

1) Metaphysical dualism: matter is bad, non-material is good.

2) Hierarchical universe: The universe is composed of various strata, the upper ones being preferable and the challenge given us is to ascend as much as possible. In this hierarchical universe the following is generally true of most gnostic schemes:

God is above, impersonal, indefinable and His is the highest level.

Man is below, limited, debased, and confined..his is the lowest level.

Between God and Man is the Pleroma (the fullness) In it are contained the items of truth that man needs to make his ascent to God if one is to be freed from the material misery and confinement.

Naturally, to climb through the Pleroma and to find God requires special insight and this is where we find the gnostic teachers. They alone can help us to get into the pleroma and retrieve the information necessary for an elevation into a better life. Theirs is the secret knowledge of the truths that lie locked up beyond the key of the average person. And, as with a lot of things, the price was high!

Christianity developed a gnostic sect or side with modifications to the general scheme above. In this modification Jesus was thought to be the son of Jehovah who was not, it turns out, a good god at all. That he had made this material world spoke ill of Jehovah and that Jesus had a role in it did not bode well for Him. To be confined to a body was the ultimate in meaningless humiliation. Jehovah therefore was a demiurge of questionable value to us. Jesus, as a divine son, certainly knew some truth but not much in comparison to what there was and thus was not really comparable with the gnostic teachers. The followers of Jesus could learn some points about the pleroma from Him but not an adequate amount and hence their skills were limited in degree. The real higher knowledge was only available to the gnostic teachers who made escape from materialism a real goal.

Although many scholars deny it, TVT thinks that Colossians 2 points itself squarely at gnostic patterns and emphasizes the sufficiency of Christ in the face of all those who claim this overriding knowledge. In later theology gnosticism will go hand in