

The Gnosis therefore imparted knowledge of the origin of things as well as the destiny of the world which the Gnostic saw as a temporary state far away from his original home. The Gnostic considers himself as a temporary resident in an alien world, in a state of spiritual drunkenness or sleep. It is only through the redeeming grace of the Gnosis that he may become sober and awakened to a higher state of consciousness, which in turn will reveal his latent spiritual potentialities.

Origins. Perhaps the greatest area of disagreement among scholars concerning Gnosticism lies in its origin. One problem with assigning a source or sources to Gnosticism is that there is no written historical record of the Gnostics, as we have in mainstream Christianity such as the Acts of the Apostles or the Church History as given by Eusebius. Possible sources would include neoplatonism, Zoroastrianism, the mystery schools of Babylon, Egypt, Chaldea, and Judaism, or any combination of these.

For those who would ascribe the origin of Gnosticism to mystical or fringe Judaism there is at the very least sufficient circumstantial evidence to support this view. Old Testament names and derivations such as Adam, Seth, Cain, Shem and Noah are frequently found in Gnostic myth and scripture. Parallels may also be made with the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament as found in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. One of the principal themes of Gnostic myth is that of Wisdom/Sophia and the manner of these myths are reminiscent of ideas expressed in the Old Testament Wisdom Literature.

Another possibility as to a source of Gnosticism would be the Essenes, a fringe sect of Judaism that flourished during the birth of Christianity, and believed by many to be the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls.



*Dead Sea Scrolls*