

The Gnostic Pantheon

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The reader has been introduced in the previous article to the first four Gnostic Deities: Bythus, Sige, Nous and Aletheia. This is the Primary Tetrad. There are many more members of the Gnostic Pantheon. As it turns out, each of the Gnostic teachers had a desire to establish himself as a great teacher. Consequently, there was a tendency for each teacher to produce his own variation of the Gnostic mythology. This resulted in a great many contradictions and endless confusion. Nevertheless, the following account is the form that was developed by the Gnostic teacher Valentinus, and is the basic form of this mythology that existed in the first century.

Nous and Aletheia, brother and sister, became consorts. Through their conjunction, they produced two more Aeons: *Logos* ("Word") and *Zoe* ("Life"). Then, by the conjunction of *Logos* and *Zoe*, two more were produced: *Anthropos* ("Man") and *Ecclesia* ("Assembly"). In order to help the reader keep track of this divine soap opera, there is a chart at the end of this article depicting the Gnostic Pantheon or "family tree." These first eight Aeons have a special name in Gnosticism. They are the *First-Begotten Ogdoad*, the *Root and Substance of All Things*. "Ogdoad" means a set of eight.

In addition to *Anthropos* and *Ecclesia*, *Logos* and *Zoe* had ten other offspring. Their names with their meanings are as follows: *Bythius* ("Deep"), *Mixis* ("Mingling"), *Ageratos* ("Undecaying"), *Henosis* ("Union"), *Autophyes* ("Self-existent"), *Hedone* ("Pleasure"), *Acinetos* ("Immovable"), *Syncrasis* ("Blending"), *Monogenes* ("Only-Begotten"), and *Macaria* ("Happiness").

And finally, *Anthropos* and *Ecclesia* produced through their union, twelve offspring. Their names with their meanings are as follows: *Paracletus* ("Advocate"), *Pistis* ("Faith"), *Patricos* ("Ancestral"), *Elpis* ("Hope"), *Metricos* ("Measure"), *Agape* ("Love"), *Ainos* ("Praise"), *Synesis* ("Understanding"), *Ecclesiasticus* ("Ecclesiastical"), *Macariotes* ("Felicity"), *Theletos* ("Desire"), and *Sophia* ("Wisdom").

These thirty Aeons were produced for the glory of Bythus, their Father. They exist in silence and are known to no one except for the Gnostics. Why thirty? According to the Gnostics, this number of the Aeons is found mystically in the fact that Jesus spent the first thirty years of his life in silence. It is found again mystically in the parable of the Laborers in the

Vineyard in which some were sent about the first hour, others about the third, others about the sixth, others about the ninth and others about the eleventh hour. When these numbers are added together (1+3+6+9+11), they equal thirty. Thus, the hours refer to the Aeons

Obviously, anywhere in Scripture where one finds the number thirty, some such device can be invented. and that is precisely what the Gnostics did with numbers and letters. In the words of Irenaeus, *"They maintain that these are great, and wonderful, and hitherto unspeakable mysteries which it is their special function to develop; and so they proceed when they find anything in the multitude of things contained in the Scriptures which they can adopt and accommodate to their baseless speculations."*

As mentioned previously, each of the Gnostic teachers taught variations that deviated from this basic scheme. Furthermore, these thirty are by no means the only Aeons in the Gnostic Pantheon. Paul made reference to this Gnostic mythology in 1 Timothy 1:3-4.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia – remain in Ephesus that you may command some not to teach heretical doctrines, nor give attention to myths and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

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