



The University of Pennsylvania

THE BARBARIAN DOCTRINE: GNOSTICISM REFRAMED

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ABSTRACT

My senior research paper examines the fascinating world of Gnosticism: who the Gnostics were, what they believed, and how they fit into a complex Mediterranean world of varied peoples and faiths. I argue that Gnosticism was a means by which colonized peoples in the Near East could create a coherent identity in the face of Greco-Roman imperialistic threat. Gnosticism, by incorporating and restructuring elements of Near Eastern goddess worship, emerged as a social and spiritual repudiation of a globalized Mediterranean world.

