

# Initiation

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You may be wondering at this point, "What must I do to become a Gnostic?" Among the ancient Gnostics, there are basically two approaches to this question. The first approach was the performance of some kind of initiation ritual. Each Gnostic teacher apparently had his own ideas of what this should look like.

One school of Gnostics taught that the baptism preached by John and Jesus was for the remission of sins. However, after Christ descended on Jesus, thus enlightening him, he taught a new and different baptism, one for "perfection." The Gnostics refer to baptism for the remission of sins as "animal" (or soulish) and [their] baptism for perfection as "spiritual."

The ritual practiced among them, however, did not look anything like Christian baptism. Because their concept of salvation after death involves ascending into the Pleroma to be reunited with their angelic mates, their initiation ritual also involved sexual immorality, cloaked with mystical rites and incantations. Sometimes this was accompanied by a ritual of immersion or sprinkling with water and / or anointing with a mixture of oil and water. A variety of incantations were spoken. Irenaeus gives some examples:

"Into the name of the unknown Father of the universe; into Aletheia, the mother of all things; into him who descended on Jesus; into union, and redemption, and communion with the powers."

I invoke that which is above every power of the Father, which is called light, and good Spirit, and life, because Thou hast reigned in the body.

Some of the incantations were spoken in a catena of pseudo-Hebraic words and phrases:

"Basema, Chamosse, Baoenaora, Mistadia, Ruada, Kousta, Babaphor, Kalachtehi."

To these incantations by the initiator, the inductee would respond:

"I am established, and I am redeemed; I redeem my soul from this world, and from all things connected with it in the name of Iao, who redeemed his own soul into redemption in Christ who liveth."

Other Gnostics altogether rejected the practice of any outward ritual that involved the use of visible, material substances such as water maintaining that the unspeakable, invisible, inconceivable, and incorporeal powers and mysteries could not be represented by material objects that can be perceived by the senses. They argued that the knowledge of these mysteries was itself perfect redemption. Since salvation was not of the body nor the soul they said, but only of the spirit, the redemption must be of a spiritual nature, not carnal, and thus only by means of knowledge.

The one thing all of these schemes have in common is best expressed in the words of Irenaeus:

**“Thus there are as many schemes of “redemption” as there are teachers of these mystical opinions. And when we come to refute them, we shall show in its fitting-place, that this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God, and thus to a renunciation of the whole Christian faith.”**