

## From Gnosis to Gnosticism

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## Emerging Gnosticism in the First Century AD Church

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In 1945, a group of texts dating from the second and third centuries AD was found at a place called Nag Hammadi in Egypt. These texts were writings that have been ascribed to a group of people called Gnostics. A great deal has been made of these texts in the popular media as being the discovery of heretofore unknown information that may have been coexistent, if not predating, the canonical gospels;<sup>1</sup> however, the reality is “the ancient polemics contained a surprising amount of authentic literature from the heretics themselves, and these materials have been widely known for centuries.”<sup>2</sup> Ancient heresiologists like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, and Eusebius “were quoting their enemies’ opinions quite fully and accurately”<sup>3</sup> over a millennium before the Nag Hammadi discoveries.

While these discoveries are provenanced as being from what are termed Gnostic sources of the second to fourth centuries, a single definition of Gnosticism has eluded the scholarly community.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, the term has been assigned to Irenaeus (c. 180 AD),<sup>5</sup> however, both Irenaeus<sup>6</sup> and Tertullian<sup>7</sup> attributed it to Paul’s writings (1 Timothy

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<sup>1</sup> Meera Lester, *The Everything Gnostic Gospels Book: A Complete Guide to the Secret Gospels* (Avon, Massachusetts: Adams Media, 2007), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Jenkins, *Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2002), 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Todd E. Klutz, “Re-reading 1 Corinthians After Rethinking ‘Gnosticism’,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26, no. 2 (December 2003): 202.

<sup>5</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Missing Gospels - Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Irenaeus referred to his writing as “A Refutation and Subversion of Knowledge Falsely So Called,” using Paul’s exact terminology in 1 Timothy 6:20, and even opens his remarks with an allusion to Paul’s statement about vain genealogies which minister questions rather than edifying the hearer (1 Tim. 1:4): “ANF01. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus - Christian Classics Ethereal Library”, n.d., <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.ii.i.html> (Accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> “ANF03. Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian - Christian Classics Ethereal Library”, n.d., <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.v.vi.iii.html> (Accessed July 2, 2012).

6:20; 1:4). Yet, Lenski points out, “The supposition that Paul refers to the Gnostics and thus to Marcion’s ‘antitheses’ conflicts with the time of the composition of this epistle unless this letter is regarded as a late forgery.”<sup>8</sup> This presents a conundrum. Shall we believe Irenaeus and Tertullian who were very early and capable writers and who were certainly nearer the time of both Paul and Marcion; or shall we accept Lenski’s seemingly logical conclusion that the church fathers were wrong, and no Gnosticism was present in Paul’s day if we are going to accept an early date for Paul’s epistle? This conundrum may not be as insurmountable as Lenski makes it. Is it possible that what Lenski defines as the Gnosticism of Marcion is a reference to Marcion’s fully developed system which rejected the Old Testament in its entirety, while Irenaeus and Tertullian were referring to elements found in Paul’s day, which we shall delineate as gnosis, referring to more basic component elements not yet developed which were the foundation for the Gnostic heresies that came to full flower in their own day? Klutz notes,

The most important of these distinctions was that between 'gnosis', which was defined broadly as élite knowledge of divine mysteries, and 'gnosticism', which was defined more specifically as referring to a family of religious systems first attested in the second century CE.

Lenski’s implication is that the only thing that may be called Gnosticism did not arise until Marcion brought it into being in the second century. However, when Irenaeus and Tertullian write about the Gnostic heresy of their day, there was a menagerie of variant forms of Gnosis, among which Marcion’s was but a part (though a very large part). Darrell Bock points out that defining Gnosticism is a problem that “became so great that

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<sup>8</sup> Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 735.

a famous conference in 1966 in Messina gathered experts to try to reach an agreed upon definition, but the attempt failed.”<sup>9</sup>

We suggest an alternative approach to understanding Gnosticism by viewing it from its developmental perspective in the early church and on into the second century. In so doing, we shall see how Irenaeus and Tertullian could ascribe this doctrine in the second century to the gnosis to which Paul referred in the first century. We shall assume for the purposes of this consideration that the writings of the New Testament are not forgeries or written by people from the second century AD. We shall also assume the absolute accuracy of the writers of the first century canonical texts.

#### The Development of Gnosticism

According to the canonical writings of the New Testament, Christianity sprang from the root of Judaism (Romans 11:13-21), as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies that heralded the dawn of a Messianic Kingdom (1 Peter 1:10-12). The first entrants into that kingdom were Jews and Gentile proselytes (Romans 1:16; Acts 2:10), followed later by unproselyted Gentiles (Acts 10). Until the entrance of unproselyted Gentiles into that kingdom, the early Jewish adherents to Christianity still maintained many of their Jewish customs and dietary laws (cf. Peter’s refusal to eat anything outside of Mosaic instruction – Acts 10:9-6). However, with the entrance of uncircumcised Gentiles into the kingdom, the problem for Jews was extensive. How could they maintain their Jewish customs, and yet fellowship with people considered unclean? How could they eat with them? And the Jewish problem was exacerbated by their attempt to continue fellowship with their Jewish peers who knew they were associating with Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-13). Later there came a council at Jerusalem

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<sup>9</sup> Bock, *Missing Gospels - Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities*, 11.

(Acts 15:1-29) that ruled that Gentiles were not subject to the Mosaic ordinances. In spite of this ruling, Paul in his Galatian letter points out that the pressing of Mosaic law on Gentiles was still going on after the council (Galatians 2:1-10); the Gentiles were being plagued with new teaching by those who were changing the gospel first proclaimed to them by Paul (Galatians 1:6-9; 6:12, 13).

A question arises at this point. If the finding of the council was that Gentiles did not have to keep the Mosaic Law, then what teaching did these Jewish teachers use to convince the Gentiles to keep Mosaic ordinances? Did they simply ignore the finding of the council? Surely not. And yet, there was still such a tremendous pressure on Jews to keep Mosaic customs that when Peter came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, he ate with the Gentiles until certain came from James in Jerusalem. And then not only Peter, but Barnabas also, who had actually worked with Paul to bring in uncircumcised Gentiles into the church, was influenced to stop associating with the Gentile brethren (Galatians 2:11-13). Notice that all of these were present at the council recorded in Acts 15.

We have a glimpse of the new instruction that pressed Judaic customs on the Gentiles in Colossians 2:23, “These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body, but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh” (RSV). Portions of the Judaic law were being pressed upon the Gentiles as having power to regulate fleshly passions. From what source would such an idea spring?

#### Judaic Polemics

Christianity was not the first religion to reject Judaic customs. With the earlier advent of Hellenism, Judaism had needed a means of engaging anti-Semitic bias coming

from the adherents of Hellenistic philosophy. An example of one Jewish polemic in dealing with Hellenism can be found in Philo of Alexandria, who “stands as the most conspicuous figure and the culminating point of a long development marked by the confluence of Jewish monotheism and Hellenic cosmogony,”<sup>10</sup> emphasizing predominantly the philosophical style of Plato.<sup>11</sup> Philo indeed built upon the work of other earlier Jews, like Aristobulus (c. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), who had used allegory to explain the Mosaic texts,<sup>12</sup> making them more palatable to a non-Jewish audience.<sup>13</sup> Alexandrians were certainly present in the religious context of Jerusalem, for Stephen disputed with them, among others (Acts 6:9). Apollos, a learned and eloquent speaker, is also mentioned as having come from Alexandria to Ephesus (Acts 18:24). The Alexandrian presence was not lacking in the Jewish community.

One of the most unique customs of the Jews dealt with dietary laws. Philo gave one reason for not eating unclean meats as follows,

Moses has not granted an unlimited possession and use of all other animals to those who partake in his sacred constitution, but he has forbidden with all his might all animals, whether of the land, or of the water, or that fly through the air, which are most fleshy and fat, and calculated to excite treacherous pleasure, well knowing that such, attracting as with a bait that most slavish of all the outward senses, namely, taste, produce insatiability, an incurable evil to both souls and bodies, for insatiability produces indigestion, which is the origin and source of all diseases and weaknesses. Now of land animals, the swine is confessed to be the nicest of all meats by those who eat it, and of all aquatic animals the most delicate are the fish which have no scales; and Moses is above all other men skilful in training and inuring persons of a good natural disposition to the practice of virtue

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel MacAuley-Editor Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), 39.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Some have also tried to find an Egyptian religious connection, but the preponderance of information to date seems to not support such a thesis, although the Nag Hammadi texts have caused some to reopen the research: Douglas M. Parrott, “Gnosticism and Egyptian Religion,” *Novum Testamentum* 29, no. 1 (January 1987): 76, 77.

<sup>12</sup> Jackson, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 9:39.

<sup>13</sup> Justo L Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1, Revised ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 43.

by frugality and abstinence, endeavouring to remove costly luxury from their characters...<sup>14</sup>

Another purported early first century Jewish writer in a document called “The Letter to Aristeas” propagandizes, “Only do not fall into the opinion, which has long been refuted, that Moses gave these laws out of consideration for these animals. These holy commands have been given for the purpose of righteousness in order to awaken godly thought and to build character.”<sup>15</sup> It is not unrealistic to expect that the same kind of Jewish propaganda would also be used against the new Gentile saints in the Pauline churches, and that Paul is addressing that very propaganda at Colossae in Colossians 2:23.

From this we may justifiably surmise that Alexandrian influence, replete with its Platonic overtones, was present in the early church as a Jewish Christian response to the ruling of the council at Jerusalem. While the Mosaic law could no longer be held as binding on the Gentiles, these long-established propagandist tools could be used to promote Jewish dietary laws and other Jewish customs. At the same time, Platonism such as that espoused by Philo could allegorize even for the Jew the reason for the new concept of a Godhead with a Son who is also God. While the mainstream Jews saw this as polytheistic, and Christianity countered that it was not, Platonism gave another cosmological view that would gain adherents first among the Jewish communities struggling with the “new” God, Jesus.

And it is just here that second century AD Gnosticism, as delineated by the heresiologists, can come to our aid in fleshing out this picture. If the gnosis and problems

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Duke Yonge, tran., “Philo: The Special Laws, IV”, n.d., <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book30.html> (Accessed June 20, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Leonhard Goppelt, E. Earle Ellis, and Donald Madvig, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 54, 55.

spoken of by Paul hold elements that were in full flower in the second century, as Irenaeus and Tertullian have proposed, then we ought to be able to see something in the canon that gives credence to that proposition. However, we do not mean to imply that any of the canonic writings themselves were teaching the basic elements of Platonism or Jewish allegorism as some have contended,<sup>16</sup> nor are we trying to find passages that show differences in canonic literature that hints at Gnostic influence such as Pagels does with the concept of a bodily resurrection.<sup>17</sup> We mean only to ascertain if opposition to such elements can be found in the New Testament canon.

#### Basic Gnostic Elements in the New Testament

There is no single picture of Gnosticism in the second century AD. Ralph Moellering points out, “There is no uniformity in the total corpus of known Gnostic writings.”<sup>18</sup> Among second through fourth century AD Gnostic writings, Meera Lester notes that there were four basic divisions among the Gnostics. She labels the first group as the Syrian Discipline, who were highly ascetic; among whom were the “Naassenes, Ophites, Sethians, Peratai, Saturnalians, and the Cainites.”<sup>19</sup> Lester calls the second group the Greek Discipline, who believed in less ascetic than the Syrian discipline. The major leaders were Basilides and Valentinus.<sup>20</sup> The third group she calls the Dualistic Discipline, which she devotes to Marcion. Marcion rejected the Old Testament altogether.<sup>21</sup> And finally she posits those of the Antinomian Discipline who engaged in “limitless licentiousness.” She places the Carpocracians and Simonians in this

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<sup>16</sup> Ralph Luther Moellering, “Ancient and Modern Gnosticism,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 10, no. 4 (August 1983): 224.

<sup>17</sup> Birger A. Pearson, “Early Christianity and Gnosticism: a Review Essay,” *Religious Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (January 1987): 2.

<sup>18</sup> Moellering, “Ancient and Modern Gnosticism,” 228.

<sup>19</sup> Lester, *The Everything Gnostic Gospels Book*, 107.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 112, 113.

grouping.<sup>22</sup> While there are certainly variations in these groups, we are more interested in their fundamental agreements which can be traced back to what may be detected in the New Testament's polemic against them.

Darrel Bock notes that there are five basic points of conversion as delineated by Kurt Rudolph. The first is dualism in God. There is an inherent mix in man of good and evil that flows from a distinction between the Creator God and the transcendent true God. There is also a dualistic cosmogony, in which the creation began with evil elements already present within it. Soul is innately good, while flesh is innately evil. The heavenly region is good, while the earthly realm is evil. The third major point is that salvation is a matter of learning about and understanding creation's dualistic nature. The fourth element is an eschatological belief that all of creation will be finally recovered into the "pleroma" from which it originated. The final element consisted of worship and other practices that differed from orthodox Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

Concerning the dualistic features of God, Peter speaks of some who were "not afraid to speak evil of dignities", and who spoke evil of things they did not understand (2 Peter 2:10-12). The term *dignities* includes the idea of angelic beings, and even an understanding of the glory of God, Himself.<sup>24</sup> The nature of God under Gnostic concepts was a direct attack on the monotheism of the Bible, with variant layers of male/female deities, who functioned under one transcendent Deity. Further, the God who created the Gnostic world is generally seen to be evil, or springing from a female aeon as a miscarriage. Such depictions of the true God would certainly be spoken of as "speaking

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 114, 115.

<sup>23</sup> Bock, *Missing Gospels - Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities*, 118–120.

<sup>24</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, trans., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 203.

evil of dignities.” Jude points out that even Michael the archangel would not speak evil of the devil, while these spoke evil of “dignities” that surely would have been higher than the devil (Jude 1:8-10). The Apostle John speaks of those who denied the Father/Son relationship (1 John 2:22, 23). These elements certainly fit the elements of second century Gnosticism.

With regard to cosmological duality, vestiges of a dualistic nature in man in which flesh is made evil can be deduced from 1 John 4:1-3, when the very fleshly nature of Christ is denied. There is no better reason for such to be denied apart from thinking that flesh is evil. And God can not inhabit evil. Again, John presents Jesus as a man of flesh and blood in his Gospel (John 1:14; 6:51-56), which is a very late gospel (c. 85 – 90 AD), written at the same time of the Gnostic, Cerinthus, against whom John is said to write.<sup>25</sup>

Admittedly, the soteriological element of Gnosticism does not seem to be so well addressed in the New Testament, though some have sought to find it in 1 Corinthians 8:1. However, the idolatrous context of that passage makes such an interpretation highly suspect. On the other hand, a Jewish tendency to separate knowledge from action for salvation may certainly be observed even as early as the text of James (James 1:22-27; 2:14-26; 3:13). Such a tendency may have made the appreciation for knowledge alone as the means of salvation a more easily acceptable principle. John, like James, makes action rather than words the grounds for fellowship with God (1 John 3:1-18).

The fourth eschatological element of the Gnostic tenets may be under attack in 2 Peter 3, as scoffers are reportedly denying the second coming of Christ, which would

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<sup>25</sup> Samuel MacAuley-Editor Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), 496, 497.

certainly have no place in Gnostic eschatology. Peter points out, however, that not only will he return, but the world will be burned up and everything in it, contrary to the Gnostic concept of a return of the material world into the pleroma (2 Peter 3:5-10). Since this section follows right after the section on those who are teaching other Gnostic elements, there is no reason to doubt the connection with the same teachers spoken of in 2 Peter 2.

Finally, the cult life of the second century AD Gnostics seems to have fluctuated between rigid asceticism and licentious abandon. Peter and Jude are very open in their assessment of the groups who were presenting atrocious teachings about heavenly dignities. They speak of them as people who have no moral restraints whatsoever (2 Peter 2:10, 13, 14, 18; Jude 1:8, 13, 16). On the ascetic side, Paul speaks of leaving Timothy in Ephesus to stop a coming teaching that forbade marriage and eating meats (1 Timothy 4:1-3), while at Colossae Paul warned brethren about a “touch not, taste not, handle not” teaching which was permeating their midst (Colossians 2:21, 22).

While in the first century canon, there is certainly not a fully developed Marcionite or Valentinian system such as is seen in the second century AD, there is certainly an easily seen rudimentary foundation of the basic points upon which all second century Gnosticism built. The heresiologists of the succeeding centuries were quick to point out “the importance of succession from one person to the next, though in the case of this genre each heresiarch received false teachings from his predecessor, further corrupted them while himself became more corrupted, and then passed them on to the next in an ever worsening chain of heresies.”<sup>26</sup> If we follow that model in our own search

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<sup>26</sup> Young Richard Kim, “Reading the Panarion as Collective Biography: The Heresiarch as Unholy Man,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64, no. 4 (2010): 393.

for the development of Gnosticism in the church, we are able to see the vehicle through which Gnosticism entered the church.

Following the chain of passages in the New Testament that refutes the basic elements of Gnosticism, the vehicle that brought that teaching into the New Testament can be fairly easily seen. In the Colossian church, the elements noted in chapter 2 are founded on an erroneous push of Judaic teaching. This makes the Colossian error Judaic in origin. In noting the Gnostic elements found in 1 Timothy, again Paul points to people who are trying to be teachers of the Law who are teaching fables and endless genealogies (1 Timothy 1:4, 7). The same prohibition on the teaching of fables is given to Titus, with the remark that these are coming from the Jews (Titus 1:14). The genealogical aspect is again addressed in Philippians 3:1-7, 18, as Paul gave his own genealogy and spoke of its worthlessness for salvation; however, this is done in the context of Jewish false teachers. Again, when Peter exposes the licentious brood in Asia Minor, he concludes the letter with an open endorsement of Paul (2 Peter 3:15, 16), which would have been of devastating consequence to Jewish teachers who came after Paul seeking to undo his work by appealing to the Apostles in Jerusalem as the grounds of their authority.

The question is whether this same succession can be seen to follow among the Jewish element in the church, and whether appeal to Jewish leaders and Jerusalem's authority was continued. Cerinthus, a very early Gnostic teacher whom Polycarp placed in the time of John, is said by Epiphanius (whose *Panarion* "included both short and long biographical sketches of individual heresiarchs")<sup>27</sup> to have been Jewish<sup>28</sup> (though that is

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Williams, tran., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Book I* (Netherlands: Brill Academic Pub, 1997), 108.

denied by some)<sup>29</sup> and shared close views with another early group, the Ebionites. Of these it is said by Irenaeus, “their opinions with respect to the Lord are similar to those of Cerinthus...they practise circumcision, persevere in the observance of those customs which are enjoined by the law, and are so Judaic in their style of life, that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.”<sup>30</sup> Other early groups are said to represent themselves as coming from Jewish backgrounds such as the Nicolaitanes from Nicholas, one of the seven in Jerusalem, and the Simonians who purported to come from Simon Magus (though technically Samaritan, he is still not considered a Gentile) in Acts 8. The Jewish dominance is very obvious in these early groups.

Another pointer to heavy Jewish influence is found in Gnostic references to James and Jerusalem for their authority. It is interesting the place of importance that James the brother of Jesus is given in the Gospel of the Hebrews.<sup>31</sup> This assuredly hearkens back to the importance of James as the person to whom early Judaizers appealed. Philip Schaff notes, “Though not one of the Twelve, he enjoyed, owing to his relationship to our Lord and his commanding piety, almost apostolic authority, especially in Judea and among the Jewish converts.”<sup>32</sup> In addition to his place of prominence in the Gospel of the Hebrews, he is also ascribed the Infancy Gospel of James, “Now I, James, which wrote this history in Jerusalem...”<sup>33</sup> points to two authoritative factors which one can see at work early in the New Testament: the rise of James to power and his place in Jerusalem, the mother

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<sup>29</sup> Jackson, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 2:496.

<sup>30</sup> “ANF01. The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus - Christian Classics Ethereal Library”, n.d., <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.ii.xxvii.html> (Accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Philipp Vielhauer and George Ogg, trans., “The Gospel of the Hebrews”, n.d., <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/gospelhebrews-ogg.html> (Accessed July 3, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: . B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 265.

<sup>33</sup> M. R. James, tran., “Infancy Gospel of James, or Protevangelium (M.R. James Translation)”, n.d., <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/infancyjames-mrjames.html> (Accessed June 23, 2012).

congregation. The fact that Gnostic leaders singled him out within their writings points to the place he held among the Jews, and the fact that they were using him to advance their doctrines. This points to a heavy Jewish element in early Gnosticism. This seems to be much like what was happening even in the first century. Again in the Apocryphon of James, James is given importance alongside Peter, and even himself sends the apostles away while he goes to Jerusalem. He and Peter are ascribed the chief places of honor.<sup>34</sup> Paul is not mentioned. The Jewish element is dominant. The reporting of a special post-resurrection appearance of Jesus, and the appeal to James as a source of secret and superior tradition, are means Gnostics often used to legitimate their message.<sup>35</sup> While Paul certainly combats this line of reasoning (Galatians 2:5-14 and Philippians 3:2-7), it is no less the case that this did not stop the Jewish usage of James, Peter and Jerusalem to give authority to their Mosaic views.

This collusion between Christianity and its Jewish roots alienated some of the early Christians such as Marcion.

“Around 140, Marcion drew a line of radical separation between Jews and Christians, rejecting the Old Testament and its evil god while extolling the good deity of the new covenant, and his messenger, Jesus: Love confronted Law. Marcionites favored jettisoning the Hebrew Bible in favor of a new entirely Christian collection.”<sup>36</sup>

Even though this Marcionite aspect did not sink orthodox Christianity, still, by this time, the sum of the variant Jewish elements had made an indelible imprint upon the Christian collage.

## Conclusion

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<sup>34</sup> Ron Cameron, tran., “The Apocryphon of James (Cameron Translation) -- The Nag Hammadi Library”, n.d., <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/jam2.html> (Accessed June 28, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Ron Cameron, tran., “The Secret Book of James”, n.d., <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/secretjames.html> (Accessed June 28, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, *Hidden Gospels*, 29.

While Lenski was certainly correct in maintaining that Marcionite Gnosticism was not present at Paul's time, the basic elements found in syncretistic Hellenistic Judaism (gnosis) were certainly present. By use of these elemental principles which had already been introduced into Judaism for at least 2 centuries, the Jewish leaders continued to press their case, until sections of the church were proselytized into variant forms of Platonic teachings which finally flowered in the second century AD.

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