

1 **Gnosticism**

2 **The Importance of Gnosticism**

- Gnosticism was a major competitor of Christianity.
- Many elements of Gnosticism were shared with other heresies.
- Some elements of Gnosticism continue to attract people today.

3 **“Knowledgeism”**

- The word *Gnosticism* comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means “knowledge.”
- Gnostics claimed to possess secret spiritual knowledge.
- We can think of Gnosticism as “knowledgeism.”

4 **There was a wide variety of Gnostic sects.**

- Gnostic teachers often disagreed among themselves.
- Some Gnostic sects were related to Christianity, and others were not.

5 **Gnostic Teachings**

- Spirit is good; matter is evil.
 - This idea was largely derived from platonic Greek philosophy.
 - Since matter is evil, any god who creates matter is evil.
- There is one supreme, good god who has nothing to do with matter.
 - Supernatural powers flow from the supreme god like rays from the sun.
 - Other, inferior powers flow from those powers.
 - The god who created the world, the God of the Jews and the Old Testament, is a very low and evil power.
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- Man finds salvation by freeing his good soul from his evil body through knowledge (*gnosis*).
- Some Gnostics taught that Christ was a supernatural power sent by the supreme god to give humanity knowledge of salvation.
 - Since matter is evil, Christ could not have had a real body.
 - Some taught that this power inhabited the body of Jesus between Jesus’ baptism and crucifixion.
 - Others taught that Jesus’ body was an illusion.

7 **Gnostic Morality**

- Gnostics had two main points of view on morality.
 - Some taught that, since matter is evil, we should build up the soul by denying the body.
 - Others taught that, since matter is evil, we cannot make our bodies good no matter what; therefore, we can do whatever we want with our bodies.