

THE ORIGIN OF GNOSTICISM AND ITS BEARING ON THE DATE OF COLOSSIANS

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We do know about a highly developed form of Gnosticism in the second century, but that fact has no bearing on the date and content of Colossians as a Pauline production in the first century.

1. Gnosticism involved a largely secret-knowledge form of religion. It may have taken a while before Gnosticism was openly known to have certain features in its written or otherwise available representations. A secret society might not be inclined to write its doctrine early.

2. The highly complex and exact formulations of second-century syncretism with Christianity could reasonably be supposed to have had less complex forms at an earlier date.

3. As to its fundamental ideas, it is now known that Gnosticism was even pre-Christian.

4. The way we know about the complex forms of second-century Gnosticism is through antagonists' literature and by Gnostics' writings. Comparably, we know about first-century Gnosticism because of what Paul writes against it.

5. The external attestation of Colossians is unassailable.

Note: Edwin M. Yamauchi. *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of Proposed Evidences*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983. 2nd ed.

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