

THE GNOSTICISM BOOKSHELF



GNOSTIC JOHN  
THE BAPTIZER

GEORGE R. S. MEAD

# **Gnostic John the Baptizer: Selections from the Mandæan John-Book**

**G. R. S. Mead**

## **Contents:**

### GNOSTICISM

Gnostic John the Baptizer: Selections from the Mandæan John-Book

### FOREWORD.

I. JOHN THE BAPTIZER AND CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.

II. FROM THE JOHN-BOOK OF THE MANDÆANS.

### INTRODUCTORY.

I.—THE GNOSTIC JOHN THE BAPTIZER.

II.—THE STORY OF THE BREACH WITH JUDAISM.

III.—SOME TYPICAL EXTRACTS.

III. THE SLAVONIC JOSEPHUS' ACCOUNT OF THE BAPTIST AND JESUS.

I. JOHN'S PROCLAMATION AND HIS REBUKE OF THE AUTHORITIES.

II. HIS INTERPRETATION OF PHILIP'S DREAM.

III. HIS PERSISTENT REBUKING OF AGRIPPA AND HIS EXECUTION.



IV. THE MINISTRY, TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

V. THE TREATMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

VI. THE TRILINGUAL INSCRIPTION CONCERNING JESUS.

VII. PORTENTS AT THE DEATH OF JESUS AND RUMOURS OF HIS RESURRECTION.

VIII.A PROPHECY CONCERNING JESUS.

IV. THE FOURTH GOSPEL PROEM:

AFTERWORD.

*Gnostic John The Baptizer, G.R.S. Mead  
Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck  
86450 Altenmünster, Germany*

*ISBN: 9783849621773*

*[www.jazzybee-verlag.de](http://www.jazzybee-verlag.de)  
[admin@jazzybee-verlag.de](mailto:admin@jazzybee-verlag.de)*

## **GNOSTICISM**

*Wilhelm Bousset*

Gnosticism is the name generally applied to that spiritual movement existing side by side with genuine Christianity, as it gradually crystallized into the old Catholic Church, which may roughly be defined as a distinct religious

syncretism bearing the strong impress of Christian influences.

I. The term " Gnosis " first appears in a technical sense in 1 Tim. vi. 20 (i)  $\epsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\gamma\iota\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$   $\gamma\nu\kappa\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ). It seems to have at first been applied exclusively, or at any rate principally, to a particular tendency within the movement as a whole, i.e. to those sections of (the Syrian) Gnostics otherwise generally known as Ophites or Naasseni (see Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, v. 2:  $\text{Νααοοί} \dots \text{εὐαγγελιακοὶ ἀποκρυφῶδες}$ ; Irenaeus i. 11.1; Epiphanius, *Haeres.* xxvi. Cf. also the self-assumed name of the Carpocratiani, *Iren.* i. 25.6). But in Irenaeus the term has already come to designate the whole movement. This first came into prominence in the opening decades of the 2nd century A.D., but is certainly older; it reached its height in the second third of the same century, and began to wane about the 3rd century, and from the second half of the 3rd century onwards was replaced by the closely-related and more powerful Manichaean movement. Offshoots of it, however, continued on into the 4th and 5th centuries. Epiphanius still had the opportunity of making personal acquaintance with Gnostic sects.

II. Of the actual writings of the Gnostics, which were extraordinarily numerous, very little has survived; they were sacrificed to the destructive zeal of their ecclesiastical opponents. Numerous fragments and extracts from Gnostic writings are to be found in the works of the Fathers who attacked Gnosticism. Most valuable of all are the long extracts in the 5th and 6th books of the *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus. The most accessible and best critical edition of the fragments which have been preserved word for word is to be found in Hilgenfeld's *Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums*. One of the most important of these fragments is the letter of Ptolemaeus to

Flora, preserved in Epiphanius, Haeres. xxxiii. 3-7 (see on this point Harnack in the *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie*, 1902, pp. 507-545). Gnostic fragments are certainly also preserved for us in the Acts of Thomas. Here we should especially mention the beautiful and much-discussed Song of the Pearl, or Song of the Soul, which is generally, though without absolute clear proof, attributed to the Gnostic Bardesanes (till lately it was known only in the Syrian text; edited and translated by Bevan, *Texts and Studies*, 2 v. 3, 1897; Hofmann, *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, iv.; for the newly-found Greek text see *Acta apostolorum*, ed. Bonnet, ii. 2, c. 108, p. 219). Generally also much Gnostic matter is contained in the apocryphal histories of the Apostles. To the school of Bardesanes belongs the "Book of the Laws of the Lands," which does not, however, contribute much to our knowledge of Gnosticism. Finally, we should mention in this connexion the text on which are based the pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Recognitions (beginning of the 3rd century). is, of course, already permeated with the Catholic spirit, but has drawn so largely upon sources of a Judaeo-Christian Gnostic character that it comes to a great extent within the category of sources for Gnosticism. Complete original Gnostic works have unfortunately survived to us only from the period of the decadence of Gnosticism. Of these we should mention the comprehensive work called the Pistis-Sophia, probably belonging to the second half of the 3rd century. Further, the Coptic-Gnostic texts of the Codex Brucianus; both the books of Ieu, and an anonymous third work (edited and translated by C. Schmidt, *Texte und Untersuchungen*, vol. viii., 1892; and a new translation by the same in *Koptische-gnostische Schriften*, i.) which, contrary to the opinion of their editor and translator, the present writer believes to represent, in their existing form, a still later period and a still more advanced stage in the decadence of Gnosticism. For other

and older Coptic-Gnostic texts, in one of which is contained the source of Irenaeus's treatises on the Barbelognostics, but which have unfortunately not yet been made completely accessible, see C. Schmidt in *Sitzungsberichte der Berl. Akad.* (1896), p. 839 seq., and "Philotesia," dedicated to Paul Kleinert (1907), p. 315 seq.

On the whole, then, for an exposition of Gnosticism we are thrown back upon the polemical writings of the Fathers in their controversy with heresy. The most ancient of these is Justin, who according to his *Apol.* i. 26 wrote a *Syntagma* against all heresies (c. A.D. 150), and also, probably, a special polemic against Marcion (fragment in Irenaeus iv. 6.2). Both these writings are lost. He was followed by Irenaeus, who, especially in the first book of his treatise *Adversus haereses* (ΕΞΕ γνων Kai i.va:ponr\* T1jS 1/Æ UScobyov 'yvCJQEWS Otf3XLa 7rEPTE, c. A.D. 180), gives a detailed account of the Gnostic heresies. He founds his work upon that of his master Justin, but adds from his own knowledge among many other things, notably the detailed account of Valentinianism at the beginning of the book. On Irenaeus, and probably also on Justin, Hippolytus drew for his *Syntagma* (beginning of the 3rd century), a work which is also lost, but can, with great certainty, be reconstructed from three recensions of it: in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius (after 374), in Philaster of Brescia, *Adversus haereses*, and the Pseudo-Tertullian, *Liber adversus omnes haereses*. A second work of Hippolytus (*Kara 7raawv aip VEcov €Xeyxos*) is preserved in the so-called *Philosophumena* which survives under the name of Origen. Here Hippolytus gave a second exposition supplemented by fresh Gnostic original sources with which he had become acquainted in the meanwhile. These sources quoted in Hippolytus have lately met with very unfavourable criticisms. The opinion has been advanced that Hippolytus has here fallen a victim to the mystification of a forger. The truth of the matter

must be that Hippolytus probably made use of a collection of Gnostic texts, put together by a Gnostic, in which were already represented various secondary developments of the genuine Gnostic schools. It is also possible that the compiler has himself attempted here and there to harmonize to a certain extent the various Gnostic doctrines, yet in no case is this collection of sources given by Hippolytus to be passed over; it should rather be considered as important evidence for the beginnings of the decay of Gnosticism. Very noteworthy references to Gnosticism are also to be found scattered up and down the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria. Especially important are the Excerpta ex Theodoto, the author of which is certainly Clement, which are verbally extracted from Gnostic writings, and have almost the value of original sources. The writings of Origen also contain a wealth of material. In the first place should be mentioned the treatise Contra Celsum, in which the expositions of Gnosticism by both Origen and Celsus are of interest (see especially v. 61 seq. and vi. 25 seq.). Of Tertullian's works should be mentioned: De praescriptione haereticorum, especially Adversus Marcionem, Adversus Hermogenem, and finally Adversus Valentinianos (entirely founded on Irenaeus). Here must also be mentioned the dialogue of Adamantius with the Gnostics, De recta in deum fide (beginning of 4th century). Among the followers of Hippolytus, Epiphanius in his Panarion gives much independent and valuable information from his own knowledge of contemporary Gnosticism. But Theodoret of Cyrus (d. 455) is already entirely dependent on previous works and has nothing new to add. With the 4th century both Gnosticism and the polemical literature directed against it die out.

III. If we wish to grasp the peculiar character of the great Gnostic movement, we must take care not to be led astray by the catchword " Gnosis." It is a mistake to regard the

Gnostics as pre-eminently the representatives of intellect among Christians, and Gnosticism as an intellectual tendency chiefly concerned with philosophical speculation, the reconciliation of religion with philosophy and theology. It is true that when Gnosticism was at its height it numbered amongst its followers both theologians and men of science, but that is not its main characteristic. Among the majority of the followers of the movement " Gnosis " was understood not as meaning " knowledge " or " understanding," in our sense of the word, but " revelation." These little Gnostic sects and groups all lived in the conviction that they possessed a secret and mysterious knowledge, in no way accessible to those outside, which was not to be proved or propagated, but believed in by the initiated, and anxiously guarded as a secret. This knowledge of theirs was not based on reflection, on scientific inquiry and proof, but on revelation. It was derived directly from the times of primitive Christianity; from the Saviour himself and his disciples and friends, with whom they claimed to be connected by a secret tradition, or else from later prophets, of whom many sects boasted. It was laid down in wonderful mystic writings, which were in the possession of the various circles (Liechtenhahn, *Die Offenbarung im Gnosticismus*, 1901).

In short, Gnosticism, in all its various sections, its form and its character, falls under the great category of mystic religions, which were so characteristic of the religious life of decadent antiquity. In Gnosticism as in the other mystic religions we find the same contrast of the initiated and the uninitiated, the same loose organization, the same kind of petty sectarianism and mystery-mongering. All alike boast a mystic revelation and a deeply-veiled wisdom. As in many mystical religions, so in Gnosticism, the ultimate object is individual salvation, the assurance of a fortunate destiny for the soul after death. As in the others, so in this the



central object of worship is a redeemer-deity who has already trodden the difficult way which the faithful have to follow. And finally, as in all mystical religions, so here too, holy rites and formulas, acts of initiation and consecration, all those things which we call sacraments, play a very prominent part. The Gnostic religion is full of such sacraments. In the accounts of the Fathers we find less about them; yet here Irenaeus' account of the Marcosians is of the highest significance (i. 21 seq.). Much more material is to be found in the original Gnostic writings, especially in the Pistis Sophia and the two books of Ieu, and again in the Excerpta ex Theodoto, the Acts of Thomas, and here and there also in the pseudo-Clementine writings. Above all we can see from the original sources of the Mandaean religion, which also represents a branch of Gnosticism, how great a part the sacraments played in the Gnostic sects (Brandt, Mandäische Religion, p. 96 seq.). Everywhere we are met with the most varied forms of holy rites - the various baptisms, by water, by fire, by the spirit, the baptism for protection against demons, anointing with oil, sealing and stigmatizing, piercing the ears, leading into the bridal chamber, partaking of holy food and drink. Finally, sacred formulas, names and symbols are of the highest importance among the Gnostic sects. We constantly meet with the idea that the soul, on leaving the body, finds its path to the highest heaven opposed by the deities and demons of the lower realms of heaven, and only when it is in possession of the names of these demons, and can repeat the proper holy formula, or is prepared with the right symbol, or has been anointed with the holy oil, finds its way unhindered to the heavenly home. Hence the Gnostic must above all things learn the names of the demons, and equip himself with the sacred formulas and symbols, in order to be certain of a good destiny after death. The exposition of the system of the Ophites given by Celsus (in Origen vi. 25 seq.), and, in connexion with Celsus, by Origen, is

particularly instructive on this point. The two " Coptic Ieu " books unfold an immense system of names and symbols. This system again was simplified, and as the supreme secret was taught in a single name or a single formula, by means of which the happy possessor was able to penetrate through all the spaces of heaven (cf. the name " Caulacau " among the Basilidians; Irenaeus, Adv. hoer. i. 24.5, and among other sects). It was taught that even the redeemer-god, when he once descended on to this earth, to rise from it again, availed himself of these names and formulas on his descent and ascent through the world of demons. Traces of ideas of this kind are to be met with almost everywhere. They have been most carefully collected by Anz (Ursprung des Gnosticismus, Texte und Untersuchungen xv. 4 passim) who would see in them the central doctrine of Gnosticism.

IV. All these investigations point clearly to the fact that Gnosticism belongs to the group of mystical religions. We must now proceed to define more exactly the peculiar and distinctive character of the Gnostic system. The basis of the Gnostic religion and world-philosophy lies in a decided Oriental dualism. In sharp contrast are opposed the two worlds of the good and of the evil, the divine world and the material world (an), the worlds of light and of darkness. In many systems there seems to be no attempt to derive the one world from the other. The true Basilides, perhaps also Saturnil, Marcion and a part of his disciples, Bardesanes and others, were frankly dualists. In the case of other systems, owing to the inexactness of our information, we are unable to decide; the later systems of Mandaeism and Manichaeism, so closely related to Gnosticism, are also based upon a decided dualism. And even when there is an attempt at reconciliation, it is still quite clear how strong was the original dualism which has to be overcome. Thus the Gnostic systems make great use of the idea of a fall of the Deity himself; by the fall of the Godhead into the world

of matter, this matter, previously insensible, is animated into life and activity, and then arise the powers, both partly and wholly hostile, who hold sway over this world. Such figures of fallen divinities, sinking down into the world of matter are those of Sophia (i.e. Ahamoth) among the Gnostics (Ophites) in the narrower sense of the word, the Simoniani (the figure of Helena), the Barbelognostics, and in the system of the Pistis Sophia or the Primal Man, among the Naasseni and the sect, related to them, as described by Hippolytus. A further weakening of the dualism is indicated when, in the systems of the Valentinian school, the fall of Sophia takes place within the godhead, and Sophia, inflamed with love, plunges into the Bythos, the highest divinity, and when the attempt is thus made genetically to derive the lower world from the sufferings and passions of fallen divinity. Another attempt at reconciliation is set forth in the so-called " system of emanations " in which it is assumed that from the supreme divinity emanated a somewhat lesser world, from this world a second, and so on, until the divine element (of life) became so far weakened and attenuated, that the genesis of a partly, or even wholly, evil world appears both possible and comprehensible. A system of emanations of this kind, in its purest form, is set forth in the expositions coming from the school of Basilides, which are handed down by Irenaeus, while the propositions which are set forth in the Philosophumena of Hippolytus as being doctrines of Basilides represent a still closer approach to a monistic philosophy. Occasionally, too, there is an attempt to establish at any rate a threefold division of the world, and to assume between the worlds of light and darkness a middle world connecting the two; this is clearest among the Sethiani mentioned by Hippolytus (and cf. the Gnostics in Irenaeus i. 30.1). Quite peculiar in this connexion are the accounts in Books xix. and xx. of the Clementine Homilies. After a preliminary examination of all possible different

attempts at a solution of the problem of evil, the attempt is here made to represent the devil as an instrument of God. Christ and the devil are the two hands of God, Christ the right hand, and the devil the left, the devil having power over this world-epoch and Christ over the next. The devil here assumes very much the characteristics of the punishing and just God of the Old Testament, and the prospect is even held out of his ultimate pardon. All these efforts at reconciliation show how clearly the problem of evil was realized in these Gnostic and half-Gnostic sects, and how deeply they meditated on the subject; it was not altogether without reason that in the ranks of its opponents Gnosticism was judged to have arisen out of the question, 7r60ev TO KaK6P; This dualism had not its origin in Hellenic soil, neither is it related to that dualism which to a certain extent existed also in late Greek religion. For the lower and imperfect world, which in that system too is conceived and assumed, is the nebulous world of the non-existent and the formless, which is the necessary accompaniment of that which exists, as shadow is of light.

In Gnosticism, on the contrary, the world of evil is full of active energy and hostile powers. It is an Oriental (Iranian) dualism which here finds expression, though in one point, it is true, the mark of Greek influence is quite clear. When Gnosticism recognizes in this corporeal and material world the true seat of evil, consistently treating the bodily existence of mankind as essentially evil and the separation of the spiritual from the corporeal being as the object of salvation, this is an outcome of the contrast in Greek dualism between spirit and matter, soul and body. For in Oriental (Persian) dualism it is within this material world that the good and evil powers are at war, and this world beneath the stars is by no means conceived as entirely subject to the influence of evil. Gnosticism has combined the two, the Greek opposition between spirit and matter,

and the sharp Zoroastrian dualism, which, where the Greek mind conceived of a higher and a lower world, saw instead two hostile worlds, standing in contrast to each other like light and darkness. And out of the combination of these two dualisms arose the teaching of Gnosticism, with its thoroughgoing pessimism and fundamental asceticism.

Another characteristic feature of the Gnostic conception of the universe is the role played in almost all Gnostic systems by the seven world-creating powers. There are indeed certain exceptions; for instance, in the systems of the Valentinian schools there is the figure of the one Demiurge who takes the place of the Seven. But how widespread was the idea of seven powers, who created this lower material world and rule over it, has been clearly proved, especially by the systematic examination of the subject by Anz (Ursprung des Gnosticismus). These Seven, then, are in most systems half-evil, half-hostile powers; they are frequently characterized as "angels," and are reckoned as the last and lowest emanations of the Godhead; below them - and frequently considered as derived from them - comes the world of the actually devilish powers. On the other hand, among the speculations of the Mandaeans, we find a different and perhaps more primitive conception of the Seven, according to which they, together with their mother Namrus (Ruha) and their father (Ur), belong entirely to the world of darkness. They and their family are looked upon as captives of the god of light (Manda-d'hayye, Hibil-Ziva), who pardons them, sets them on chariots of light, and appoints them as rulers of the world (cf. chiefly Genza, in Tractat 6 and 8; W. Brandt, Manddische Schriften, 125 seq. and 137 seq.; Manddische Religion, 34 seq., &c.). In the Manichaeic system it is related how the helper of the Primal Man, the spirit of life, captured the evil archontes, and fastened them to the firmament, or according to another account, flayed them, and formed the firmament



from their skin (F. C. Bauer, *Das manichäische Religionssystem*, v. 65), and this conception is closely related to the other, though in this tradition the number (seven) of the archontes is lost. Similarly, the last book of the Pistis-Sophia contains the myth of the capture of the rebellious archontes, whose leaders here appear as five in number (Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften*, p. 234 seq.). There can scarcely be any doubt as to the origin of these seven (five) powers; they are the seven planetary divinities, the sun, moon and five planets. In the Mandaean speculations the Seven are introduced with the Babylonian names of the planets. The connexion of the Seven with the planets is also clearly established by the expositions of Celsus and Origen (*Contra Celsum*, vi. 22 seq.) and similarly by the above-quoted passage in the Pistis-Sophia, where the archontes, who are here mentioned as five, are identified with the five planets (excluding the sun and moon). This collective grouping of the seven (five) planetary divinities is derived from the late Babylonian religion, which can definitely be indicated as the home of these ideas (Zimmern, *Keilinschriften in dem alien Testament*, ii. p. 620 seq.; cf. particularly Diodorus ii. 30). And if in the old sources it is only the first beginnings of this development that can be traced, we must assume that at a later period the Babylonian religion centred in the adoration of the seven planetary deities. Very instructive in this connexion is the later (Arabian) account of the religion of the Mesopotamian Sabaeans. The religion of the Sabaeans, evidently a later offshoot from the stock of the old Babylonian religion, actually consists in the cult of the seven planets (cf. the great work of Daniel Chwolson, *Die Ssabier u. der Ssabismus*). But this reference to Babylonian religion does not solve the problem which is here in question. For in the Babylonian religion the planetary constellations are reckoned as the supreme deities. And here the question arises, how it came about that in the

Gnostic systems the Seven appear as subordinate, half-daemonic powers, or even completely as powers of darkness. This can only be explained on the assumption that some religion hostile to, and stronger than the Babylonian, has superimposed itself upon this, and has degraded its principal deities into daemons. Which religion can this have been ? We are at first inclined to think of Christianity itself, but it is certainly most improbable that at the time of the rise of Christianity the Babylonian teaching about the seven planet-deities governing the world should have played so great a part throughout all Syria, Asia Minor and Egypt, that the most varying sections of syncretic Christianity should over and over again adopt this doctrine and work it up into their system. It is far more probable that the combination which we meet with in Gnosticism is older than Christianity, and was found already in existence by Christianity and its sects. We must also reject the theory that this degradation of the planetary deities into daemons is due to the influence of Hebrew monotheism, for almost all the Gnostic sects take up a definitely hostile attitude towards the Jewish religion, and almost always the highest divinity among the Seven is actually the creator-God of the ,Old Testament. There remains, then, only one religion which can be used as an explanation, namely the Persian, which in fact fulfils all the necessary conditions. The Persian religion was at an early period brought into contact with the Babylonian, through the triumphant progress of Persian culture towards the West; at the time of Alexander the Great it was already the prevailing religion in the Babylonian plain (cf. F. Cumont, *Textes et monuments rel. aux mysteres de Mithra*, i. 5, 8-10, 14, 22 3 seq., 233). It was characterized by a main belief, tending towards monotheism, in the Light-deity Ahuramazda and his satellites, who appeared in contrast with him as powers of the nature of angels.

A combination of the Babylonian with the Persian religion could only be effected by the degradation of the Babylonian deities into half-divine, half-daemonic beings, infinitely remote from the supreme God of light and of heaven, or even into powers of darkness. Even the characteristic dualism of Gnosticism has already proved to be in part of Iranian origin; and now it becomes clear how from that mingling of late Greek and Persian dualism the idea could arise that these seven halfdaemonic powers are the creators or rulers of this material world, which is separated infinitely from the light-world of the good God. Definite confirmation of this conjecture is afforded us by later sources of the Iranian religion, in which we likewise meet with the characteristic fundamental doctrine of Gnosticism. Thus the Bundahish (iii. 25, v. z) is able to inform us that in the primeval strife of Satan against the light-world, seven hostile powers were captured and set as constellations in the heavens, where they are guarded by good star-powers and prevented from doing harm. Five of the evil powers are the planets, while here the sun and moon are of course not reckoned among the evil powers - for the obvious reason that in the Persian official religion they invariably appear as good divinities (cf. similar ideas in the Arabic treatise on Persian religion *Ulema-i-Islam*, Vullers, *Fragmente fiber die Religion Zoroasters*, p. 49, and in other later sources for Persian religion, put together in *Spiegel, Eranische Altertumskunde*, Bd. ii. p. 180). These Persian fancies can hardly be borrowed from the Christian Gnostic systems, their definiteness and much more strongly dualistic character recalling the exposition of the Mandaean (and Manichaeian) system, are proofs to the contrary. They are derived from the same period in which the underlying idea of the Gnostic systems also originated, namely, the time at which the ideas of the Persian and Babylonian religions came into contact, the remarkable results of which have

thus partly found their way into the official documents of Parsiism.

With this fundamental doctrine of Gnosticism is connected, as Anz has shown in his book which we have so often quoted, a side of their religious practices to which we have already alluded. Gnosticism is to a great extent dominated by the idea that it is above all and in the highest degree important for the Gnostic's soul to be enabled to find its way back through the lower worlds and spheres of heaven ruled by the Seven to the kingdom of light of the supreme deity of heaven. Hence, a principal item in their religious practice consisted in communications about the being, nature and names of the Seven (or of any other hostile daemons barring the way to heaven), the formulas with which they must be addressed, and the symbols which must be shown to them. But names, symbols and formulas are not efficacious by themselves: the Gnostic must lead a life having no part in the lower world ruled by these spirits, and by his knowledge he must raise himself above them to the God of the world of light. Throughout this mystic religious world it was above all the influence of the late Greek religion, derived from Plato, that also continued to operate; it is filled with the echo of the song, the first note of which was sounded by the Platonists, about the heavenly home of the soul and the homeward journey of the wise to the higher world of light.

But the form in which the whole is set forth is Oriental, and it must be carefully noted that the Mithras mysteries, so closely connected with the Persian religion, are acquainted with this doctrine of the ascent of the soul through the planetary spheres (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, vi. 22).

V. We cannot here undertake to set forth and explain in detail all the complex varieties of the Gnostic systems; but