

1. The Apocryphon of John is a mythical and revelatory text described as a hidden teaching given by Jesus to John after his resurrection. It offers a complex cosmological account of the universes, humanity's, and salvation's beginnings. Its influence comes from its claim that only individuals seeking spiritual awakening can access the hidden, heavenly truth (gnosis). The book serves as a religious narrative about the descent of divine spark in the material world and how knowledge has the power to free them (Layton, 25). Mythological aspects are also present in Manichaean literature, like the kephalaia, though it incorporates a more methodical dualism cosmology. As the last prophet, Mani asserts the authority of his teachings by portraying truth as a universal truth that blends aspects of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity (Thomas, Lecture 14.2).

2. Jewish and Christian figures are reinterpreted in the Apocryphon of John, which represents Yaldabaoth, the creator god of the Old Testament, as a false and uninformed deity. Conventional biblical figures like Adam, Eve, and the serpent now serve as a messenger of the truth, and Eve is linked to heavenly intelligence. This challenges popular Jewish and Christian doctrine, arguing that the material world is a falsehood intended to keep humanity enslaved (Thomas, Lecture 11.1). Likewise, Jewish and Christian motifs are included in Manichaean literature, but they are reframed within a cosmic struggle. Rather than being the only savior, Jesus is shown as one of the many divine teachers. Manichaeism portrays an ongoing conflict between light and darkness, in contrast to the contrast to the Gnostic perspective, which emphasizes ignorance as humanity's issue. Biblical stories are often modified to accommodate the cosmic dualism, which characters such as Jesus acting as mentors in this continuous conflict (Thomas, Lecture 14.3).

3. In the Gnostic text Apocryphon of John, there is a distinction between the highest, true God and the creator god, called the Demiurge. The highest God is a transcendent, perfect Being, while the Demiurge is a lesser, flawed being who created the material world. Other supernatural beings exist in Gnostic cosmology, some aligned with the highest God and others with the Demiurge. There is a clear difference of good and evil, with the material world being associated with evil or imperfection (Layton, 25).

Manichaean cosmology also maintained a strict separation between the highest God and the darkness. However, while Yaldabaoth in Gnostic text thought is misguided and ignorant, Manichaeism's Prince of Darkness is an

intentionally evil. (*Kephalaia* document, 302).

4. According to Gnosticism, the created material world has serious flaws. It is not the product of the genuine, highest God, but rather of the Demiurge, a lower god. The world that this demeiruge created is one of ignorance, misery, and delusion since he is frequently portrayed as being unintelligent or evil (Layton, 25).

In contrast to Gnosticism, which holds that the cosmos is the product of a flawed creator, Manichaean writing portray the material world as the realm of absolute evil. As an example, the *Kephalaia* states that, "sin constructed the human body from evil matter," while the soul is divine and descended from the First Men's five sons. This shows how the divine soul is imprisoned within the material body and leading to a loss of its true origin. This supports the Manichaean concept that the material world and the human body are a prison for the divine spirit, and salvation is attained by returning to God (*Kephalaia* document, 100).

5. According to Gnosticism, ignorance and captivity to the material world are the main evils that humanity faces. The demeiruge and his archons are thought to be in charge of the physical cosmos, which is a defective or even malicious creation that traps human souls in a never ending cycle of pain and forgetfulness. Gnosticism considers ignorance as the cause of human misery. By diverting people with superficial pleasures and false religious doctrines, the archons keep people under control and lead them to believe that the material world is their true home. Spiritual awakening is necessary to overcome this deception, and can only occur via self-awareness and divine revelation (Layton, 17).

Manichaean philosophy supports this viewpoint, but it adopts a dualistic stance, seeing evil as an inherent cosmic force that opposes light. This conflict between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness is shown in the Manichaean cosmology, where evil is a distinct force that actively tries to imprison divine particles in matter. In contrast to Gnosticism, which views ignorance as the primary enemy, Manichaean views the evil principle as a separate force that engages in combat with the good (Pearson ch. 11, 302).

6. Gnostics believe that knowledge (gnosis), which enables people to reject the material world and acknowledge their heavenly nature, is the means of salvation. A heavenly messenger, like Jesus, who is regarded as a bringer of enlightenment rather than a savior, frequently reveals this information. Rejecting earthly attachments, rising to the higher, immaterial worlds, and waking from the illusions imposed by the Demiurge are all steps in the path of salvation. A Valentinian Gnostic text called the Gospel of Truth defines salvation as a process of self-discovery and reconciliation with the divine source (Thomas, Lecture 7).

While knowledge is also essential to Manichaean salvation, its main goal is to free the divine light that has been imprisoned in the material universe. Strict lifestyles that stop further entanglement with matter, like fasting, celibacy, and a vegetarian diet, are used to achieve this. An important part of this process is played by a unique group of followers known as the Manichaean Electi, who release divine light through ceremonial purity and eat specific foods thought to contain it. Manichaeism emphasizes a continuous cosmic fight where salvation is not only personal but also helps to the greater battle between light and darkness, in contrast to Gnostic individual enlightenment (Thomas, Lecture 14.2).

1. Under the name Pre-Nicene Gnostic Catholic Church, Bishop Richard, Duc de Palatine, established Ecclesia Gnostica in the United States in 1959. Dr. Stephan A. Hoeller, who has been dedicated by the Duc de Palatine in 1967, carried on the church's work after his passing in the 1970s. Dr. Hoeller is the highest human authority in the church and the senior holder of the English Gnostic Tradition in America. In order to preserve the Gnostic legacy and provide sacraments to individuals who are interested in its teachings, the Ecclesia Gnostica was established. Instead of growing for its own sake, its goal is to keep the ministry functioning.

The church has grown to congregations in Salt Lake City, Utah; Portland, Oregon; and Los Angeles, California. It also runs a missionary extension in Norway and a tiny seminary in Arizona. Both men and women who exhibit a genuine devotion to the Gnostic tradition and are prepared to serve in pastoral ministry are eligible for ordination within Ecclesia Gnostic. Since the church does not provide teachings by mail, holy training is done in person at one of its missions. The Ecclesia Gnostic does not encourage independent endeavors outside of its framework; it solely requires clergy for its own jurisdiction.

The Ecclesia Gnostica's Los Angeles congregation regularly gathers for worship and instructions. Sacraments are given to the faithful during the church's eleven monthly scheduled services. Four catechetical lectures are held each month to offer further in-depth training in Gnostic doctrines in addition to these services. These meetings support the congregation's spiritual development and strengthens their ties to the Gnostic tradition. The church continues to fulfill its aim of preserving and disseminating Gnostic knowledge via theological research and ritual practice under the direction of Dr. Hoeller.

2. The texts are based on a number of Gnostic texts and works, such as the writings of prophet Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, the Gnostic Gospels (including the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip) and the Nag Hammadi Library. These works' depictions of the Ecclesia Gnostica rely on original sources such as the Gnosis of Light, the Book of Sophia, and the Acts of Thomas. These texts also reflect a wide range of esoteric spiritual teachings by combining aspects of Christian mysticism, Jewish traditions, and Hermetic. Their syncretic approach to spirituality, is highlighted in the books such as the Gospel of Luke.

The religious currents in these texts reflect influences from multiple Gnostic traditions. The Gospel of Thomas and its emphasis on self-knowledge aligns with Sethian and Thomasine traditions, which focus on direct spiritual awakening. The Gospel of Philip reflects Valentinian thought, particularly in its metaphor of sowing and reaping, which aligns with the idea of salvation through divine wisdom. The writings of Mani strongly indicate Manichaean influence, emphasizing the dualistic struggle between light and darkness, the role of the Redeemer, and the salvation of souls through knowledge and purification.

3. The beliefs closely align with the Sethian Gnostic system, especially regarding the nature of the material world and the role of the Demiurge. This tradition views the Demiurge as a flawed and ignorant creator who imprisons heavenly sparks in the material world, turning it into a place of misery and imprisonment. This viewpoint reflects the Demiurge's lack of understanding of the actual heavenly truth and the text's portrayal of the material world as a prison. Through gnosis, a type of divine wisdom that enables people to awaken and reunite with God, the ultimate objective is the return of the soul to divine fullness. Sethian thought places a strong emphasis on redemption by this process.

However, the text also incorporates elements of Valentinian Gnostic system, particularly in its portrayal of the divine structure. While Sethian system emphasizes the Demiurge's flaws and the soul's entrapment, Valentinian thought presents a more complex cosmology where the soul ascends towards the divine. The idea of Messengers of Light imparting Gnosis aligns with Valentinian teachings. While the Thomas Gnostic influence is less obvious, the focus on personal knowledge resonates with Thomas traditions. Overall, the text is drawn primarily from Sethian system but shows influences from the Valentinians, especially regarding salvation and divine revelation.

4. This organization may draw in people because it emphasizes self-awareness and transformational knowledge and provides a more profound, intimate experience of spirituality. A sense of connectedness to a greater purpose and the possibility of freedom from material misery are offered by emphasis on inner awakening. The teachings might be appealing to people who are looking for solutions outside of the traditional religious systems. Also for people looking for

purpose, empowerment, and the idea of escaping material constraints.