eg. Irenaeus "Against Heresies"
- Early Writings "Gospel of Mary" 1896 Egypt etc

## 1945 Nag Hammadi

Codices found at Nag Hammadi

## GNOSTIC DOCTRINES

Peter Bayliss

- 1) That which is physical is evil; spirit is good.
- 2) Salvation is by your pure spirit escaping from your fleshly body and ascending to heaven. The means of such escape is 'special knowledge', *gnosis* in Greek, hence Gnosticism.
- 3) The Old Testament God had created the evil physical world. Hence he himself is evil and a deceiver.
- 4) The body is evil and to be treated harshly by fasting etc. Marriage is forbidden. Chastity preserved. Or the opposite/immorality ok (little evidence for this – Irenaeus misquoting Revelation)
- 5) Creating more vile flesh by having children is evil. Women who give birth will be hindered from entering Gnostic heaven.
- 6) Eve is worshipped as a perfect, spirit being, Adam's creator and, united with the Serpent, the enlightener of mankind with the True Knowledge.
- 7) Knowledge of your origins via your family tree is important to salvation; Eve is the origin of all.
- 8) Christ being perfect did not have a physical body, he only appeared to have one. (Docetism – Jesus was human - Christ not – not shared by all Gnostics)

**Elaine Pagels** Professor of Religion at Princeton University . . .

The church fathers put the fear into people that outside the catholic church there is no eternal salvation-

Gnostic Christians, on the contrary, assert that what distinguishes the false from the true church is not its relationship to the clergy, but the level of understanding of its members, and the quality of their relationship with one another. The Apocalypse of Peter declares that "those who are from the life... Have been enlightened," they discriminate for themselves between what is true and false. Belonging to "the remnant...summoned to knowledge, they neither attempt to dominate others nor do they subject themselves to the **bishops and deacons**, those "**waterless canals**". Instead they participate in "the wisdom of the brotherhood that really exists... The spiritual fellowship with those united in communion."

**Jewish "Gnostic" Origins**

The Jewish encyclopaedia says  
*"Jewish gnosticism unquestionably preceded Christianity."*

Gnosticism was a mix of Jewish, Persian, Greek and Egyptian ideas

It's home was the area of Syria Palestine and Alexandria.



**Philo the Jewish Philosopher**  
 of Alexandria – 20 BCE -50CE

*"One of the most widely read Jewish intellectuals in the first century"*

**Merged Greek philosophy with Jewish philosophy**

**Principles of interpretation established by Philo:**

- The literal sense of a scriptural passage is rejected if it raises a factual or theological contradiction
- The silence of scripture is significant
- A single word is often the key for interpretation
- Word studies can uncover the meaning of scripture



20 BCE - 50 CE  
**PHILO** - Brother of Alexander the Alabarch

"Surpassed all his fellow citizens in ancestry and wealth" Josephus  
 Overlaid 9 gates of Jerusalem temple with silver and gold.  
 In charge of customs for Rome in Alexandria. Friend of Claudius.

Born Roman Citizens

Tiberius Julius Alexander (Procurator of Judea 46-48 CE, Prefect of Egypt 58-69 CE, 2nd in charge during siege of Jerusalem 70 CE under Titus)

Herod Agrippa 1 (Sister of Herod Agrippa 11 love affair with Titus before he became emperor.)

Marcus Julius married Princess Bernice

Met Paul  
 "The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer."  
 Acts 25:23-24



**Philo Symbolises Genesis**

"And the heaven and the earth and all their world was Completed." Having previously related the creation of the mind and of sense, Moses now proceeds to describe the perfection which was brought about by them both. And he says that neither the indivisible mind nor the particular sensations received perfection, but only ideas, one the idea of the mind, the other of sensation. And, speaking symbolically, he calls the mind heaven, since the natures which can only be comprehended by the intellect are in heaven. And sensation he calls earth, because it is sensation which has obtained a corporeal and some what earthy constitution. The ornaments of the mind are all the incorporeal things, which are perceptible only by the intellect. Those of sensation are the corporeal things, and everything in short which is perceptible by the external senses.

ii. (2) "And on the sixth day God finished his work which he had made." **It would be a sign of great simplicity to think that the world was created in six days, or indeed at all in time; because all time is only the space of days and nights, and these things the motion of the sun as he passes over the earth and under the earth does necessarily make. But the sun is a portion of heaven, so that one must confess that time is a thing posterior to the world. Therefore it would be correctly said that the world was not created in time, but that time had its existence in consequence of the world. For it is the motion of the heaven that has displayed the nature of time.**

(3) When, therefore, Moses says, "God completed his works on the sixth day," we must understand that he is speaking not of a number of days, but that he takes six as a perfect number.

**Philo Personified LOGOS as a mediator between our soul and God**

"Logos" = "word" or "divine reason" - entered soul  
 It came from God and communicated with people.

**THE BODY was for Philo as for Plato, "an evil and a dead thing," wicked by nature and a plotter against the soul.**

"Now the image of God is the Word (LOGOS), by which all the world was made."  
 - Philo, "The Special Laws", I (81)



### 500 years of LOGOS EPHESUS

Heraclitus 500 BC "Although this Logos is eternally valid, yet **men are unable to understand it**—this common and divine reason [logos], by participation in which we become rational, is **the criterion of truth.**"

(A copy of a book kept in the temple at Ephesus)

Kahn said "Down to the time of Plutarch and Clement, if not later, the little book of Heraclitus was **available in its original form to any reader who chose to seek it out.**"



### John 1 Identifies Logos as Jesus

In the beginning was the Word (**Logos**), and the Word was with God, and the Word (**LOGOS**) was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> And the light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness did not comprehend it...** The Word (**LOGOS**) became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.



### 1 Timothy 6:20



Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and **the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge (gnosis)**, which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.

### Bishops claimed " True Knowledge"

**Ignatius 35-107 AD**  
Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians  
"It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself... that being **subject to the bishop and the presbytery**, you may in all respects be sanctified."  
"The true gnosis," is the doctrine of the apostles... and the **manifestation of the Body of Christ according to the successions of bishops** *Irenaeus Against Heresies*



### 2 John 1 – Countering Gnoticism?



As you have **heard from the beginning**, **his command is that you walk in love** (LOVE - THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMAND RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING).<sup>7</sup> I say this because many deceivers, **who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh**, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup> Watch out that you do not lose what we<sup>1a</sup> have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. <sup>9</sup> **Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ** does not have God; **whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son**<sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching do not take them into your house or welcome them.<sup>11</sup> Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

### Ignatius 35-107 CE

Said that Jesus was God  
"God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible, even Jesus Christ our Lord."  
—Letter to the Ephesians, ch. 7



### Women Had Equality

**Irenaeus** noted with dismay that “women especially are attracted to heretical groups... who seduced women by telling them to prophesy-which they were strictly forbidden to do in the orthodox church. . . . Worst of all, they were allowed to act as priests in celebrating the eucharist (bread and wine).”

**Tertullian** – “These heretical women how audacious they are! They have no modesty: they are bold enough to teach, to engage in argument, to undertake cures, and, it may be, even to baptize!”

Pages 59-60 EP Gnostic Gospels



### From “The Gospel of Mary”

Levi said....“*But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well.*

**That is why He loved her more than us.**  
*Rather let us be ashamed and put on the perfect Man, and separate as He commanded us and preach the gospel, **not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Saviour said.***

### Personification of “Sophia”

Greek: Sophia = Wisdom

Jewish Myths: Sophia = Holy Spirit

Philo : Sophia =The wife of God

Personified as a woman in Proverbs 8



### Hagia Sophia – Turkey (1<sup>st</sup> church 360 AD)

“Dedicated to the Wisdom (Sophia) of God the Logos the second person of the Holy Trinity”



A Difficult Passage Explained in Gnostic Context

**1 Tim 2:11-15**

**“Perhaps one of the most debated passages in all of the Epistles”**



### PURPOSE OF WRITING TO TIMOTHY 1 Tim 1:3-4



*“Stay there in **Ephesus** so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.”*

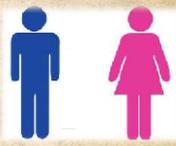
### 1 Tim 2:11-15

~~First~~   ~~Second~~

*"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."*

**For Adam was first formed, then Eve.**  
**And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.**

**And she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."**



Jesus the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam  
 1 Cor. 11:12  
**As the woman came from the man, even so is the man also by the woman**

FROM THE CONTEXT OF 1 TIM. 2

### WHAT WERE THE PROBLEMS ?

- pray, without anger or disputing – **angry people**
- dress modestly- not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes - **women overdressing**



the woman being deceived was in the transgression - **not part of Adam's transgression**

- she shall be saved throughout childbearing – **don't marry or have children**

**Adam was made first - EVE MADE FIRST**

### From "On the Origin of the World"

**Sophia** sent Zoe, her daughter, who is called "**Eve**," as an instructor in order that she might raise up **Adam**, in whom there is no spiritual soul so that those whom he could beget might also become vessels of light. When Eve saw her companion, who was so much like her, in his cast down condition she pitied him, and she exclaimed: "Adam, live! Rise up upon the earth!" Immediately her words produced a result for when Adam rose up, right away he opened his eyes. When he saw her, he said: "You will be called 'mother of the living', because you are the one who gave me life."

### What were the Wrong Doctrines ?

1 Tim 2:11-15

**"And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence (quietness)."**

**For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.**

**And she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."**

From "On the Origin of the World"  
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**Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin"**  
 Rom. 5:12 As in Adam all die 1 Cor 15:22

1 Tim 4:3 They forbid people to marry

### 1 Tim 1:3-4

*"Stay there in Ephesus so that you may command **certain people** not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies."*

## STOP THE TEACHING OF FALSE DOCTRINES

And devotion to **MYTHS** & endless **GENEALOGIES**

Paul's command was only for 'certain people'  
 - the ones teaching wrong doctrine.

### Titus 1:10-14

### Silencing Men with Wrong Doctrine

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and **deceivers**, specially they of the circumcision:

**Whose mouths must be stopped**, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not.

Paul taught wrong doctrine -



### THE PURPOSE

**Of the Gospels**  
*These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31*



**Of Paul's Letters**  
*Advice in a local context  
We often have one side of the story  
Paul often writes in confusing "rhetoric" putting forth all sides of an argument*

Paul	Socrates
<p>For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ... and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it [the member that suffers]</p> <p>For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?</p>	<p>For example, if the finger of one of us is wounded, the entire community...is made aware, and all of it [the community] feels the pain as a whole</p> <p>For whence come wars, and fightings, and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body?</p>