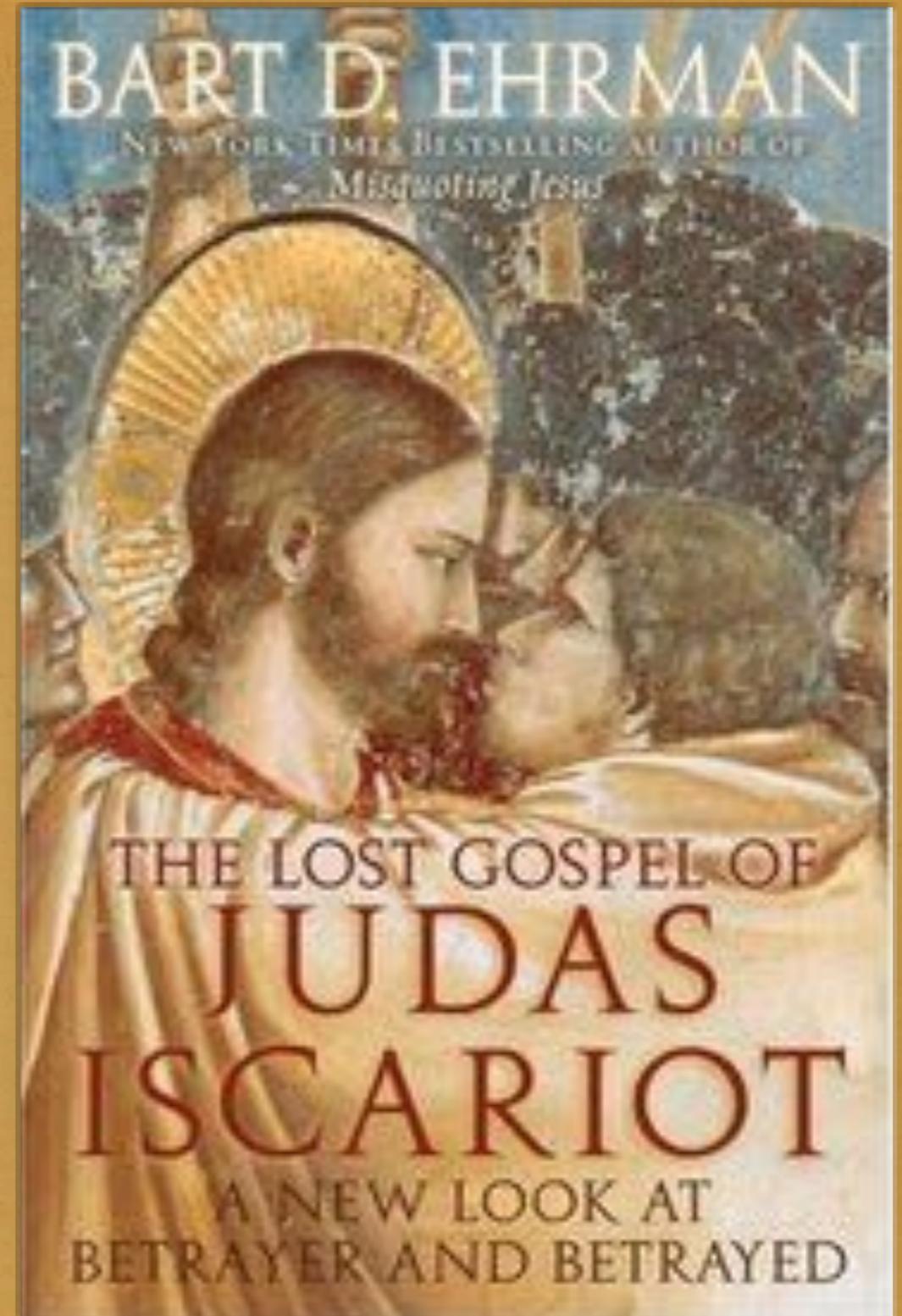


# GNOSTICISM

## ANCIENT AND MODERN



## **FROM MARK 7:14- 23 ESV**

**AND HE CALLED THE PEOPLE TO HIM AGAIN AND SAID TO THEM, “HEAR ME, ALL OF YOU, AND UNDERSTAND: <sup>15</sup> THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE A PERSON THAT BY GOING INTO HIM CAN DEFILE HIM, BUT THE THINGS THAT COME OUT OF A PERSON ARE WHAT DEFILE HIM.” <sup>17</sup> AND WHEN HE HAD ENTERED THE HOUSE AND LEFT THE PEOPLE, HIS DISCIPLES ASKED HIM ABOUT THE PARABLE. <sup>18</sup> AND HE SAID TO THEM, “THEN ARE YOU ALSO WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING? DO YOU NOT SEE THAT WHATEVER GOES INTO A PERSON FROM OUTSIDE CANNOT DEFILE HIM, <sup>19</sup> SINCE IT ENTERS NOT HIS HEART BUT HIS STOMACH, AND IS EXPELLED?” (THUS HE DECLARED ALL FOODS CLEAN.) <sup>20</sup> AND HE SAID, “WHAT COMES OUT OF A PERSON IS WHAT DEFILES HIM. <sup>21</sup> FOR FROM WITHIN, OUT OF THE HEART OF MAN, COME EVIL THOUGHTS, SEXUAL IMMORALITY, THEFT, MURDER, ADULTERY, <sup>22</sup> COVETING, WICKEDNESS, DECEIT, SENSUALITY, ENVY, SLANDER, PRIDE, FOOLISHNESS. <sup>23</sup> ALL THESE EVIL THINGS COME FROM WITHIN, AND THEY DEFILE A PERSON.”**

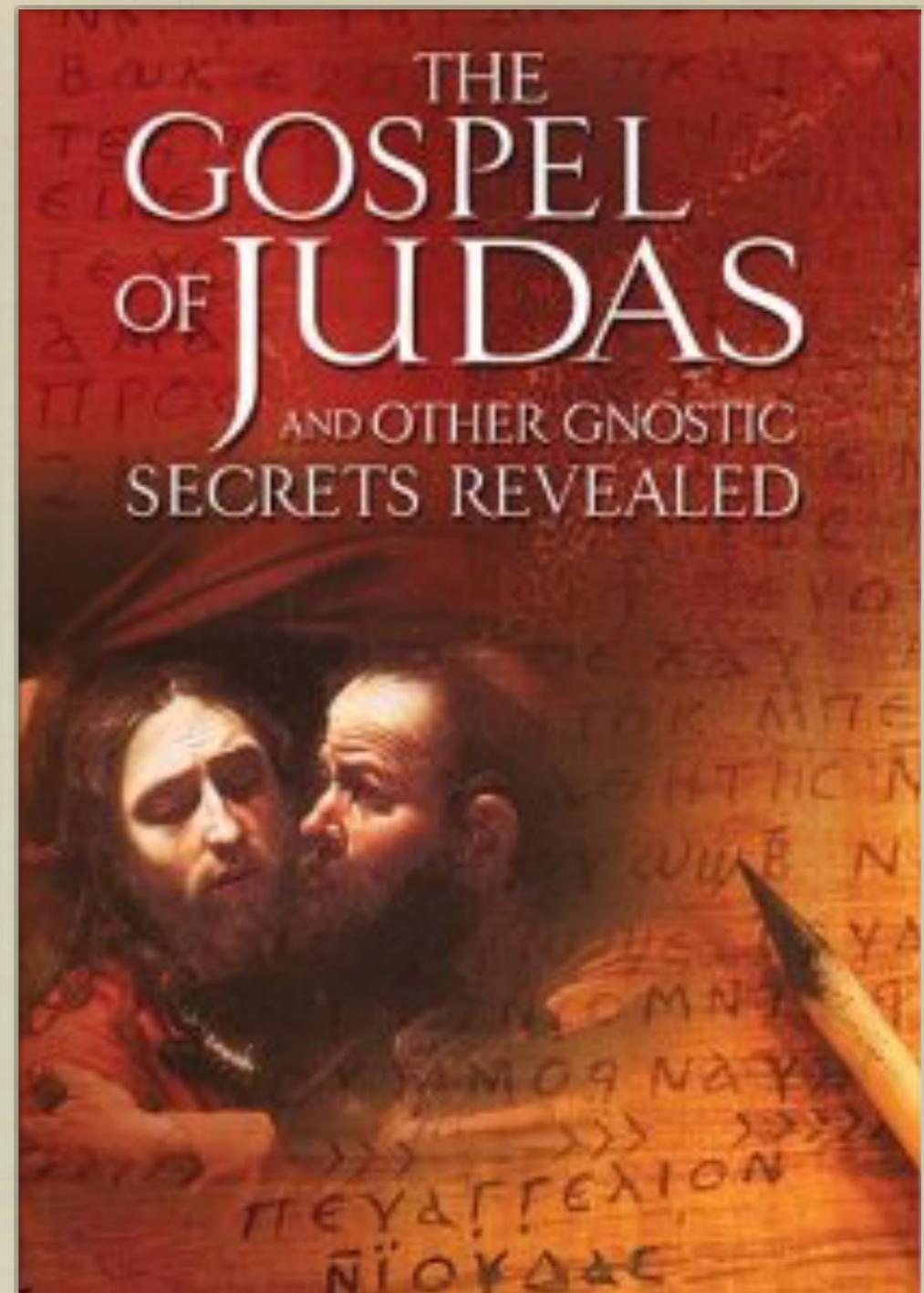
★ **WHAT IS GNOSTICISM?**

- GREEK WORD GNOSIS, ΓΝΩΣΙΣ, TRANSLATED KNOWLEDGE
- INTRODUCED IN 1669; THE TERM IS ARGUED OVER, DOES IT HAVE MEANING
- ROOTS, PRE-CHRISTIAN, JEWISH, PAGAN OR CHRISTIAN?

★ **TERM IS FOR A COMPLEX WIDELY DIVERSE NUMBER OF GROUPS**

★ **TWO IDEAS, CONCEPTS, THEMES, LINK GNOSTIC GROUPS;**

- DUALITY OF THE COSMOS; EVIL MATTER AND GOOD SPIRIT
- GNOSIS, TYPICALLY SECRET, REQUIRED TO ESCAPE MATTER



# **GNOSTICISM**

## **\* GNOSTIC TEACHERS**

### **MARCION OF SINOPE C. 85 – 160 AD**

- WEALTHY SHIP BUILDING FAMILY**
- CAME TO ROME AND GAVE SIZABLE DONATION**
- TAUGHT TWO GODS, GOD OF THE HEBREWS AND GOD OF JESUS**
- DEITY DESCRIBED IN THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES AS INFERIOR OR SUBJUGATED TO THE GOD PROCLAIMED IN THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL**
- FIRST RECORD OF LIST OF AUTHORITATIVE BOOKS, A CANON**
- LIKELY PROMPTED THE CHURCH TO DEVELOP A CANON OF SCRIPTURES.**

# **GNOSTICISM**

## **\* GNOSTIC TEACHERS**

### **VALENTINUS c. 100 – 155 AD**

- BORN IN PHREBONIS IN UPPER EGYPT AND EDUCATED IN NEARBY ALEXANDRIA.**
- THERE HE BECAME A DISCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER THEUDAS WHO HAD BEEN A DISCIPLE OF SAINT PAUL. HE CLAIMED THAT THEUDAS TAUGHT HIM SECRET WISDOM THAT PAUL HAD TAUGHT PRIVATELY TO HIS INNER CIRCLE.**
- CHRISTIAN TEACHER AT ALEXANDRIA AROUND 120AD.**
- IN 136 AD, HE WENT TO ROME AFTER STOPPING BRIEFLY IN CYPRUS. AT ROME HE QUICKLY ROSE TO PROMINENCE AND WAS WIDELY RESPECTED FOR HIS ELOQUENCE.**
- 143 AD HE WAS A CANDIDATE FOR THE OFFICE OF BISHOP. HE CONTINUED TO TEACH IN ROME FOR AT LEAST TEN MORE YEARS.**

# **GNOSTICISM**

## **✦ GNOSTIC TEACHERS**

### **BASILIDES C. 100 – 139 AD**

- WRITINGS PRIMARILY PRESERVED IN THE ELENCHOS OF HIPPOLYTUS.**
- BASILIDES REJECTED THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES**
- RECONCILE PAULINE CHRISTIANITY, EGYPTIAN GNOSTICISM, AND POPULAR ALEXANDRIAN PLATONIST PHILOSOPHY WITH HIS OWN MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES.**
- HE CLAIMED, BY SOME ACCOUNTS, TO HAVE BEEN VESTED WITH SECRET REVELATIONS FROM PAUL THROUGH HIS "INTERPRETER" NAMED GLAUCIUS; BY OTHERS FROM THE DISCIPLE MATTHIAS; BY OTHERS FROM UNKNOWN AND POSSIBLY FICTITIOUS PROPHETS BARCOPH AND BARCABBAS.**
- HE WROTE 24 COMMENTARIES, CALLED EXEGETICA, ON THE GOSPELS, ONLY FRAGMENTS OF WHICH NOW REMAIN. OTHER WRITINGS HAVE NOT BEEN DISCOVERED TO DATE.**

# GNOSTICISM

## \* **ORTHODOX RESPONSE**

**IRENÆUS ΕΙΡΗΝΑΪΟΣ (EYE-REN-EE-S) c. 125 - c. 202 AD**

— **BISHOP OF LYONS, FRANCE.**

— **HE WAS AN EARLY CHURCH FATHER AND APOLOGIST**

— **WROTE ADVERSUS HAERESES OR AGAINST HERESIES (c. 180) IS A DETAILED ATTACK ON GNOSTICISM, ESPECIALLY ON THE SYSTEM OF THE GNOSTIC VALENTINUS.**

— **THREE FOLD ARGUMENT**

◦ **APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION; THE EPISCOPATE**

◦ **AGAINST THE GNOSTICS, WHO SAID THAT THEY POSSESSED A SECRET ORAL TRADITION FROM JESUS HIMSELF, THE BISHOPS IN DIFFERENT CITIES ARE KNOWN GOING BACK TO THE APOSTLES PROVIDED THE ONLY SAFE GUIDE TO THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.**

◦ **SCRIPTURE**

◦ **RULE OR SYSTEM OF FAITH; CREEDS A SUMMATION OF WHAT WE BELIEVE**

◦ **IRENÆUS IS THE EARLIEST WITNESS TO RECOGNITION OF THE CANONICITY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.**

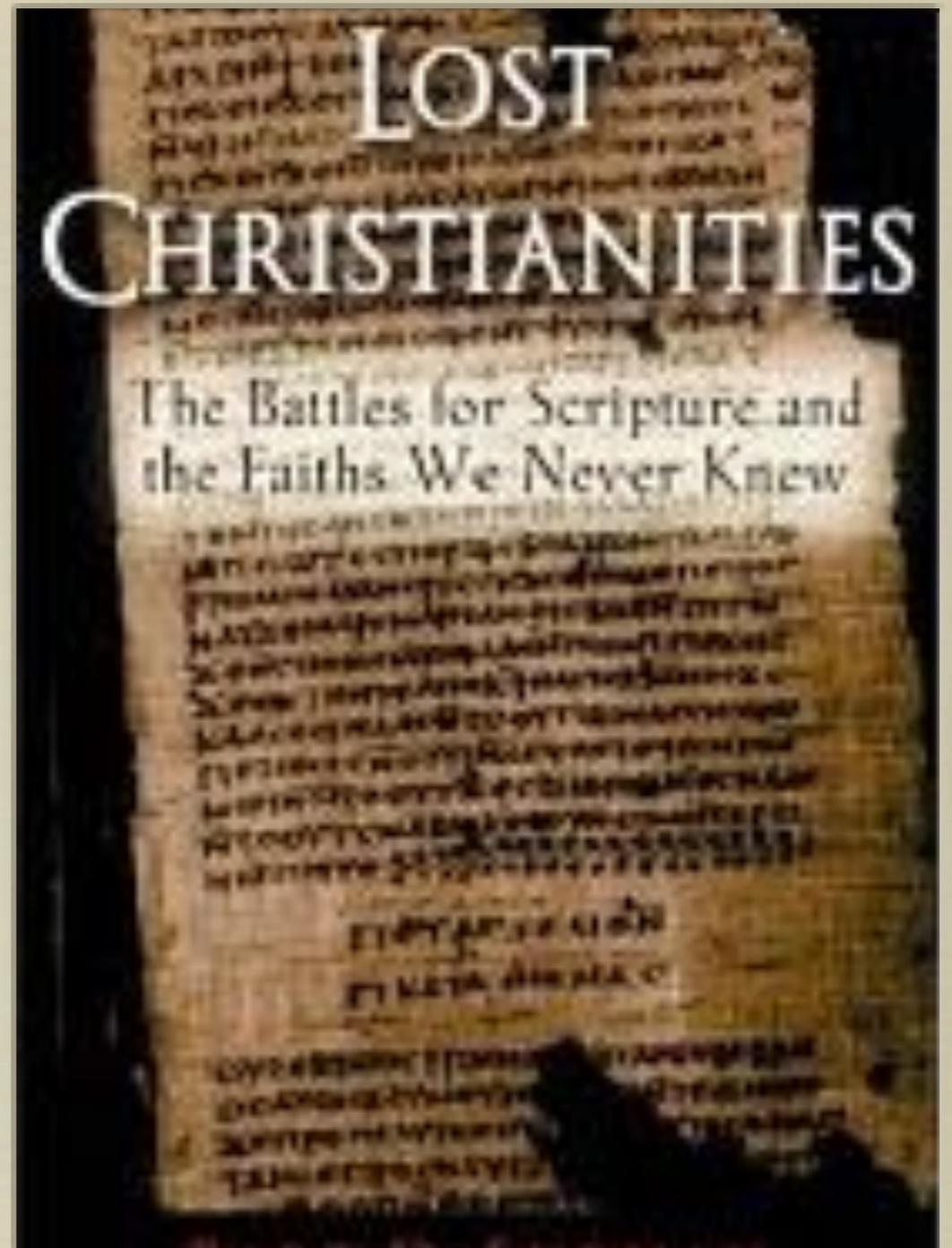
# GNOSTICISM

## ✦ IRENAEUS; CONTINUED

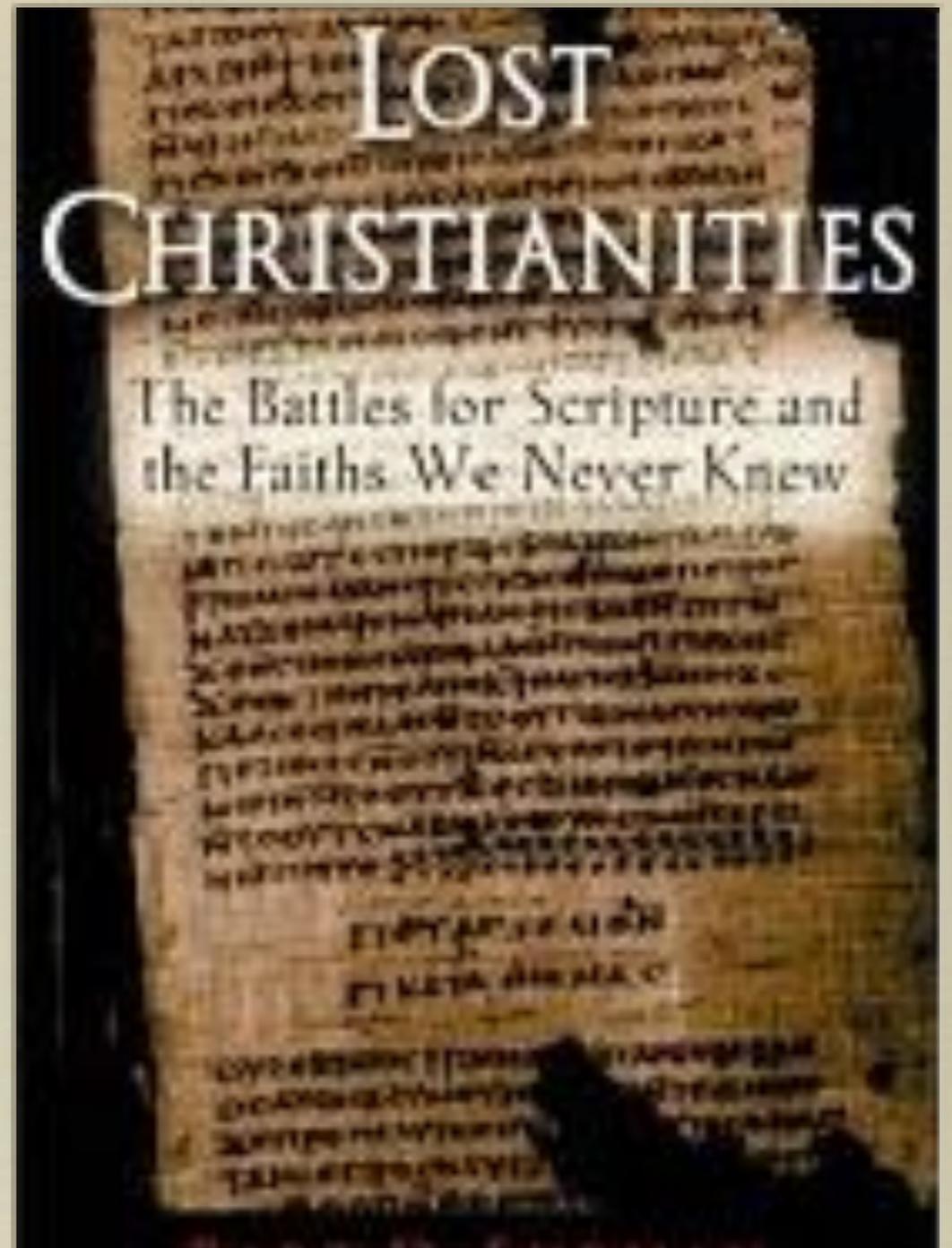
- ✦ HE THEREFORE SAW THE GNOSTICS AS FALSE TEACHERS WHO HAD CLEVERLY AND ARTFULLY CLOTHED AN UNORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM IN A DECEITFUL, SEDUCTIVE COSTUME. "ERROR," HE NOTED, "INDEED, IS NEVER SET FORTH IN ITS NAKED DEFORMITY, LEST, BEING THUS EXPOSED, IT SHOULD AT ONCE BE DETECTED. BUT IT IS CRAFTILY DECKED OUT IN AN ATTRACTIVE DRESS, SO AS, BY ITS OUTWARD FORM, TO MAKE IT APPEAR TO THE INEXPERIENCED ... MORE TRUE THAN THE TRUTH ITSELF."

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH WAS A CHAOS OF CONTENDING BELIEFS. SOME GROUPS OF CHRISTIANS CLAIMED THAT THERE WAS NOT ONE GOD BUT TWO OR TWELVE OR THIRTY. SOME BELIEVED THAT THE WORLD HAD NOT BEEN CREATED BY GOD BUT BY A LESSER, IGNORANT DEITY. CERTAIN SECTS MAINTAINED THAT JESUS WAS HUMAN BUT NOT DIVINE, WHILE OTHERS SAID HE WAS DIVINE BUT NOT HUMAN.

IN *LOST CHRISTIANITIES*, BART D. EHRMAN OFFERS A FASCINATING LOOK AT THESE EARLY FORMS OF CHRISTIANITY AND SHOWS HOW THEY CAME TO BE SUPPRESSED, REFORMED, OR FORGOTTEN. ALL OF THESE GROUPS INSISTED THAT THEY UPHELD THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES, AND THEY ALL POSSESSED WRITINGS THAT BORE OUT THEIR CLAIMS, BOOKS REPUTEDLY PRODUCED BY JESUS'S OWN FOLLOWERS. MODERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK HAS RECOVERED A NUMBER OF KEY TEXTS, AND AS EHRMAN SHOWS, THESE SPECTACULAR DISCOVERIES REVEAL RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY THAT SAYS MUCH ABOUT THE WAYS IN WHICH HISTORY GETS WRITTEN BY THE WINNERS.



- EHRMAN'S DISCUSSION RANGES FROM CONSIDERATIONS OF VARIOUS "LOST SCRIPTURES"--INCLUDING FORGED GOSPELS SUPPOSEDLY WRITTEN BY SIMON PETER, JESUS'S CLOSEST DISCIPLE, AND JUDAS THOMAS, JESUS'S ALLEGED TWIN BROTHER--TO THE DISPARATE BELIEFS OF SUCH GROUPS AS THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN EBIONITES, THE ANTI-JEWISH MARCIONITES, AND VARIOUS "GNOSTIC" SECTS. EHRMAN EXAMINES IN DEPTH THE BATTLES THAT RAGED BETWEEN "PROTO-ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS"-- THOSE WHO EVENTUALLY COMPILED THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND STANDARDIZED CHRISTIAN BELIEF--AND THE GROUPS THEY DENOUNCED AS HERETICS AND ULTIMATELY OVERCAME. SCRUPULOUSLY RESEARCHED AND LUCIDLY WRITTEN, LOST CHRISTIANITIES IS AN EYE-OPENING ACCOUNT OF POLITICS, POWER, AND THE CLASH OF IDEAS AMONG CHRISTIANS IN THE DECADES BEFORE ONE GROUP CAME TO SEE ITS VIEWS PREVAIL.



# GNOSTICISM

## ✦ **IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY**

— **WHEN THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS CONTROVERSY BROKE, NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLAR DARRELL BOCK WROTE IN AN ARTICLE FOR CHRISTIANITY TODAY, "IT IS IMPORTANT TO APPRECIATE THAT MANY PEOPLE ASKING QUESTIONS OR EMBRACING THE RECENT MATERIALS HAVE NO BACKGROUND IN CHURCH HISTORY, SO THEY HAVE NO WAY OF ASSESSING WHAT IS BEING SAID. THEIR QUESTIONS ARE QUITE SINCERE IN LIGHT OF THE REPEATED MESSAGE THEY ARE HEARING THAT THE NEW MATERIALS SHOULD CHANGE OUR VIEW OF HISTORY."**