HERESIES, SCHISMS AND PROBLEMS OF THE SECOND CENTURY (Con.) No. 2

Hymn: 617 "For All the Saints"
Prayer: Colossians 1:9-14
Scripture: Colossians 1:15-19

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTIONS OF GNOSTICISM:

1. God, the Creator and Lawgiver of the Old Testament is not the True God. Above him, at an infinite distance, is the Father-God, the Supreme First Cause of all being—unspeakable, unknowable.

2. The God of the Old Testament did not know the True God; the world also shared this ignorance, until the appearance of Jesus Christ, who proceeded from the True God.

3. Between the True God and creation is a complicated series of beings (aeons) divine in origin; a catastrophe occurred at some point in the series, destroying the harmony of the whole. The visible world, its Creator, and the different levels of aeons originated in this primal disorder of fall.

4. In humanity there are some elements capable of redemption, having fallen from the celestial world above the Demiurge or Creator. Jesus Christ came into the world to deliver these celestial elements.

5. The Incarnation did not really amount to a true union of divinity and matter—it was a Docetic appearance. The Gospel story presents a moral or transitory union between a divine aeon and the concrete personality of Jesus or a simple semblance of humanity.

6. The passion and resurrection of Jesus were not real. The future of the predestinate does not permit the resurrection of the body.

7. The divine element which has strayed into humanity, which is the predestinate soul, has no solidarity with the flesh which oppresses it. Either the flesh must be annihilated by asceticism (riginism), or at least the responsibility of the soul for the weaknesses of the flesh must be denied (lebertinism).

8. Christ and Jesus usually are distinguished with Christ in the higher position. Jesus comes to bring saving Gnosis.


10. The Holy Spirit tends to be female.

THE HYMN OF THE SOUL (attributed to the Naassene Gnostics)

THREE GREAT SCHOOLS OF GNOSTICISM: Carpocratian, Basilidian, and Valentinian.

CARPOCRATIAN GNOSTICISM:

Founded by Carpocrates, a Platonic philosopher from Alexandria, and his wife from the island of Cephalonia about A.D. 120. Their son, Epiphanes, something of a child prodigy, died at 17, after having written a book, "On Justice." The parents could not accept his death and came to believe he had ascended to heaven. Developed a system incorporating "On Justice":

One God and a hierarchy of angels
Visible world created by angels
Souls of men are fallen sparks from God imprisoned in bodies. Must be released to return to God.
Jesus, son of Joseph, born like other men, but overcame rulers of this world (angels) and ascended to Father. Epiphanes also had conquered and ascended. All men are subject to metempsychosis until conquer and ascend.

To conquer must follow system of justice taught by Epiphanes—actions are indifferent—only human opinion makes things good or bad. All men should hold all property in common—including women. Magic highly esteemed.

Chapels decorated with paintings and statues of wise men, including Jesus and Epiphanes, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle.

Marcellina brought this heresy to Rome c. 155 A.D. in time of Bishop Anicetus and won many adherents.

BASILIDIAN Gnosticism:

Basilides in Alexandria between 125-150 A.D., a disciple of Menander of Antioch, who had been a disciple of Simon of Samaria, claimed to have the secret tradition of Peter. 365 heavens: highest occupied by Unbegotten Father. Lowest is the blue we see above. Supreme God described only in negatives. Below him are Nous, Logos, Phronesis (Understanding, Intelligence), Sophia, Dunamis, Virtues, Powers, Angels.

Last heaven created by angels, one of whom is God of Jews. Struggle between the angels and the nations they created.

Supreme Father sent Nous, who took form of Jesus, to rescue men from tyranny of angels. Jesus' humanity only a semblance. Crucifixion only a semblance—Simon the Cyrenian took the place of Jesus. No reason to suffer martyrdom.

Salvation by Gnosis from Basilides: included magic. ABRAXAS (Greek letters with value of 365) protects the ascending soul from jealous angels who rule the different heavens.

Metempsychosis: body can cause soul to be reborn in this world.

Basilides and his son, Isidore, allowed marriage and condemned immoralities but followers had a reputation for immorality. What body did not important—just inconvenient

Basilides wrote a Gospel and 24 volume commentary on it. Also a Psalter.

VALENTINIAN Gnosticism:

Valentinus, an Egyptian who came to Rome c. 135-136 A.D. Became candidate for Bishop, probably at death of Hyginus c. 140 A.D. When Pius, brother of Hermas, was chosen, Malentinus in bitterness returned to Egypt and developed his Gnostic System. Claimed to have secret Gnosis of Paul. Claimed he learned it from Theodas, a disciple of Paul.

The first Tetrad: 4 aeons

The Supreme Being, the Father, the Unbegotten Abyss, who is ineffable and envisible, and his consort, Sige (Silence)

Intellect and Truth: Abyss impregnated Sige and she bore him Intellectual and his sister consort, Truth.

The Ogdoad: Eight higher aeons

Abyss and Sige

Intellect and Truth


Man and the Church: Word and Life produced Man and the Church.
THE DECAD: Word and Life produced five couples
THE DODECAD: Man and the Church gave birth to Six pairs
PLEROMA: 15 pairs or 30 aeons—15 males and 15 females. The
perfect society of enneable beings. All abstract.
THE FALL: Will and Wisdom the lowest couple in Pleroma.
Will did not satisfy Wisdom. She became infatuated
with the Abyss and fromm her passion bore the Illegitimate,
Hacamothe (illicit desire for Wisdom). Hacamothe
expelled from Pleroma.
HORUS THE KEEPER OF THE BOUNDARY: Intellect and Truth produced
a 16th pair, Christ and the Holy Spirit, to form a
boundary around the Pleroma.
JESUS: Aeons combined to produce Jesus, a 33rd aeon, to bring
Gnosis and save Hacamothe.
KENOMA: the dwelling of Hacamothe. Hacamothe very unstable and
subject to moods. Created angels or Demiurges who
created world and men. Work very imperfect. Three
levels of men: Gnostics or Pneumatics: predistined
to ascend with Jesus and Hacamothe to the Pleroma.
These were Valentianians.
Psychic: capable of ascending to Kenoma.
Hyllic: will burn up with the world.
THREE LEVELS OF MEANING IN SCRIPTURE:
Gnostic or spiritual meaning
Psychic meaning
Literal or hyllic meaning—will not save anyone.
LEADING VALENTINIANIS:
Italian School:
Ptolemy the systematic theologian
Heraclaeon: wrote great commentary on John
Oriental School:
Theodotus, leading Valentinian in Alexandria, who
was attacked in writings of Clement of Alexandria
Mark the Magus: Played with numbers, practised
magic and claimed great healing powers.

THE ANTI-GNOSTIC WRITERS:
Writers whose works survive: Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of
Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, Eusebius, Epiphanius.
Writers whose works are lost but who are known through Eusebius:
Justin Martyr, Hegesippus, Agrippa Castor, Philip of
Gortyna, Modestus, Rhodo, Musanus, Candidus, Apion,
Sextus, Heraclitus.

THE CAMPAIGN OF HEGESIPPUS AGAINST THE GNOSTICS: In his great
work, THE MEMOIRS, he urged churches to keep good bishop lists.
If Christ had secret doctrine he would have given it to the
apostles who would have passed it on to the Bishops. Go
to the churches with unbroken bishop lists to trace the truth.

THE GNOSTIC LIBRARY DISCOVERED AT NAG-HAMMADI about 1945 or 1946.