



Gnosticism

Irenaeus – Against Heresies

Gnosticism

In this presentation, we will :

- 1 Introduce the early church father, Irenaeus.
- 2 Define heresy.
- 3 Introduce the concepts of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism

- 4 See a few instances in which Gnostics use Scripture to support their beliefs.
- 5 See the method the early church father, Irenaeus, used to respond to “Christian Gnostics.”
- 6 See how we can identify false teachings (sources of *and* actual) and deal with differences in interpretation of Scripture in the assembly.

1

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- Irenaeus (~130-202 CE) was an early church father who studied under Polycarp (69-155 CE), the Bishop of Smyrna, who had been a disciple of the apostle John (6-100 CE).
- After the death of Pothinus (87-177 CE), the first bishop of Lyon (Lugdunum), Irenaeus became the second bishop of Lyon, France.



1

Gnosticism

- Irenaeus is well known for a series of five books entitled “Against Heresies,” which was also known as “The Refutation and Overthrowal of Knowledge Falsely So-Called.”
- This series was written between 175 and 189 CE.



1

Gnosticism

- **Against Heresies** was the best explanation of Gnosticism until actual Gnostic texts were found in upper Egypt in the town of Nag Hammadi in 1945.
- This collection of 13 codices are known as the Nag Hammadi library.



1

Gnosticism

- Not all of the Nag Hammadi library is Gnostic in nature, but it does contain 52 Gnostic treaties.
- There is much variation in their content – including contradiction.



1

Gnosticism

- There are many forms of Gnosticism.
- Irenaeus' work not only confronts the Valentinian form of Gnosticism, but several other false teachings as well.
- Valentinian Gnosticism was founded by a man named Valentinus. It is one of the Syrian-Egyptian forms of Gnosticism.



2

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- According to the Louw Nida Lexicon, *hairesis* (αἵρεσις, Strong's G: 139/LN: 152) is defined as:
 1. Division or group based upon different doctrinal opinions and/or loyalties and hence by implication in certain contexts an unjustified party or group (applicable in the NT to religious parties) Acts 24:14, 26:5
 2. The content of teaching which is not true. 2 Peter 2:1
 3. Division of people into different and opposing sets. 1 Cor. 11:19

2

Gnosticism

- For example, Judaism had a wide variety of sects >>
- Despite some differences in Scripture interpretation and practices, they still held to a common set of beliefs found in the Tanakh.



2

- Even today among our assemblies, we see differences in interpretation, which affect how we walk out the Scriptures.

Gnosticism



2

Gnosticism

- During the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Ante-Nicene period), the assemblies were not only interpreting Scripture differently, but several false teachings had entered the assemblies.

2

Gnosticism

- False teaching in the early centuries included:
- **Marcionism** – the God of Yeshua was a different God from that of the Tanakh.
- **Montanism** – reliance on prophetic revelation of the Holy Spirit.
- **Adoptionism** – Yeshua was not born the Son of God, but He was adopted at his baptism, resurrection, or ascension.
- **Docetism** – Yeshua was pure spirit; His physical form was an illusion; this belief was often present in some Gnostic circles. (1 John 4:2)
- **Gnosticism** – is vastly different from these.

2

Gnosticism

- In 2 Peter 2:1, the Apostolic writings already in existence warned its readers to avoid false prophets and teachers:
- *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*
- *² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”*

2

Gnosticism

In 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, Paul told the Corinthians:

*“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he who comes preaches **another Yeshua** whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it!”*

2

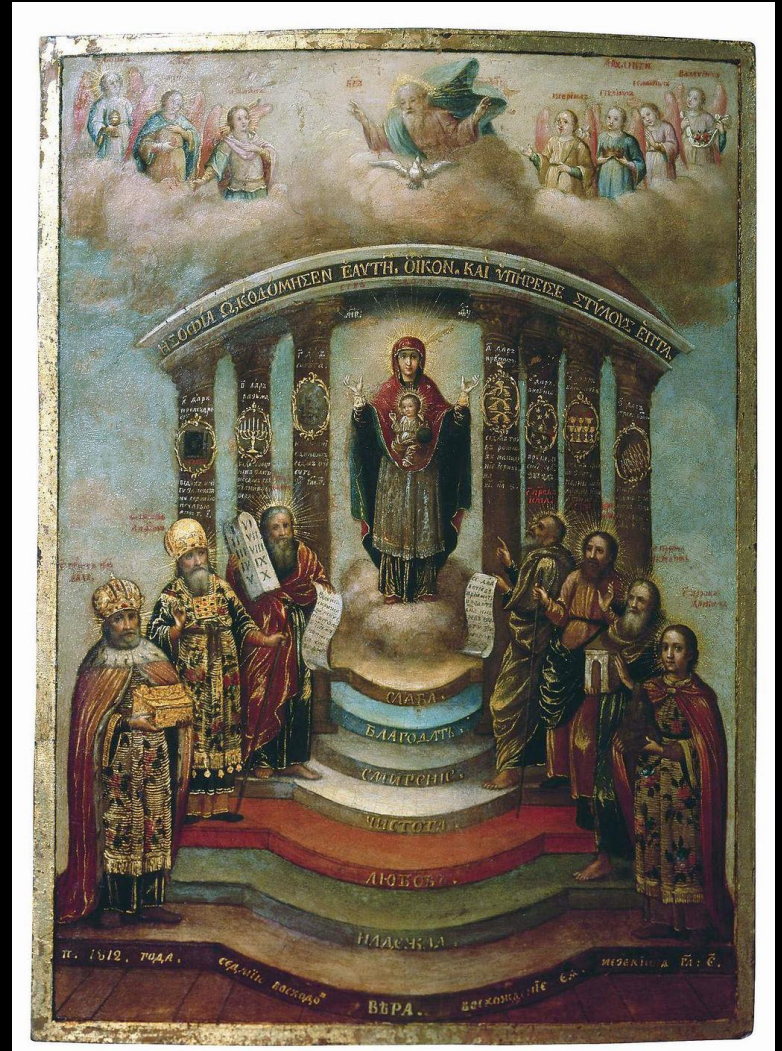
Gnosticism

Irenaeus was coming against another Yeshua in the teachings of Valentinus that we call Gnosticism.

3

Gnosticism

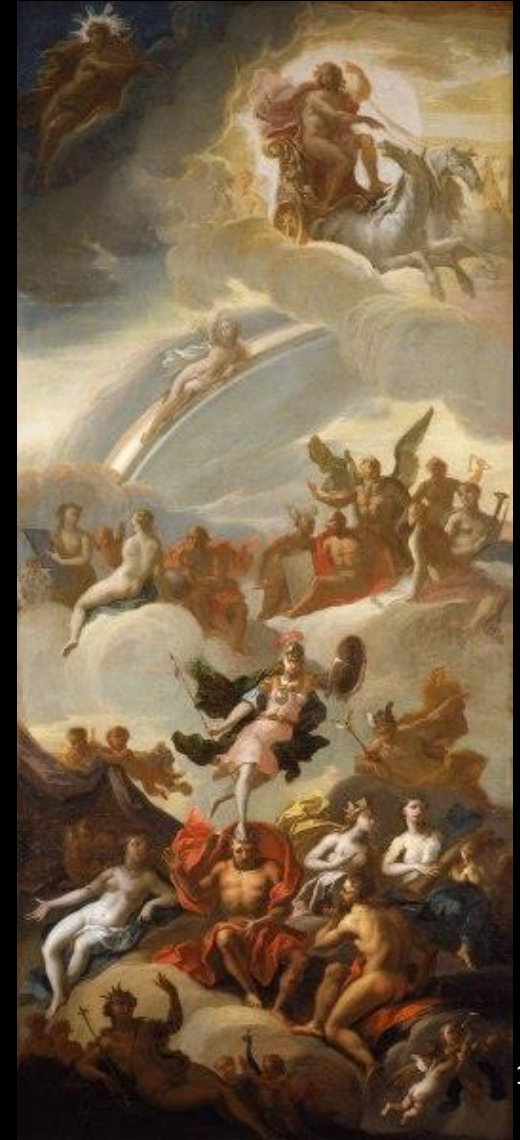
As we get started, I will warn you now that this will likely blow your mind, but please bear with me.



3

In an effort to head off your brain freeze, I'd like you to think back for a moment to the time when you learned about **Greek Mythology** – that pantheon of gods in the sky – because **Gnosticism** seems to share similarities with them.

Gnosticism



3

Gnosticism

In addition, we'll see who ended up **outside** a location known as the **Pleroma** and how the earth supposedly came to be.

We'll also learn a bit of their eschatology as well.

The colors of the bubbles will be your guide to what we are talking about in the discussion.

Although there is quite a variation in beliefs among Gnostics, the following are some of their basic beliefs:

The first god of Gnosticism is known as **Monad**, which means “The One.”

He is the source of the **Pleroma** (πλήρωμα, fullness), which is a region of light.

I’m using this pale blue bubble to represent the Pleroma.

Monad, the first god of Gnosticism, is a perfect pre-existing **Aeon** (spirit being) that is invisible and incomprehensible.

The Pleroma is made up of **emanations of the Monad**; these are eternal spiritual beings called **Aeons**, which are known by several names, and some of their names are used more than once.

We will limit those multiple names in this presentation to keep things as simple as possible.

The Pleroma is **tripartite**; it's divided into an **Ogdoad** (8 Aeons), **Decad** (10 Aeons), and **Duodecad** (12 Aeons).

These divisions are composed of male and female conjugal pairs of Aeons called **syzygies**.

Monad (The One)
is the pre-existing Aeon;
he is part of the Ogdoad

Ogdoad
(8 Aeons)

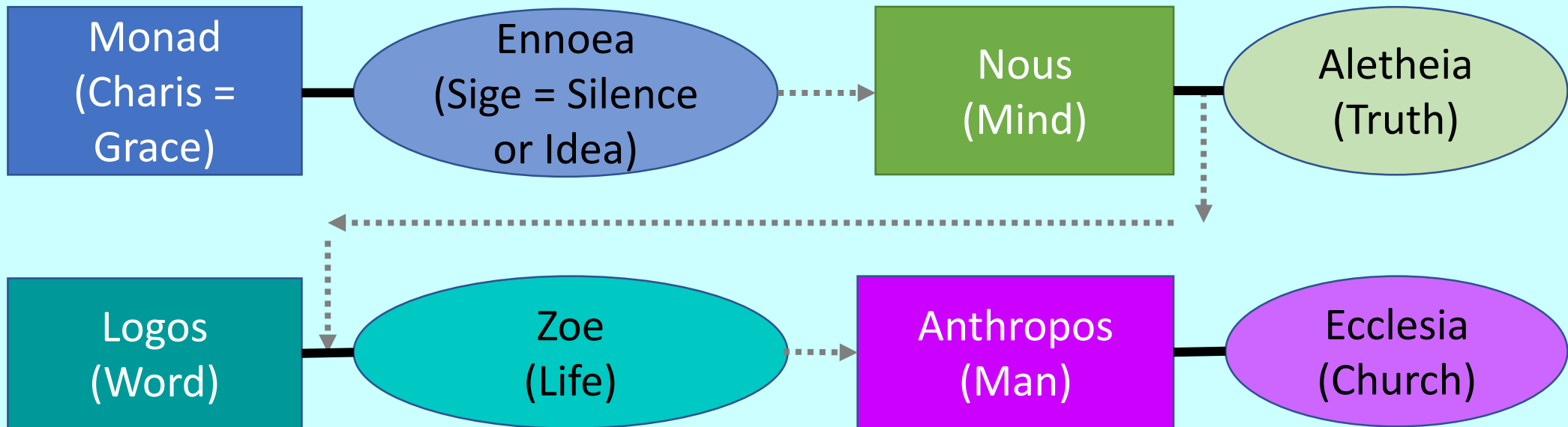
Decad
(10 Aeons)

Duodecad
(12 Aeons)

Pleroma (πλήρωμα) = totality of divine powers; fullness

Only one pair of the Ogdoad (Logos and Zoe) formed one pair of the Decad; and a different pair of the Ogdoad (Anthropos and Ecclesia) formed one pair of the Duodecad.

Ogdoad



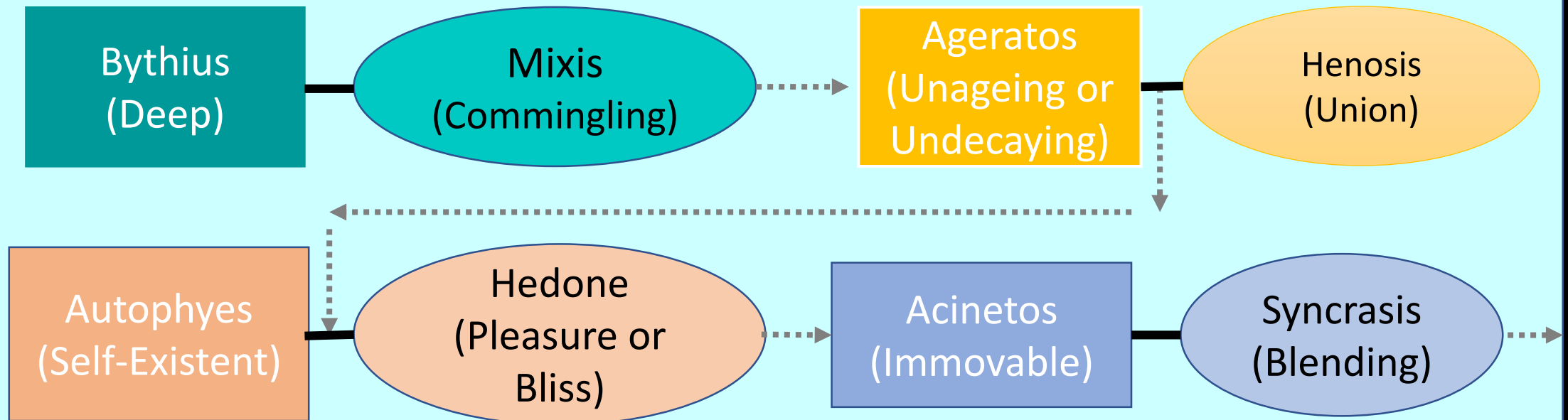
Pleroma (πλήρωμα) = totality of divine powers; fullness

Nous (Mind) is also known as Monogenes, the Father, Beginning of All Things

He is the only one who knows the nature of the Monad.

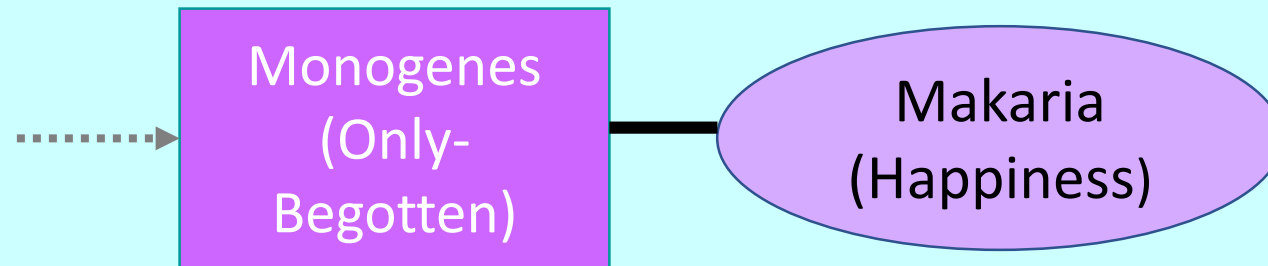
There is another Aeon by the name of Monogenes, which confuses things.

Decad – From Logos and Zoe



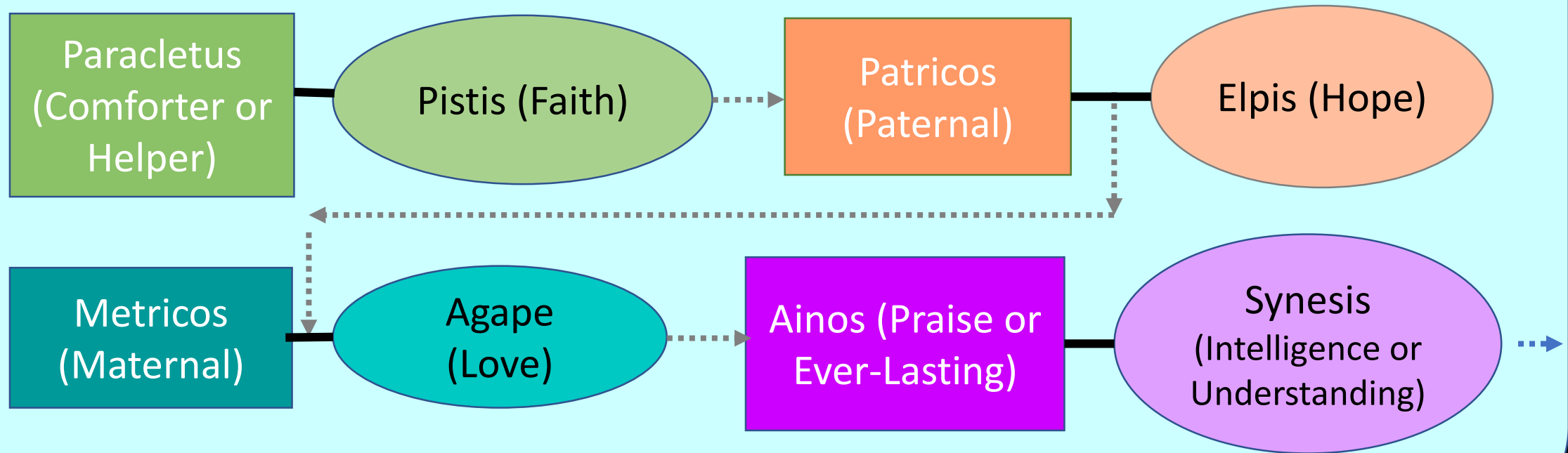
Pleroma (πλήρωμα) = totality of divine powers; fullness

Decad – From Logos and Zoe



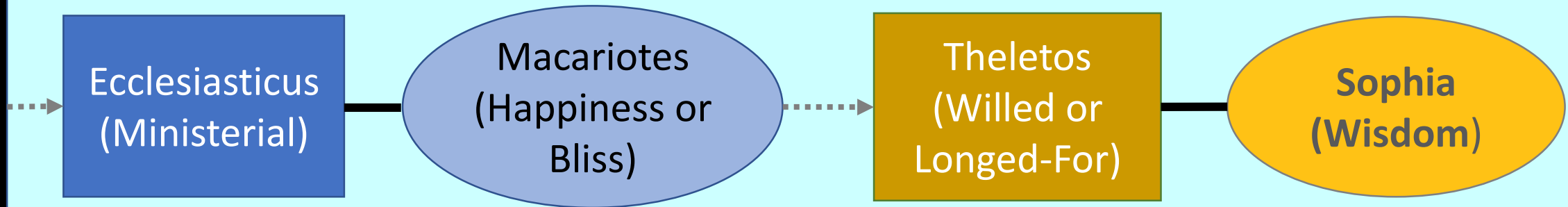
Pleroma (πλήρωμα) = totality of divine powers; fullness

Duodecad - From Anthropos and Ecclesia



Pleroma (πλήρωμα) = totality of divine powers; fullness

Duodecad - From Anthropos and Ecclesia



Pleroma (πλήρωμα) = totality of divine powers; fullness

Sophia desired to know and search out the nature of **Monad**, and she ended up producing (without her male conjunction) an amorphous, spiritual substance, which was later known as **Sophia Achamoth**.

Monad, by way of **Monogenes** (and without a m-f conjunction), produced **Horus** who purified Sophia and restored her to her proper conjunction.

Sophia Achamoth, the amorphous/spiritual substance, accidentally made by the Aeon **Sophia**, was placed outside the Pleroma.

Monogenes (Nous?) produced another conjugal pair: **Christ and the Holy Spirit**.

Christ instructed the Aeons as to the nature of their conjunction/syzygy, and taught them that those who possessed a comprehension of the Unbegotten (Monad) were sufficient for themselves. He told them about their origins and that the Father (Monad) cannot be understood or comprehended, nor seen or heard, except as far as he is known by Monogenes (Nous).

The **Holy Spirit** taught the Aeons to give thanks that they were all equal among themselves, and led them to a state of true rest.

Together all the Aeons produced the perfect fruit of **Jesus** who is also referred to as **Savior and Christ (a second Christ)**, and patronymically, **Logos, and Everything**, because he was formed from the contributions of all of the Aeons.

I'm leaving this as Jesus instead of Yeshua for two reasons:

1. All of the names of the Aeons are in Greek.
2. To emphasize that this is another Yeshua than what is depicted in the Apostolic Scriptures.

So, notice that so far, we have two Monogenes and two Christs.

Outside the Pleroma, **Sophia Achamoth** formed a second god, known as the **Demiurge**, in the image of the only begotten Son.

The **Demiurge** is **Father and King** of all things.

So now, we have two gods (the Monad and the Demiurge), two Monogenes, and two Christs.

The orange bubble indicates what is outside the Pleroma.

Then the **Demiurge**, without his knowledge, was helped by his mother (Sophia Achamoth) to create all things outside the Pleroma - both material and animal, as well as seven heavens, above which he exists. He was ignorant of everything he made.

The **Demiurge** also created angels and archangels in the image of the rest of the Aeons.

The **Savior (Jesus)**, through **Sophia Achamoth**, formed images of the Aeons that are in the Pleroma.

Achamoth, in the image of the invisible Father, kept herself concealed from the **Demiurge**.

The **Demiurge** has a variety of names:

- Yaldaboath, Saklas, Ahriman
- El, Satan, Yahweh

He is essentially believed to be the same as the God of Abraham.

3

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The **Demiurge** has said, “I am God, and besides me there is none else.”

The devil, called **Cosmocrator**, is the ruler of the material world. He has knowledge of what is above himself because he is a spirit of wickedness, but the **Demiurge** is ignorant of such things.

People are declared to be the **Ecclesia**, an emblem of the **Ecclesia** which is above in the Pleroma.

Man has his animal soul from the **Demiurge**, his body from the earth, his flesh from matter, and his spiritual man from the mother **Achamoth**.

Jesus, an intermediary aeon, was created to bring gnosis (knowledge) to “spiritual people,” so they can get to the Pleroma.



This secret knowledge is not available to everyone.

Jesus is identified by some Gnostics as embodying the supreme being who became incarnate to bring gnosis (knowledge) to the earth, while others deny that the supreme being came in the flesh.

Sophia Achamoth is not only called Sophia after her father, but she is also called the **Holy Spirit** from the Spirit who is along with Christ.

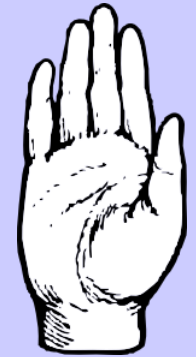
There are 3 kinds of people in Gnosticism:



“Left hand” are those who will perish in fire.



Spiritual people are shaped in union with the psychic; **they are the salt and light of the world** to whom Jesus came to save by imparting special knowledge of their divine origins. They will become intelligent spirits and enter the Pleroma. They will marry angels who wait on the Savior.



“Right hand” are those who can go either way depending on their inclination.

When all that is spiritual has been formed and come to perfection, **Sophia Achamoth (the bride)** will pass from the intermediate place, enter the Pleroma, receive the **Savior (Jesus, the bridegroom)** as her spouse, in order to form a conjunction between them.



The nuptial chamber will be the full extent of the Pleroma.

The spiritual seed (people) will be divested of their animal souls; they will become intelligent spirits and enter the Pleroma.

They will become brides of those angels who wait upon the **Savior**.

The **Demiurge** will pass into the place of his mother Sophia – into the intermediate habitation.

The souls of righteous will rest there.

If someone is of spiritual seed, they can commit all kinds of sins and abominations that they desire because it is impossible for their spiritual substance to come under the power of corruption or be lost.

No men of animal nature will be admitted to the Pleroma.

Fire that is hidden beneath the world will destroy all matter, so that it no longer exists.

4

Gnosticism

- When we look at Gnosticism, we see that there are serious differences between Scripture and its:
 - **Cosmology** – origin and development of the universe.
 - **Soteriology** – doctrine of salvation
 - **Eschatology** – theology concerned with death, judgment, and destiny of the soul.

4

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- These kinds of differences make Gnosticism a heresy (false teaching).
- When we suspect that something may be a false teaching, we need to see if there are differences in these kinds of things.

4

Gnosticism

- In Gnosticism, these differences are not truly a result of misinterpretation of Scripture.
- These are a result of twisting Scripture for ones own purposes.
- Let's see what I mean by Scripture being twisted by looking at some quotes from *Against Heresies*.

4

Gnosticism

- Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 1:
- “... The thirty Aeons are indicated (as we have already remarked) by the thirty years during which they say the Savior performed no public act, and by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard...”

4

Gnosticism

- The fact that Yeshua did not begin his ministry for the first 30 years of his life has nothing to do with the concept of their being 30 Aeons.
- This is an illogical conclusion or attempted connection.

4

Gnosticism

- Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 2:
- “The production, again, of the Duodecad of the Aeons, is indicated by the fact that the Lord was twelve (Luke 2:42) years of age when He disputed with the teachers of the law, and by the election of the apostles, for of these there were twelve. (Luke 6:13) The other eighteen Aeons are made manifest in this way: that the Lord, [according to them,] conversed with His disciples for eighteen months and after His resurrection from the dead.”

4

Gnosticism

- The numbers 12 and 18 being mentioned in Scripture has no other connection to the concept of a duodecad or the other 18 aeons.
- Again, there is no logical or significant connection or conclusion here.

- Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 2 (continued):
- “They also affirm that these eighteen Aeons are strikingly indicated by the first two letters of His name [Ἰησοῦς]. Namely *Iota* and *Eta*. And, in like manner, they assert that the ten Aeons are pointed out by the letter Iota, which begins His name; while, for the same reason, they tell us the Savior said, “One *Iota*, or one tittle, shall by no means pass away until all be fulfilled.” (Mat. 5:18)

4

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Again, using letters to establish any kind of connection or conclusion between Scripture and Gnostic concepts is extremely weak and illogical.

4

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- Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 6:
- “Such, then, is the account which they all give of their Pleroma, and of the formation of the universe, striving, as they do, to adapt the good words of revelation to their own wicked inventions. And it is not only from the writings of the evangelists and the apostles that they endeavor to derive proofs for their opinions by means of perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions: they deal in the same way with the law and the prophets, which contain many parables and allegories that can frequently be drawn into various senses,

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- Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 6 (continued):
- according to the kind of exegesis to which they are subjected. And others of them, with great craftiness, adapted such parts of Scripture to their own figments, lead away captive from the truth those who do not retain a steadfast faith in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

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Clearly, there are many kinds of things in the Scriptures that Gnostics twist for their own purposes.

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Gnosticism

- I have met people who have twisted Scripture in a similar manner, and they don't even realize that this is what they are doing.
- They have not learned proper study techniques or techniques of exegesis.



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Gnosticism

- When investigating any topic, we must ask ourselves, “What does the WHOLE text say?”



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Gnosticism

- We need to exercise caution in rejecting various passages of Scripture when they doesn't fit into what our idea of correctness is.



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Gnosticism

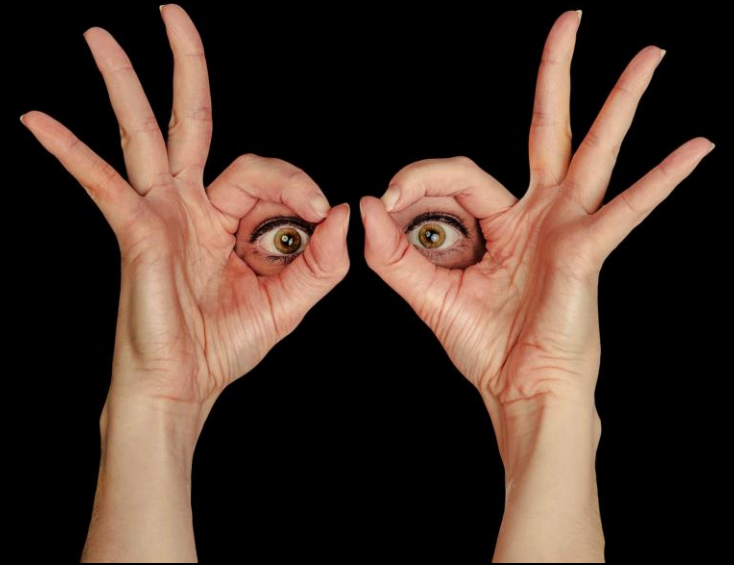
- Rejecting certain portions of Scripture could potentially lead to an error in halacha – how something is walked out.



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Gnosticism

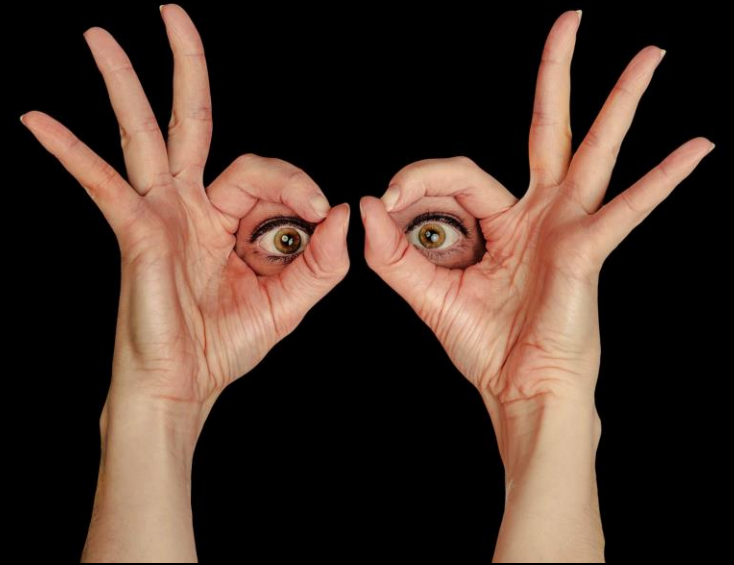
- We must look at all facets of a debate. This is especially true when we must go outside the Scriptures to address a debate such as the new moon.
- That was the biggest problem I ran into when investigating that vast subject.



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Gnosticism

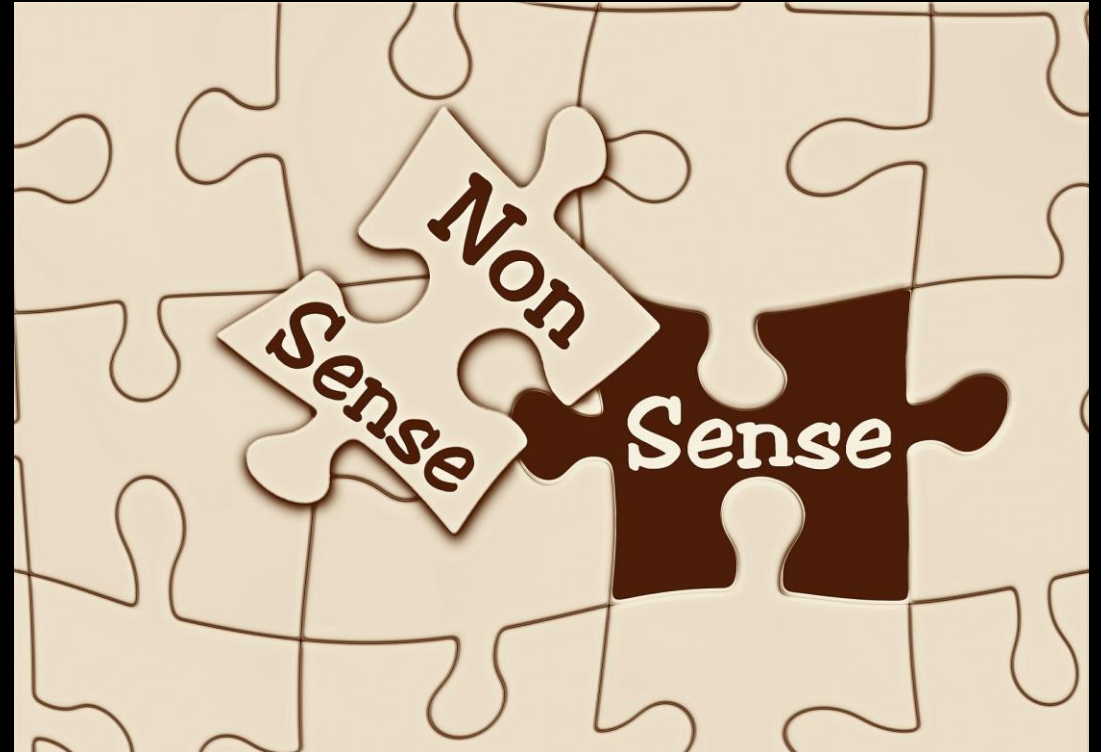
- I found that people would zoom in on one area to support their position, and they probably weren't even aware that there were other pieces of the puzzle that had to be examined such as general astronomy, a math model related to orbits, a Scriptural pattern, Scripture itself, claims that observing a new crescent moon was pagan, differences in definitions, historical practices, various kinds of calendars, barley, etcetera.



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Gnosticism

- The early church father, Irenaeus, responded to the way “Christian Gnostics” twisted Scripture by explaining his interpretation of Scripture, which was based on teachings handed down to him.



- Irenaeus responded to the Gnostics by saying:
- “The assembly, which is dispersed throughout the world, received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: “[She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them: and in one Christ Jesus (Messiah Yeshua), the Son of God...”

- “But that the apostle did not speak concerning their conjunctions, but concerning our Lord Jesus Christ (Yeshua Messiah), who he also acknowledges as the Word of God, he himself has made evident.”
- “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”
- “.. Jesus (Yeshua) who suffered for us, and who dwelt among is Himself the Word of God.”

- “... And that He (Yeshua) should execute just judgment towards all; that He may send “spiritual wickedness,” (Eph 6:12) and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteousness, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire;
- but may, in the exercise of His grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love, some from the beginning [of their Christian course], and others from [the date of] their repentance, and may surround them with everlasting glory.”

- Irenaeus used a method similar to that which Yeshua used to deal with Satan when Yeshua was tempted following His baptism – Irenaeus used Scripture to correct false teaching.
- This method, when using Scripture as a whole, can be used not only to refute false teaching, but also to respond to the misinterpretations of Scripture.

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Gnosticism

- Please be aware -- when you use Scripture to correct false teachings and misinterpretations, there will be various responses:
 1. The correction will be received, and adjustments in behavior, if needed, will take place.
 2. The correction will be doubted, and all those involved should investigate the subject further to confirm.
 3. The correction will be rejected.

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- If the correction is rejected, understand that it's not unusual for each person involved to experience some level of emotional turmoil or discomfort.
- Give yourself some time and space for that to subside if needed.



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Gnosticism

- Continue to respond to each other with love, kindness, and patience. Pray for the truth of the matter to be revealed to everyone involved.
- No one should respond by creating division in the body, and sometimes, this requires a level of self-control.



6

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- As you can see, Gnosticism brought a completely different worldview into the assembly, which had the potential to radically change the way people interpreted the Scriptures.
- This impacted concepts such as YHWH being only one God; God's nature or character; creation; covenant; the reason Yeshua came to God's people; the meaning of salvation and redemption; and the need for Yeshua to return at some point in the future.

6

Gnosticism

- Just think what it would be like if the way we interpret Scripture was permanently changed because of Gnosticism.

6

Gnosticism

- We need to have a way that we can tell the difference between:
 - A false teaching that could potentially cause people to abandon YHVH and worship false gods
 - A simple misinterpretation of Scripture

6

Gnosticism

- As we read or hear various teachings, we should ask ourselves:
 - Are the teachings inline with what is presented in the entire Scriptural canon, especially the foundation of Torah? *(Yes)* If not, could we have misinterpreted Scripture?



6

Gnosticism

- Do the teachings add to or take away from God's commandments? *(No)*



6

- If we are looking at an ancient text outside the canon of Scripture, does it fit the time, place, and culture of ancient Israel? *(Yes)*
- Is it of Jewish origin? *(Yes)*

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6

- Is there consistency among similar texts? *(The main information should be consistent, but it's not unusual for details to differ.)*

Gnosticism



6

- Does the ancient text accurately reflect what is known about Biblical characters such as Satan, God, the patriarchs, judges, prophets, priests, kings, Yeshua, apostles, etcetera?
(Yes)

Gnosticism



6

- Does the overall feel of an ancient text have a quality comparable to any of the fruit of the Spirit or to deeds of the flesh? (*Fruit of the Spirit*)

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6

- Is there a true parallel or typological picture that can be demonstrated between the Scriptures and what is being taught? *(Yes)*

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6

- Are unreasonable and illogical connections being made between a text, the Scripture, and what is being taught? (*No*)

Gnosticism



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- The answers to these questions can be used as a guide to know if something is potentially a false teaching or a text to avoid.
- You may have good answers to some of the questions but not all of them.

6

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- We've looked at how to question the validity of a teaching or text, now let's look at interpretation of Scripture.

6

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- Interpretation of Scripture can fall into two main categories.
 - Non-debatable
 - Debatable

6

Gnosticism

- Non-debatable interpretations:
 - No apparent contradictions in Scripture exist.
 - However, there could still be differences in how something is walked out.
 - **For example:** People agree that the feasts must be celebrated, but not everyone agrees to the same calendar.

6

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- Types of debatable interpretations:
 1. An unexplained, apparent contradiction exists in Scripture.
 2. More than one view of something, perhaps even something opposite, is supported by Scripture.
 3. Something is alluded to without an outright Biblical explanation or command for walking it out.

6

Gnosticism

- We must accept the fact that some things are debatable.



6

Gnosticism

- In the case there is an unexplained, apparent contradiction that exists in Scripture, we may need to set the Scripture aside until the reason for the discrepancy becomes apparent.
- This may need to be done more than once.

6

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- While it has been set aside, we should pray passionately for truth to be revealed to us.



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Gnosticism

- Answers to these prayers come when you least expect them.



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Gnosticism

- So, when more than one view of something seems to be supported by Scripture, we should exercise caution and NOT favor one view over another in case all views may eventually prove to be true somehow.



6

Gnosticism

- We must accept the fact that there are times when such a reason is not readily apparent, yet we can't deny what various passages say or demonstrate.



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Gnosticism

- There may be times when something is alluded to in Scripture without an outright Biblical command or explanation for walking it out. This may require extrapolation for application.
- An example of this would be whether or not to observe the day of the new moon.
- Another would be that it's okay to prepare meals on the High Sabbaths of Chag HaMatzot, but nothing is said about Sukkot's.

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- When it comes to how to specifically walk things out, we need to consider what is Scriptural and reasonable in our current cultural setting.
- We need to accept that not everyone will agree on what that is.

6

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- Some topics have become “hot topics” that people do not agree on for one reason or another.
- We need to decide whether or not a topic is serious enough to engage in debate about.



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- Young children should NOT be listening to debates over interpretation of Scripture.
- They should be learning about non-debatable things.



6

Gnosticism

- Assembly leaders should decide if there are any debatable topics that they feel should be off limits in their assembly or during feasts until their assembly has learned how to maturely discuss debatable topics, so that no division in the body takes place.
- Bear in mind, the ultimate goal would be that no topic of debate would be off limits in the regular assembly. Feasts are a different matter because people from different assemblies may be coming together and our relationship ties with them are not as strong.

6

- We should desire to hear all sides of an interpretation of Scripture – whether it's a verse, word study, concept, doctrine/teaching, etcetera.
- When we have a serious difference of opinion, we should want to understand how a person reached their position on a particular topic because we may need to adjust our own opinion on that topic.

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- A person should be willing to share their position without fear, so that it can be examined thoroughly to see if it is based on what is found throughout the whole Scriptural canon or on only a part of it.
- That person should be able to calmly and completely defend their position, including answering any questions about their position.
- Everyone should be willing to listen and feel free to ask questions.

6

Gnosticism

- In the event someone thinks there is a major error in a teaching or discussion, people should be able to talk in a civil manner with the presenter and, if necessary or possible, respond with a fully investigated and prepared case to refute that position.



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Gnosticism

- Such a case can be prepared in conjunction with others, but it should only be presented by a limited number of people in a setting outside of the assembly, so that the recipient does not feel overwhelmed by the opposition.
- It should be done in a kind, loving manner without hatred or heated emotions.
- This can be done initially through e-mail, or two other people can be present to witness a live discussion and mediate as necessary.

6

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- It is important that open discussion be maintained and the topic be fully explored before further information is brought back to the rest of the assembly.



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- Depending on how things go, the assembly leader can decide if:
 - A consensus has been reached regarding interpretation;
 - Further study or discussion is required;
 - People can safely agree to disagree;
 - Or, the topic needs to be off-limits until further information comes to light.

6

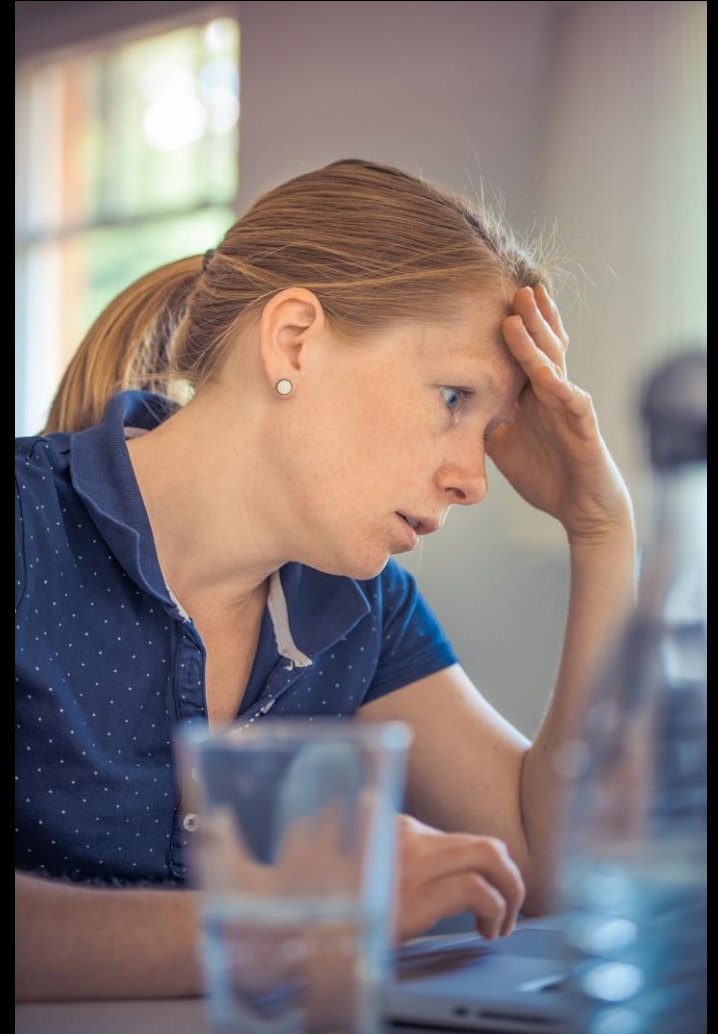
Gnosticism

- We should not allow debatable interpretations of Scripture to be a source of division in the body.
- We should accept that it's okay to sometimes disagree on an interpretation of certain Scriptures and remain on friendly terms with people who we disagree with.

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- This requires everyone involved in a debate to be responsible to behave in an understanding, loving, and caring manner.
- One may not feel comfortable during or after a debate, but sometimes it must be done. Unfortunately, this is normal.

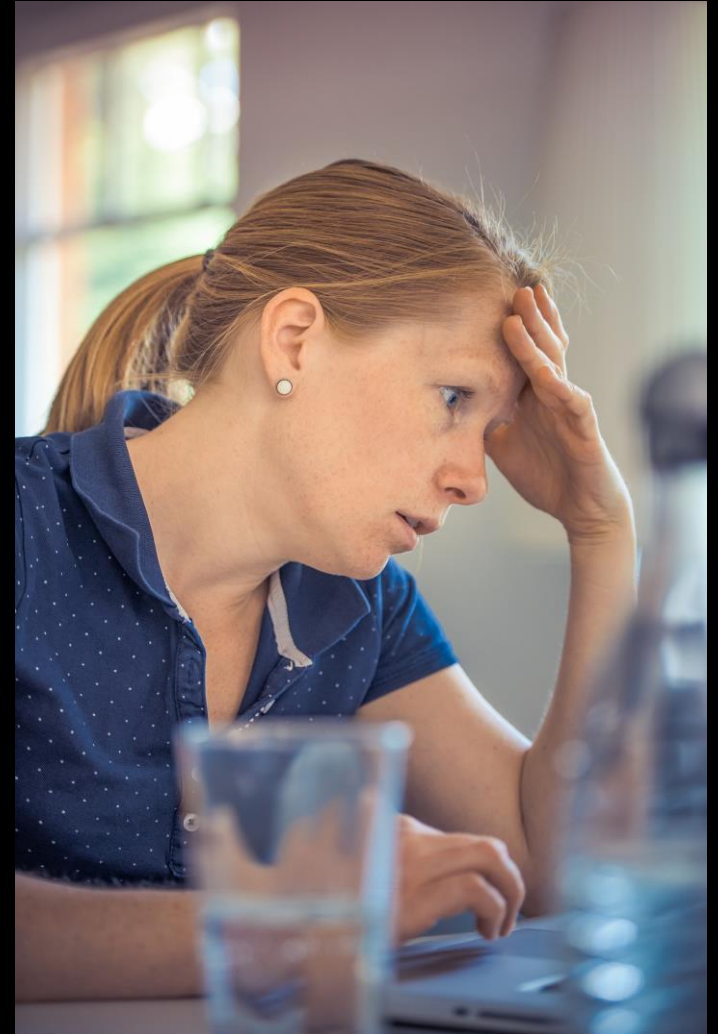
Gnosticism



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- It often hurts when people don't agree with us, but that feeling will dissipate with time and with a demonstration of love and acceptance.

Gnosticism



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Gnosticism

- We must accept that part of our covenant with YHVH is learning to live in a loving relationship with one another in the good times and the bad.

6

Gnosticism

- Whenever you need to discuss a possible misinterpretation of Scripture, be determined to maintain and eventually deepen the relationship with the person you disagree with -- no matter what the other person says or does at every stage of the process.
- The goal is not necessarily to win a debate, even if you think you are right, but to fully explore a topic, openly discuss difficult things, and maintain and eventually deepen our relationships. Everyone involved should be committed to doing this.

6

Gnosticism

- If someone does not want to discuss a difference of interpretation with you, let it go until they are ready.
- This is a sad state of affairs, but sometimes life may be such that they simply can't handle such a discussion or don't have time to fully prepare their case.



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Gnosticism

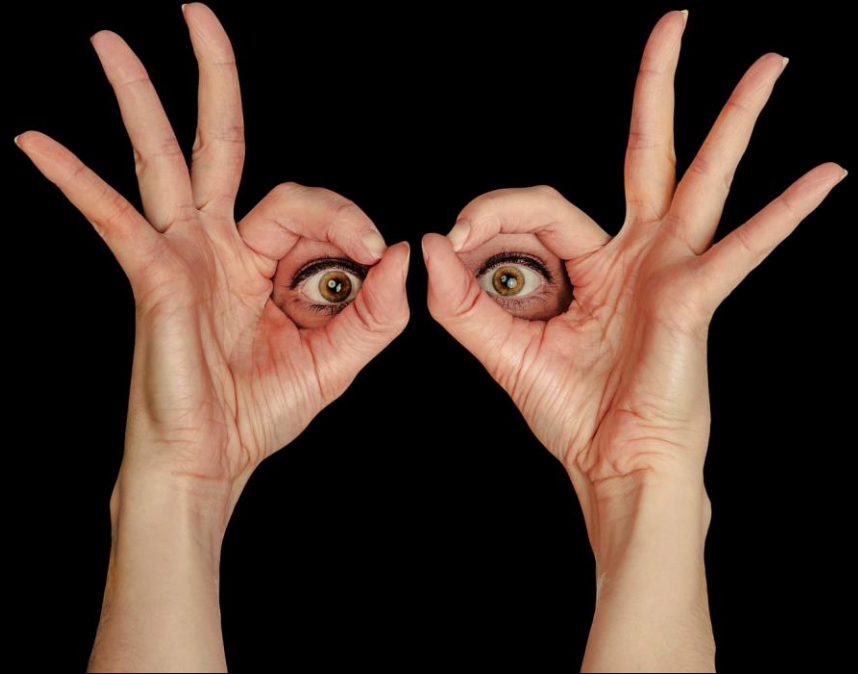
- Prayer, patience, and Bible study is often required to resolve a difference in interpretation or a debate.



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Gnosticism

- Perspective is in the eyes of the beholder.
- Someone's focus may not be on the same thing.
- That doesn't mean they're wrong.
- It just means that person may be looking at things differently.



6

Gnosticism

- We teach our children to talk things out when they disagree with their friends, but this idea must also extend to adults in the assembly.
- We expect children to get along with each other and make up after a disagreement, but often adults fail to do just that in the assembly.



6

Gnosticism

- They pack up their things, go home, seek out another fellowship, and even go so far as to bear false witness against those they disagreed with.
- But there are not many Torah observant fellowships to choose from, and we can't do that when the earth is renewed, so we better get our act together now and work through our issues.

6

Gnosticism

- We must remember and practice Leviticus 19:18:
- *“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am YHVH.”*

6

Gnosticism

- If you can do this, your relationships will become deeper and last longer.

6

Gnosticism

- Do everything you can to not allow a differences of opinion regarding Scriptural interpretation to cause division in the body because it can bring dishonor to our Father.

6

Gnosticism

- Having said that, we must also realize that we do not always wrestle against flesh and blood.
- Sometimes, we wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness.
- These spiritual entities can influence people and lead them away from truth until they are spiritually dead.

6

Gnosticism

- In the process of discussing debatable cases, you will know people by their spiritual fruit.
- Present your case from the Scriptures, and be open to further explore the Scriptures.
- When in doubt, ask God to reveal to you the full extent of their fruit.
- As much as it hurts, if their fruit is bad and they want to leave, let them go.

Gnosticism

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Gnosticism

Irenaeus – Against Heresies

A circular image showing a misty forest path. The path is covered in fallen leaves and leads into a dense forest of tall trees. The atmosphere is hazy and ethereal, with soft light filtering through the trees.

Highway to Holiness

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By Beth Mehaffey