

Pagan Religions

Backgrounds to the New Testament

Mount Carmel arises from the Jezreel Valley where Elijah met the pagan religions of his day

Spread to Gentiles

29
150

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria** and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)



Paul's First & Second Missionary Journeys

30
150



Pagan Religions

Types of Gentile Belief Systems



Traditional Pagan Religion

Schools of Philosophy

The Emperor Cult

Mystery Religions

Astrology & Superstition

Gnosticism

Pagan Religions

Types of Gentile Belief Systems

Traditional Pagan Religion



Greek Mythology



Roman Mythology



Importing gods from Greece

Greek god

Hermes



Roman god

Mercury



Importing gods from Greece

Greek god

Roman god

Hermes



Mercury

Zeus



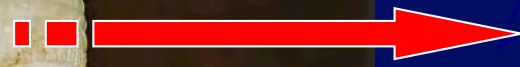
Jupiter

Ares

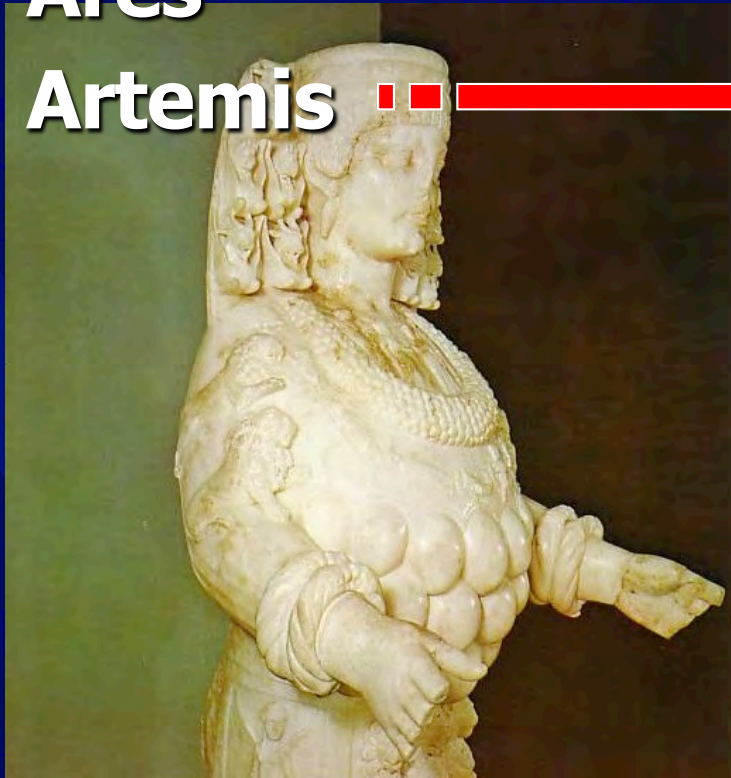


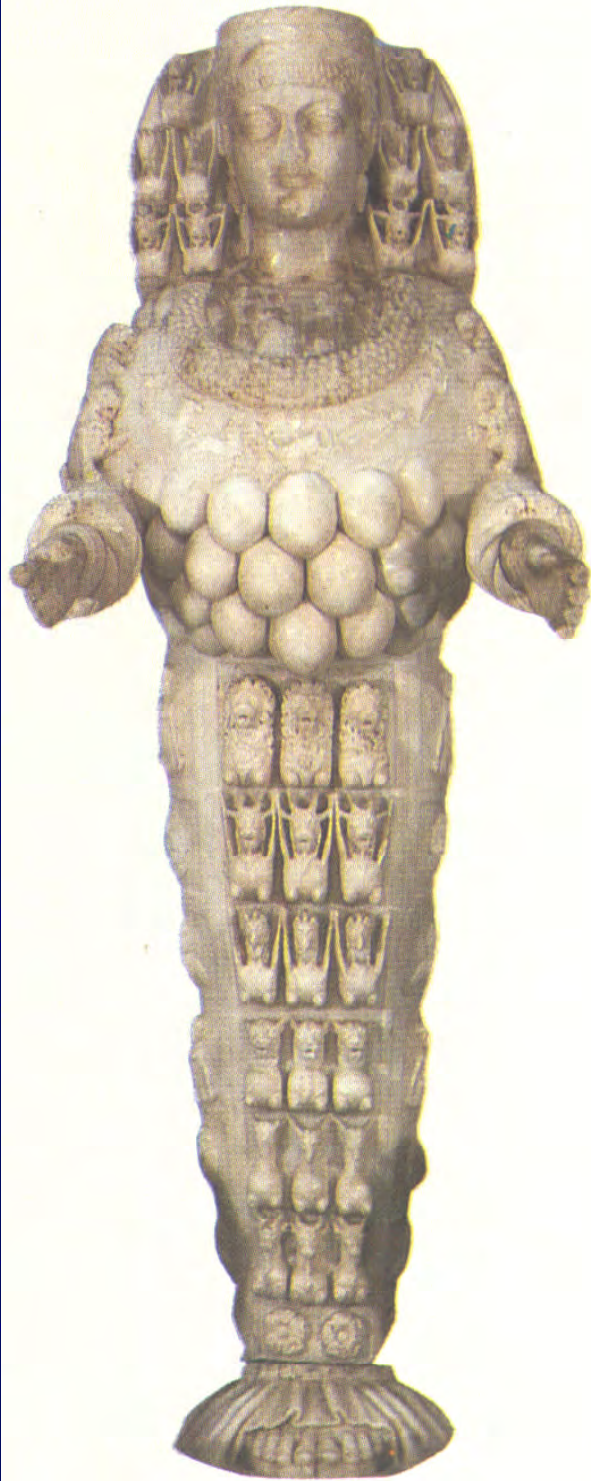
Mars

Artemis



Diana





Diana Worship

Artemis

Goddess of Fertility

**Originally huntress and lover
of nature in classical times**

"Diana" to the Romans

Many breasts (fertility)

Non-promiscuous

Mother goddess of Asia

Centered in Ephesus

Acts 19:23-41



Perpetua's Martyrdom (AD 203)

TRADITIONAL GODS



Jupiter: chief of all the gods, and the sky god

Juno: chief goddess, goddess of women and of childbirth

Minerva: goddess of wisdom and handicrafts

Mars: god of war

Neptune: god of the sea and all water

Apollo: god of light and healing

Diana: goddess of the moon and also of hunting

Venus: goddess of love and beauty

Saturn: god of growth and farming

Pluto: god of the dead

Mercury: messenger of the gods, and god of merchants



THE BEST GODS?

The Romans basically copied the Greeks to determine the types of gods to worship. They simply changed their names!

The Roman Calendar

Each Latin month led to the English name for that month



Gods of the household:

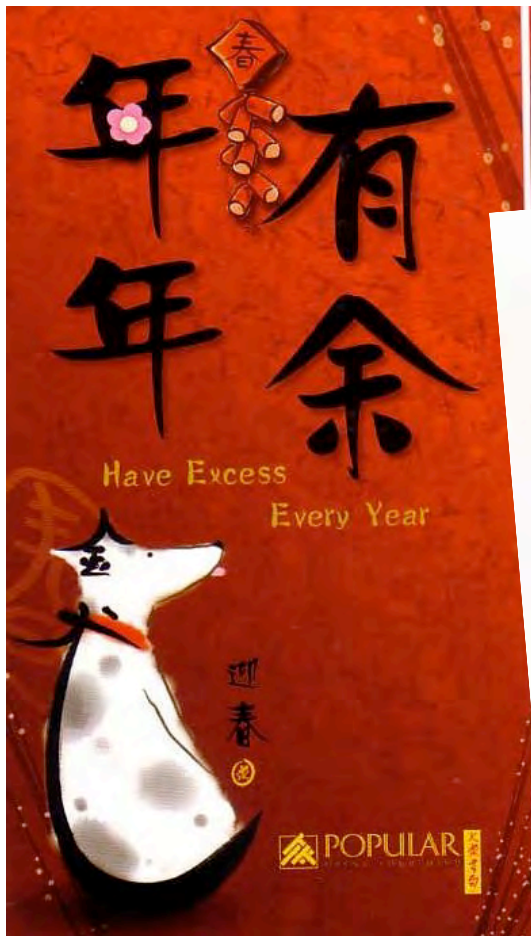
- Vesta (the hearth)
- The Penates (kitchen)
- The Lares (departed ancestors)

Month	Names after...
<i>Januarius</i>	Janus, god of the doorway, looks forward to the new and backwards to the old
<i>Februarius</i>	<i>Februare</i> meaning "to cleanse"
<i>Martius</i>	Mars, god of war
<i>Aprilis</i>	<i>Aperier</i> meaning "to open"; the month when flowers open
<i>Maius</i>	Maia, goddess of summer
<i>Junius</i>	Juno, queen of the gods
<i>Julius</i>	Julius Caesar's month of birth
<i>Augustus</i>	Augustus, Rome's first emperor
<i>September</i>	<i>Septem</i> , the 7 th month in the old Roman calendar
<i>October</i>	<i>Octo</i> , the 8 th month in the old Roman calendar
<i>November</i>	<i>Novem</i> , the 9 th month in the old Roman calendar
<i>December</i>	<i>Decem</i> , the 10 th month in the old Roman calendar

Roman Months

Named after...

1. Gods
2. Words
3. Emperors
4. Old Calendar



Year of the Dog



Receiving the God of Wealth

丙戌年的正财神星在正西270度，刚巧与五黄星相遇，正应了“富贵险中求”的玄机。今年的正财神喜金属用品，饰物。如，金狗，金鸡，金龟，金龙，金筷子等。数量以一，四，七件为吉。

The righteous God of Wealth of the Dog Year is at West, 270 degrees and it coincidentally meets with the Five Yellow Stars and thus realises the prophecy of "Seek Wealth in Danger". This year, the righteous God of Wealth likes items and accessories made of gold, such as Golden Dog, Golden Chicken, Golden Tortoise, Golden Dragon and Golden Chopsticks. The lucky numbers are 1, 4 and 7.



Receiving the Love Star

桃花代表人缘或异性缘，为您打通人脉，处处逢缘。丙戌年的正桃花星在正东90度卯方，正桃花星喜欢花草树木，可以多栽种花草，或放置在水位，木龟，木刻品，以引动桃花。

Love Star represents human affinity and luck with the opposite sex. It clears your circulation and brings many relationships. This year, the righteous Love Star likes trees and flowers and you can plant many of these, or put Wooden Tortoises, Wooden sculptures in the Water position to invoke the Love Star.

The quest of pagan man

Then

1. Health
2. Prosperity
3. Protection
4. Victory in battle

Now

1. Long life
2. Money
3. Insurance
4. Squash the competition!

Some things never change

The Failure of Pagan Deities

1. Failed to fulfill their claims
2. Gods too human in morality
3. Impersonal local religion
4. Detachment through migration

"The coastline of Paphos on Cyprus where, according to Greek legend, Aphrodite, the goddess of love was 'born'—having risen from the foam of the sea nearby"

E. Pax, In the Footsteps of St. Paul, 65

Pagan Religions

Types of Gentile Belief Systems

Traditional Pagan Religion Schools of Philosophy



Contrasting the Two...

Traditional Pagan Religion
(vertical)

polytheistic

corporate and
local

**strategies of
appeasement
(theological)**

akin to a religion
(like Buddhism)

Philosophical Schools
(horizontal)

**monotheistic
(though inconsistent)**

individualistic and
universalistic

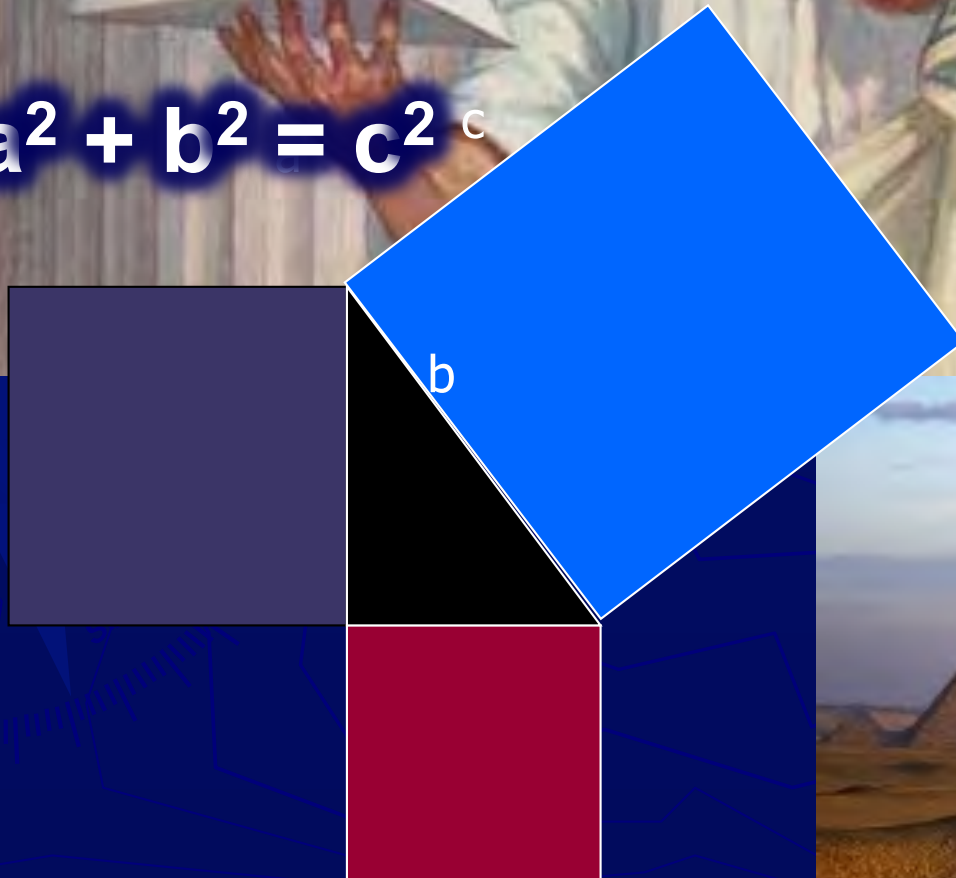
**philosophies of
conduct
(behavioral)**

akin to a philosophy
(like Confucianism)

Pythagoras

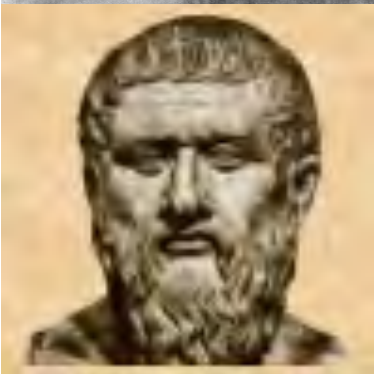
1. Pythagorean Theorem
2. Basic math to design many structures

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$



Plato

1. 429-380 BC
2. Socratic method
3. Reality is in mental ideas



Cynics: Antisthenes

151



"Antisthenes of Athens (c. 445-c. 360 BC) is regarded as the **founder of Cynicism**. He was a student of Gorgias, but later he became a pupil and follower of Socrates. He usually expressed his disdain for conventional values and pleasure. For Antisthenes, **desire leads to pleasure and pleasure to the misery** of insufficient and temporal happiness. For Antisthenes **only virtue is sufficient for real happiness**, that is well-being."

www.philosophy.gr/hellinistic/cynics.htm

Cynics: Diogenes of Sinope

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Cynics: Diogenes of Sinope

151



Cynics: Diogenes of Sinope

151



Alexander und Diogenes.

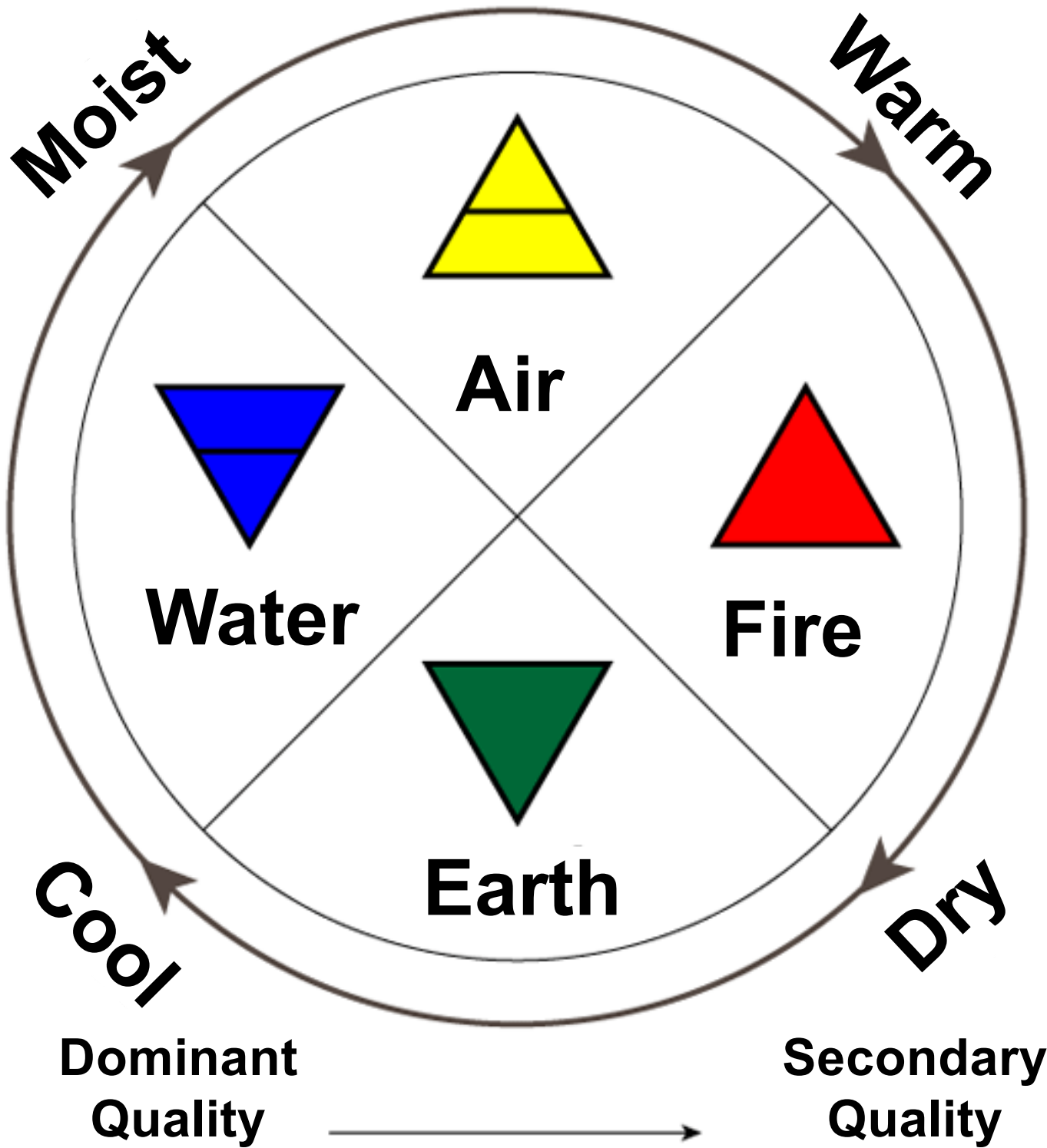
Aristotelianism

Aristotle (384-322 BC)

Reality is the material world (what you can see and touch)

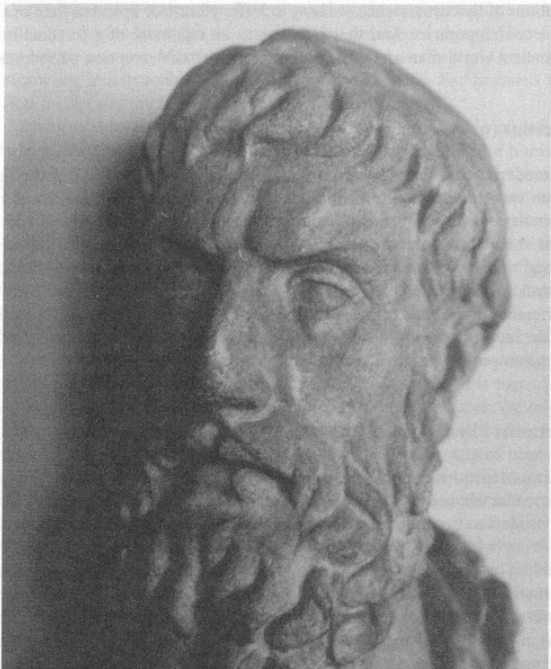


Aristotle's 4 Elements



Reality = Material World

Epicureans and Stoics at the Parthenon



EPICURUS

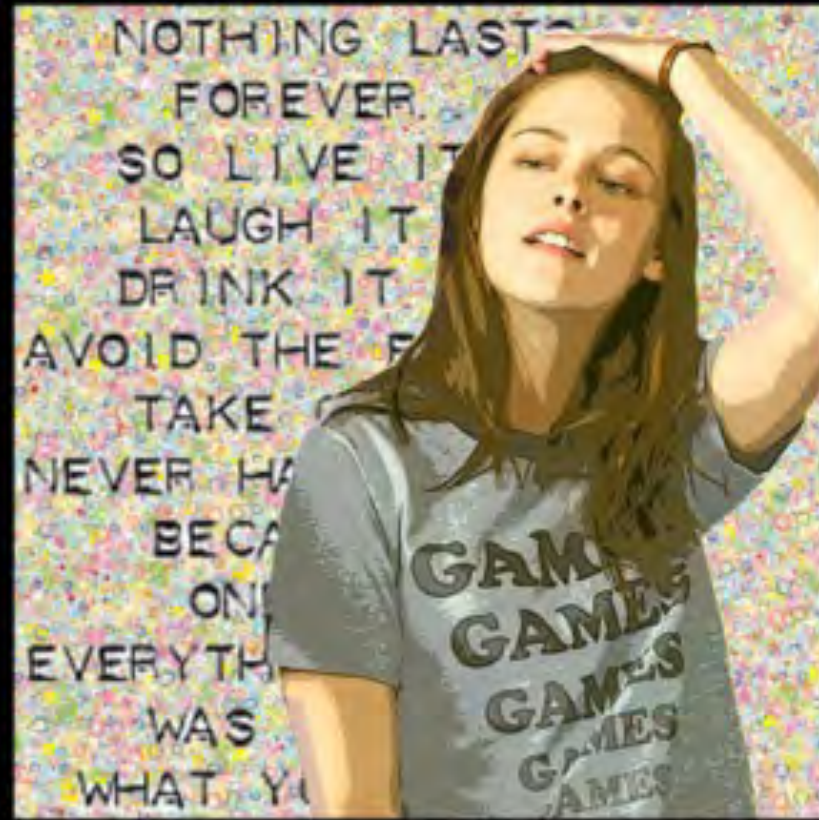
Epicurus had more loyal followers than any other Hellenistic philosopher and created close-knit communities with similarities to Christian communities.

(Barrocco Museum, Rome)

The Parthenon: Place of Debate



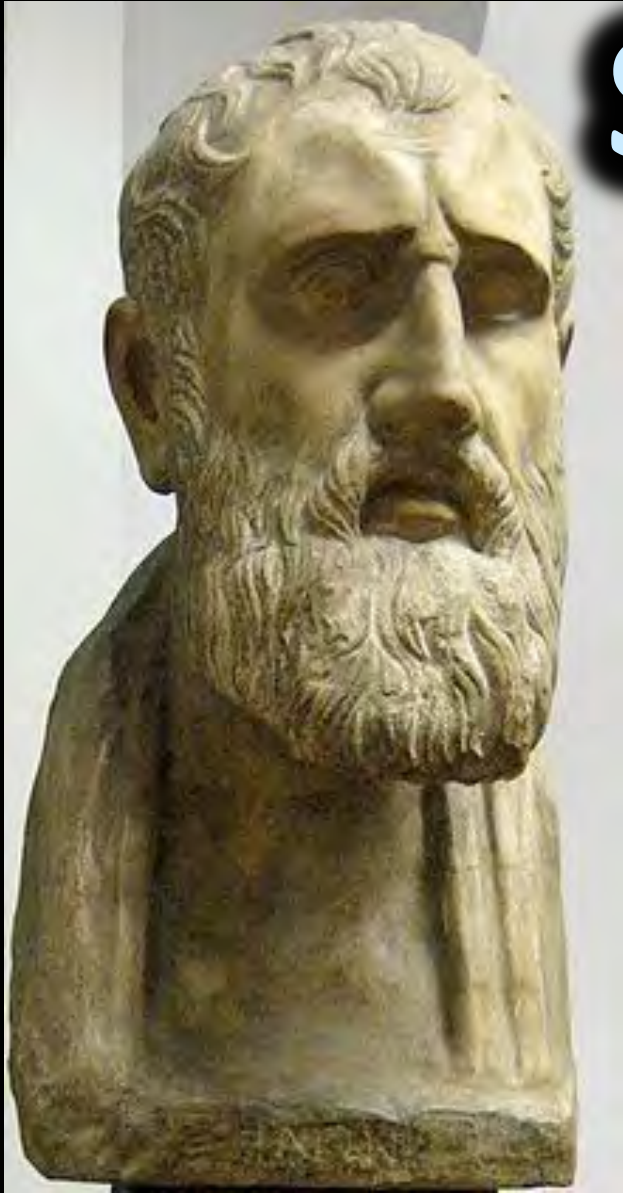
Epicureanism



**Eat,
Drink
& Be
Merry**



Stoicism

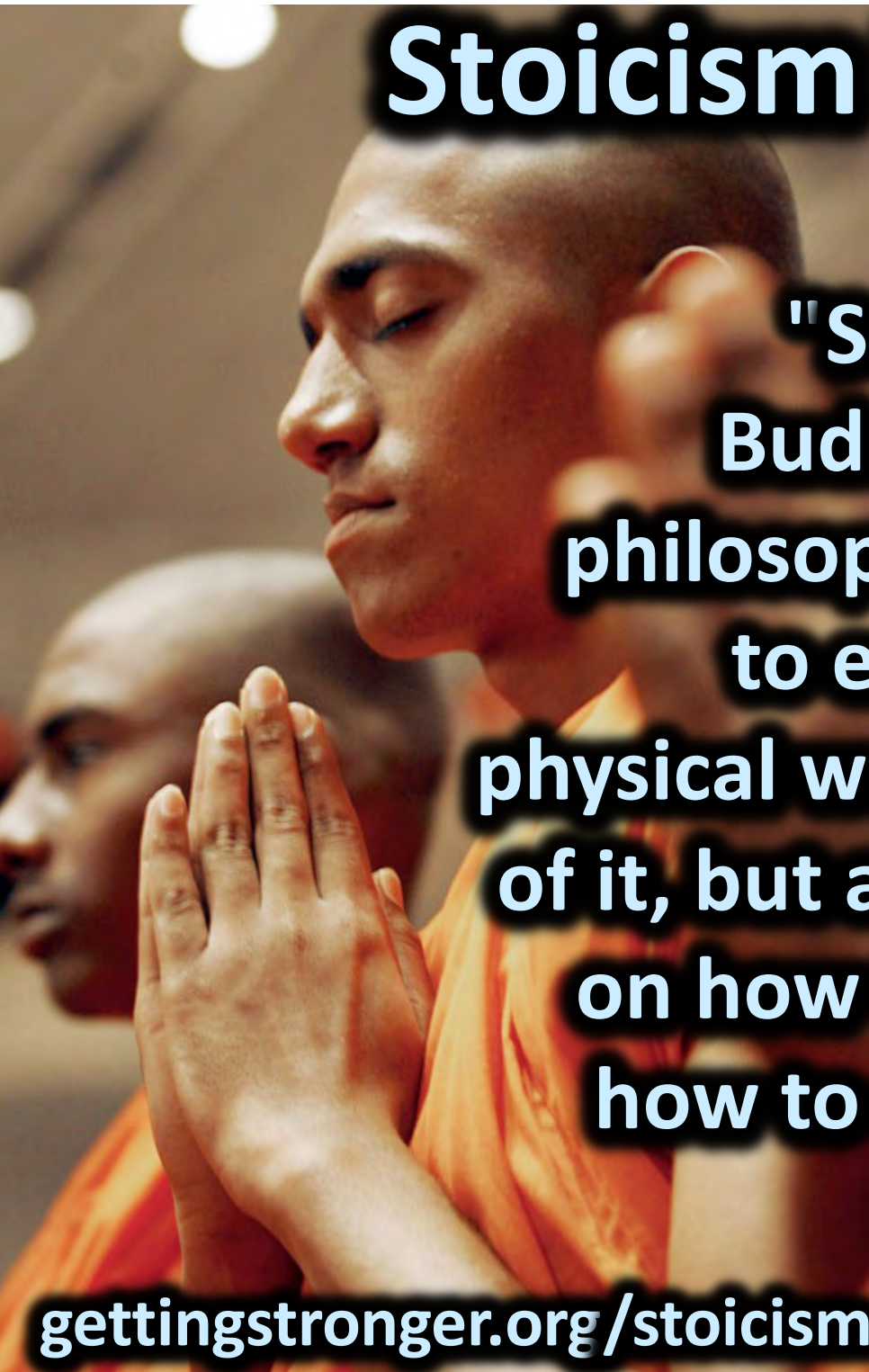


**Zeno of Citium
(336-264 BC)**

- **Rejected Epicureanism**
- **"Reality is natural reason"**
- **Cause & effect**
- **Led to materialism**

Stoicism Today

151

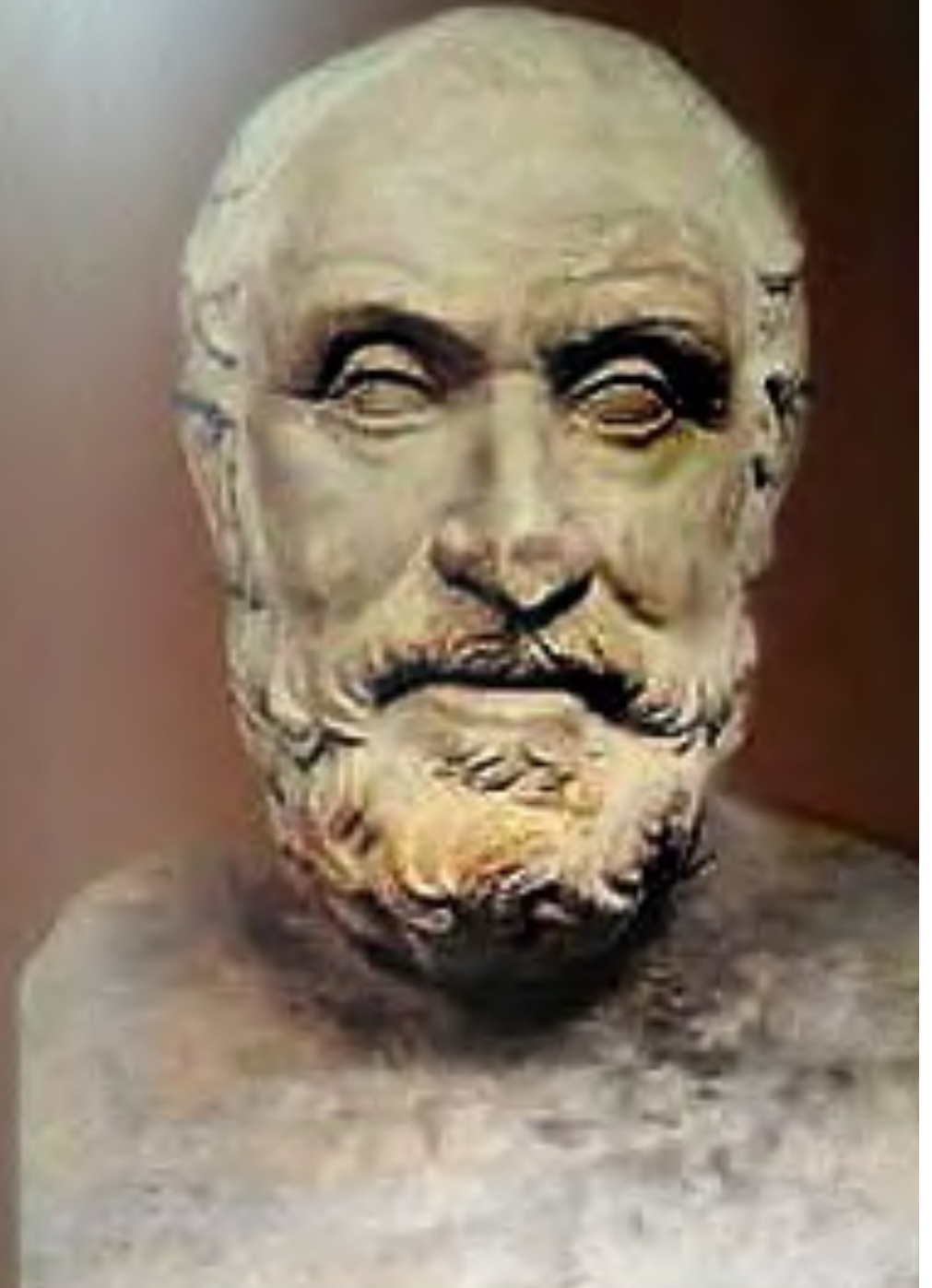


"Stoicism in the West, like Buddhism in the East, was a philosophy that sought not only to explain the nature of the physical world and our knowledge of it, but also to provide guidance on how to live the best life, and how to confront the challenges we all face in living."

gettingstronger.org/stoicism

Skepticism: Pyrrro of Elis

- Knowledge is unattainable
- Just "go with the flow"



Eclectics

"I'm a Buddhist.
I'm a Muslim.
I'm a Christian.
I'm whatever you
want me to be.
It all comes down to
the same thing."

Actor Jim Carrey
60 Minutes, 21 Nov 04



Eclectics Today = Freethinkers

**Are you a
freethinker?**

**Yes, but not
regularly practicing.**



The Challenge of Greek Philosophy Against Christianity

Platoism

Pythagoreanism

Cynicism

Eclectics

Aristotelianism

Skepticism

Epicurianism

Stoicism



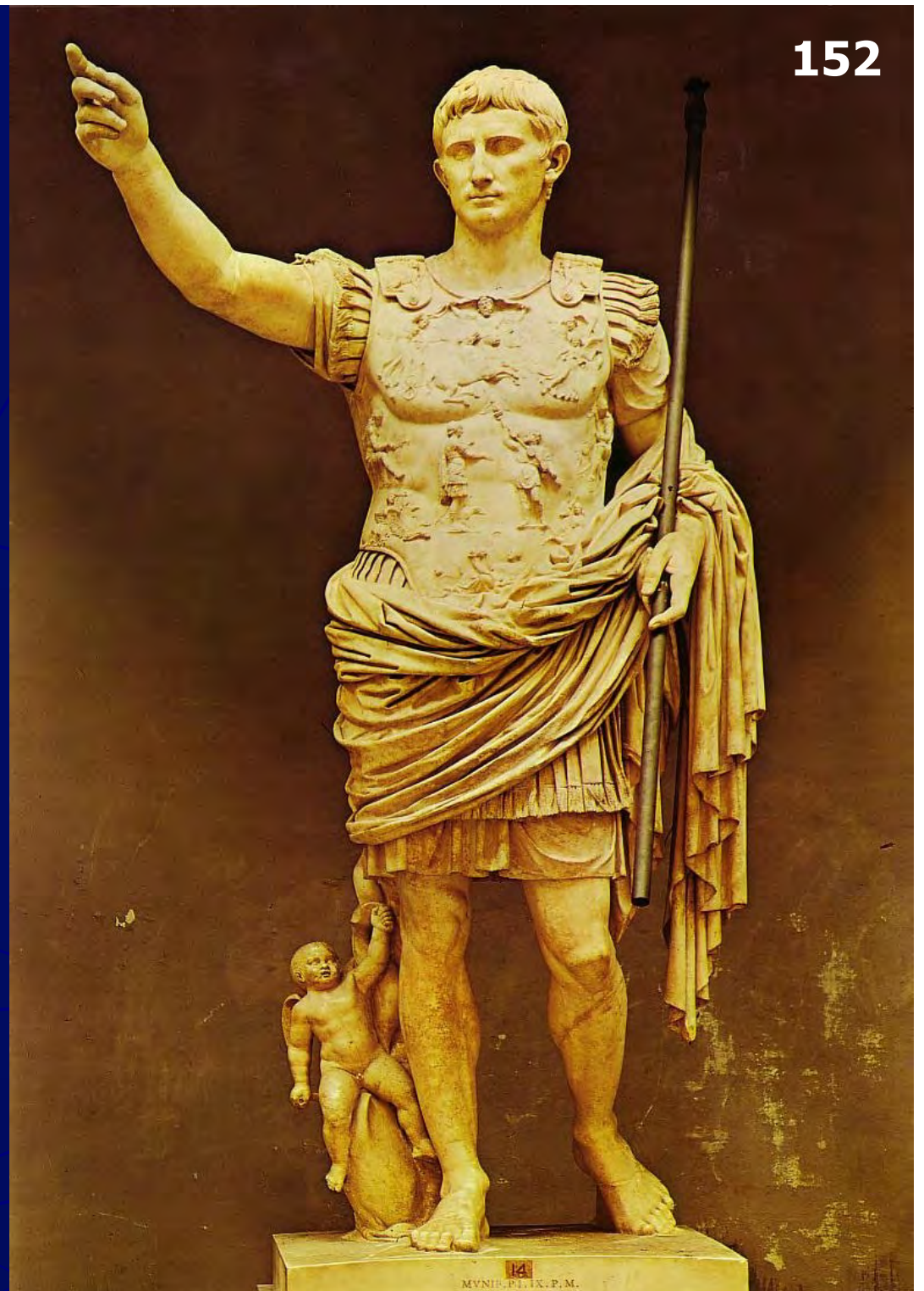
Pagan Religions

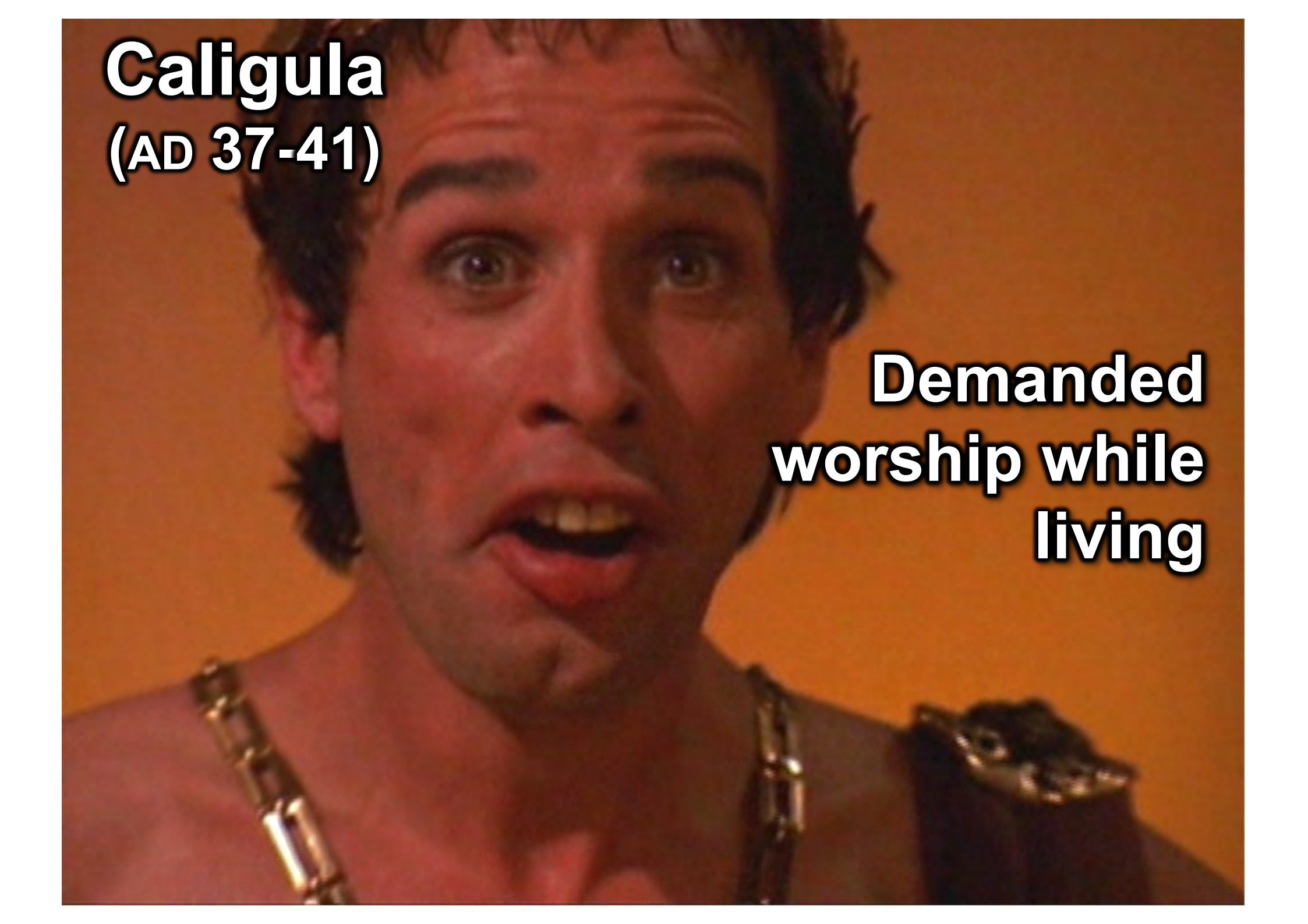
Types of Gentile Belief Systems

Traditional Pagan Religion
Schools of Philosophy
The Emperor Cult



**Augustus
(30 BC-AD 14)
was worshipped after
his death**



A close-up photograph of a man with a shocked expression, wide eyes, and an open mouth. He is wearing a gold chain necklace. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Caligula
(AD 37-41)

**Demanded
worship while
living**

Nero (AD 54-68)

Demanded worship while emperor



A black and white photograph of a marble bust of the Roman Emperor Domitian. The bust shows a young man with curly hair, looking slightly to the right. The background is a dark, textured wall.

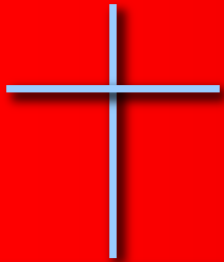
Domitian (AD 81-96)

This bust of Domitian was found in his huge temple at Ephesus—consistent with his claim to divine honors

Book of Revelation (AD 95)

When Did John Write Revelation?

Who was the Roman Emperor then?



Christ
Crucified
AD 33

Jerusalem
Destroyed
AD 70

Revelation
Written
AD 95

Tiberius
14-37

Caligula
37-41

Claudius
41-54

Nero
54-68

Vespasian
69-79

Titus
79-81

Domitian
81-96

14-37

Supported by:
Irenaeus
Victorinus of Pettau
Clement of Alexandria
Eusebius

The Emperor Cult Threatened Christians



Ignatius (c. 35 – c. 107), Bishop of Antioch, refused emperor worship and was brought to Rome to be fed to wild beasts. En route he wrote seven letters.

Polycarp's Martyrdom

**“The blood of martyrs is
the seed of the Church”
(Tertullian, AD 160-225)**



Model of Pergamum: Continuing Yet Compromising



Altar of Zeus

**"I know where you live—where
Satan has his throne" (Rev 2:13)**

Pliny the Younger (AD 111-113)

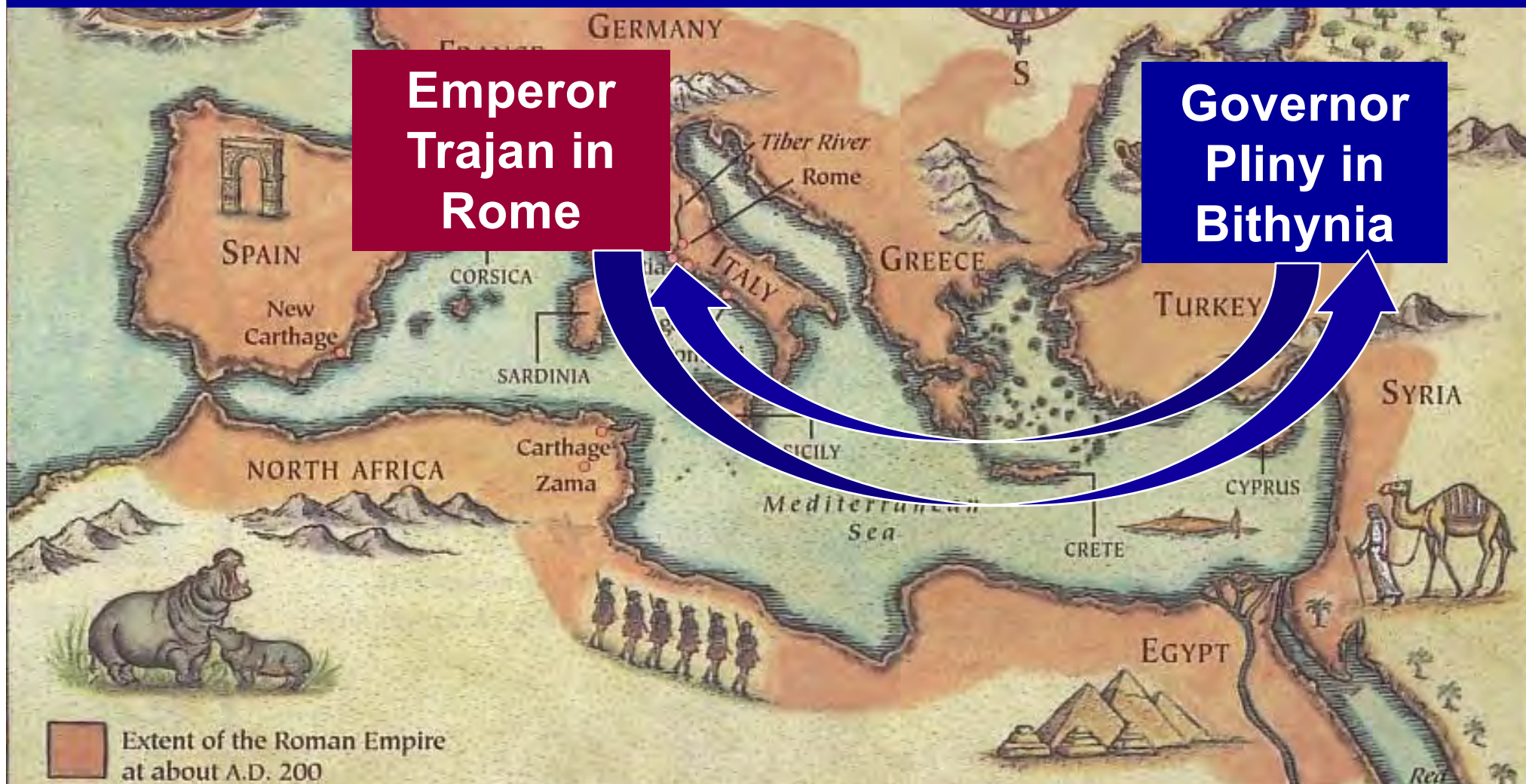
C. PLINIUS CALPURNIUS SUO SALUTEM
 NESCIO ANULLUM VICE VINDICTAE
 EXCEPERO QUAM QUONIAM REPARANDUM
 EST INNAMPTUM DEO QUONIAM NE AMINEM
 AMICIS IN SENECTUTE SINO DOSENESER
 RE DOMINUM EST AMULXREI BELI INIHI
 EST ENIM VILLOUITAECENERE DISTIN
 CTUS INE AMITTEMOTECERTUS SIDERUM
 CURSUS IN XUIX HOMINUM DISTIN
 DELECTAISE NUMPTAEXERTIMNAM
 IUVENES ADHUC CONTUS AQUAEDAM
 ET QUINSTRIBATANONINDECEMISE
 NIB PLACIDAMOMINEXORNAIACON
 UENIAMITQUIBANDUSTIINSELMUTIS
 AMBITIOESTHANE RECOLAMIS PURIN
 NACONSTANTIS SIMYESCUMIQUINETA
 PAREULXNECTARIX SINONECOTIDIE PAM
 ORDINE QUODXAPETUELITOREBETIREU
 XAPTAMNELECTULOCONTINETUR HORA
 SECUNDYNECTARIX SINONECOTIDIE PAM



- He was the governor of Bithynia who wrote letters to the Emperor Trajan for counsel on various matters

MAP OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Helpful Correspondence (AD 111)



Early Church Suffering



Early Church Suffering

Governor Pliny to Emperor Trajan (AD 111):

I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; **those who persisted I ordered executed...**

Pliny, Letters 10.96

Early Church Suffering

Governor Pliny to Emperor Trajan (AD 111):

Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they **invoked the gods** in words dictated by me, **offered prayer with incense** and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover **cursed Christ**—none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do—these I thought should be discharged.

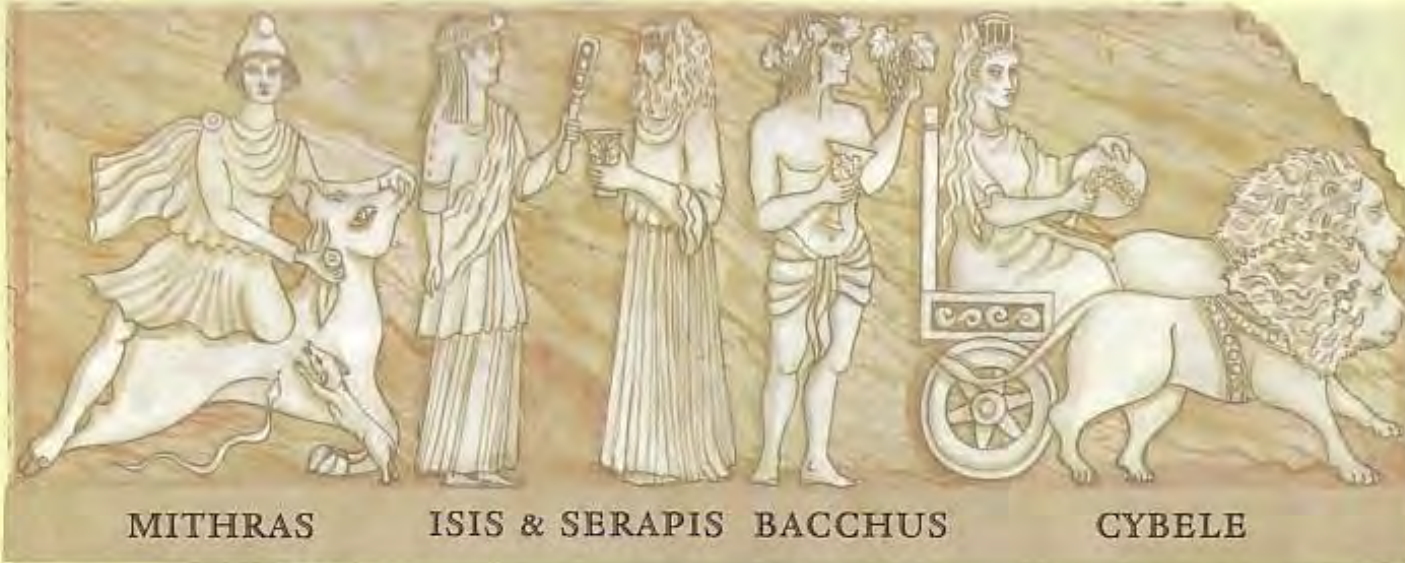
Pliny, Letters 10.96

Pagan Religions

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Mystery Religions





THE NEW CULTS

Mithras: god of darkness and light, good and evil, from Iran
Isis and Serapis: gods of the endless cycle of death and rebirth, from the East
Cybele: the Great Mother, goddess of fertility and life, death and rebirth, from Turkey

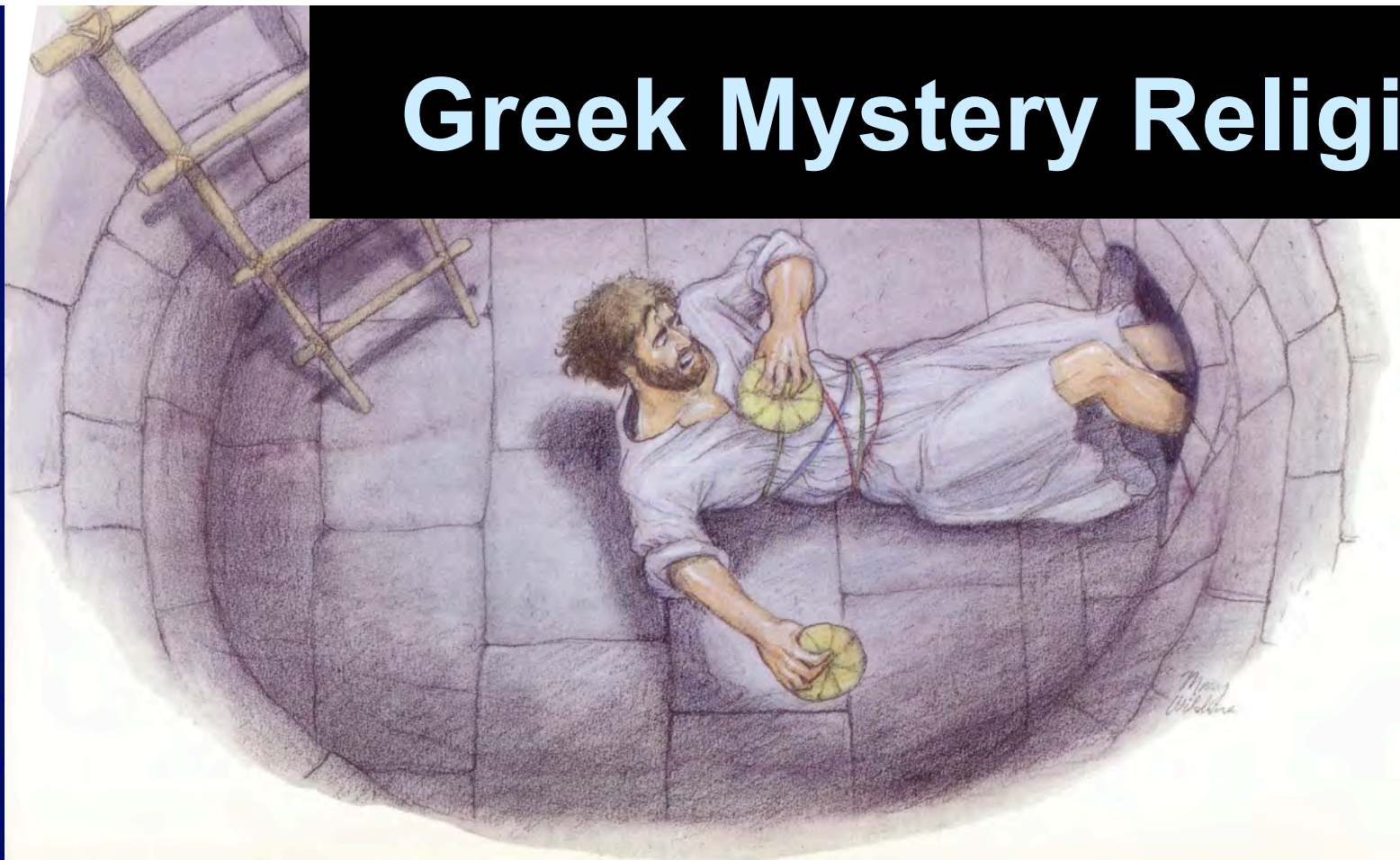


Bacchus: god of wine and all life-giving forces, from Greece

Mystery Religions



Greek Mystery Religion



To reach the fearful oracle of Trophonius (in central Greece), one had to climb down into a stone pit, where he was then drawn through a small opening into a dark passage. Clutching honey-cakes to feed any mythical serpents along the way, the terrified supplicant later emerged, feet first, through the same opening, having triumphantly obtained visions of the future.



The Eleusinian Cult

**Originated in
Eleusis near
Ephesus**

Don't miss the obvious!

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are going camping. They pitch their tent under the stars and go to sleep. Sometime in the middle of the night, Holmes wakes Watson up: "Watson, look up at the stars, and tell me what you deduce."

Watson says, "I see millions of stars and even if a few of those have planets, it's quite likely there are some planets like Earth, and if there are a few planets like Earth out there, there might also be life."

Holmes replied: "Watson, you idiot, somebody stole our tent."

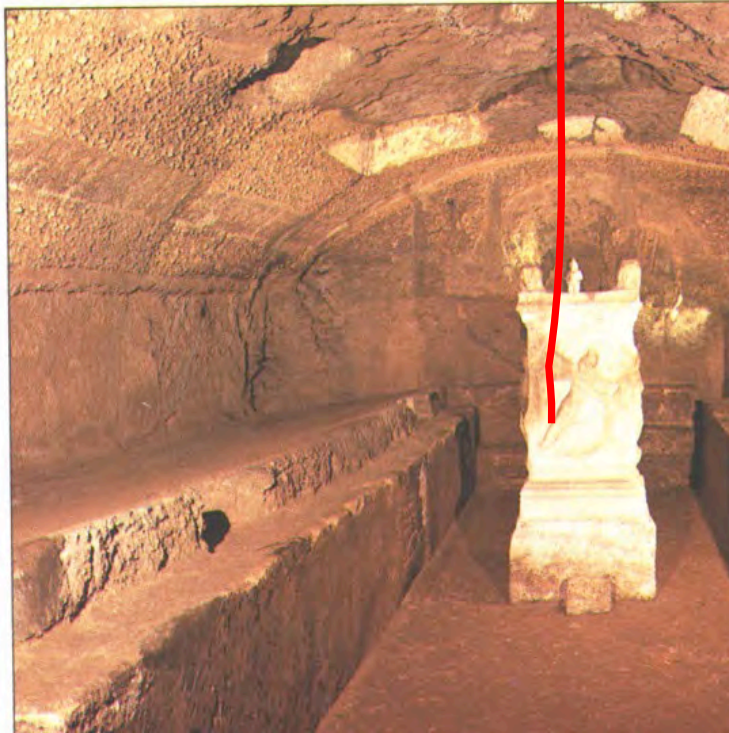
Mithraism

I can only let you in once you've told me the secret password, shown me your secret ring, given me the secret handshake, and...er...found the key.



Mithraism

**Mithras (god of light) over
Ahriman (evil prince of darkness)**



The worshippers dig a deep pit and the High Priest is lowered into it. Above him they put a platform of loose planks. Each plank has tiny holes drilled in it. A huge bull is stood on the platform. They take a sacred hunting spear and drive it into the bull's heart. The hot blood spurts out of the deep wound. It falls through the holes in the planks like rotten rain onto the priest below. His clothes and body are covered in the animal's gore. Afterwards he climbs out of the pit. It is a dreadful sight to see...





Mithraism Slaying of the Bull

- ▶ *At some points Mithraism was similar to Christianity*

The Height of Mithraism (3rd Cent. AD)

MAP

At the cult's peak in the third century AD, Mithraic temples and artifacts could be found from the Black Sea to Scotland and to the borders of the Sahara Desert. Many cult members were Roman soldiers manning garrisons, especially in Italy and along the Rhine and Danube rivers.



Egyptian Mythology



Pagan Snake Charming?

▶ **Albino
Burmese
Python
training**



Isis, an Egyptian goddess



*White-robed
followers of Isis,
Egyptian goddess
of life, walk
behind a
priestess*



Dionysus

- ▶ **Roman Period**
- ▶ **The drinking cup turned down was a sign of drunkenness.**

(Eleusis Museum)



The Cult of Cybil



Bronze Iron Lamp

(Missing goddess Cybele on the back)



Corinth: Crossroads of Immorality



West division
of Roman Empire

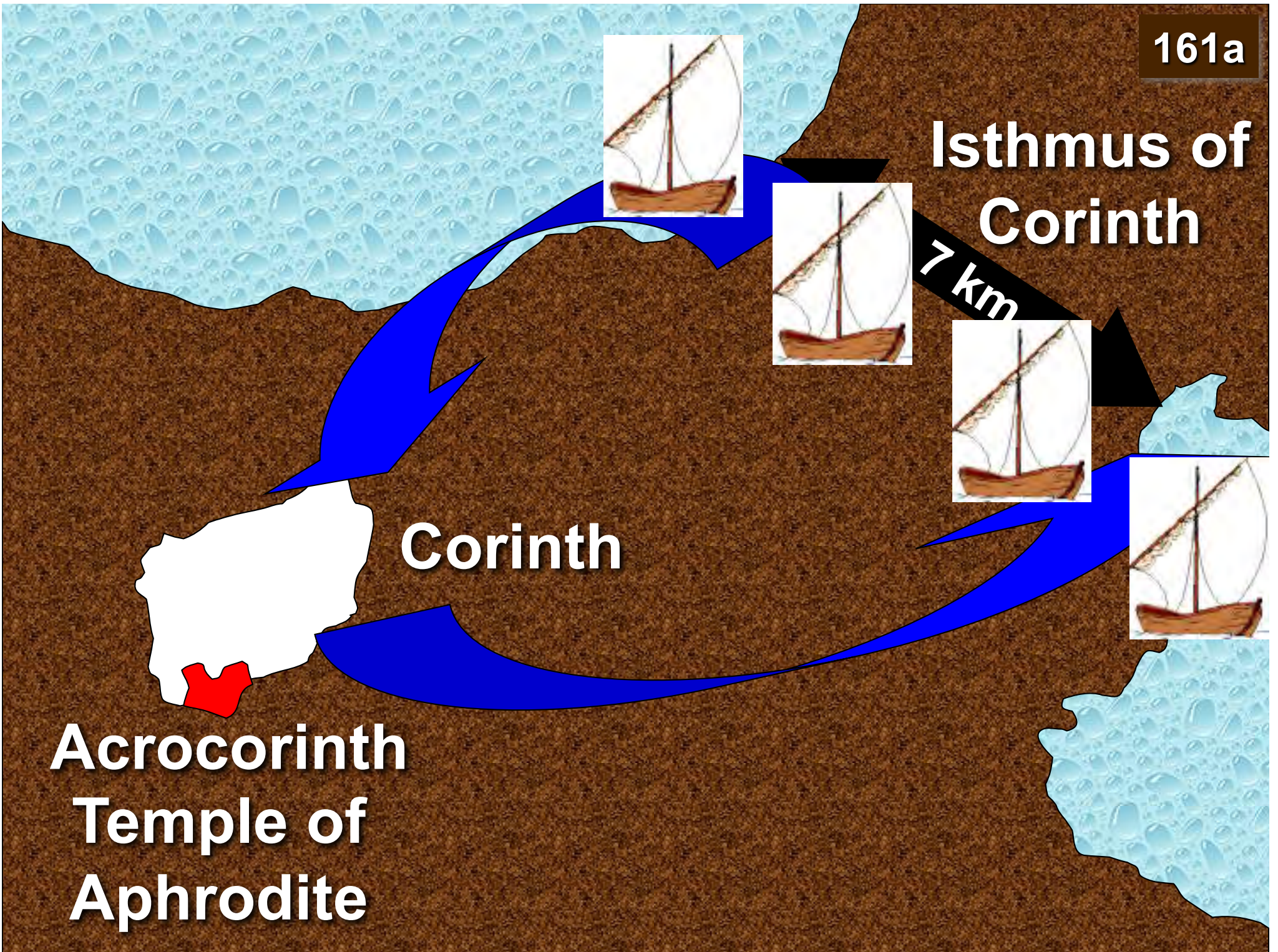
161a

Isthmus of
Corinth

7 km

Corinth

Acrocorinth
Temple of
Aphrodite





View of Acrocorinth from the City

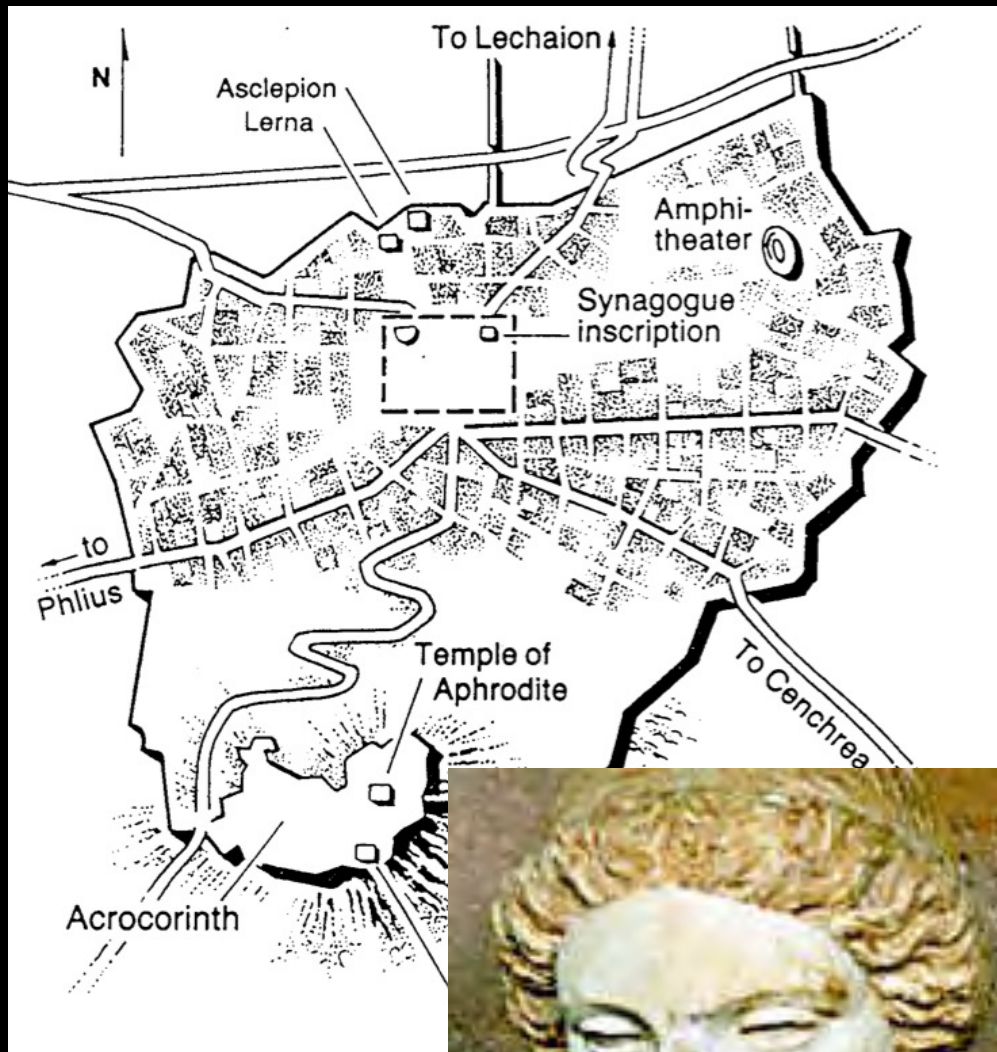


Immorality in
All Seasons



Temple of Aphrodite





Temple of Aphrodite



*Greek
Goddess
of Love*

A photograph of a person playing a cymbal in a drum set. The cymbal is illuminated by a spotlight, creating a bright, circular glow. The person's hands are visible, striking the cymbal. The background is dark, and the overall scene is dimly lit, focusing attention on the cymbal and the player's hands.

Meaningless Worship

***"If I speak with the tongues of men and
angels but do not have love,
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal"
(1 Cor. 13:1)***

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Astrology

"Chance!"

ring Jewellers
merchants since 1942.



77, Orchard Road,
371207, 7378685

The Straits Times

Estd. 1845

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 10, 1995

60 CENTS MITA (P) 026/12/94

1,099 couples to tie the knot on V-Day

A SINGAPORE record will be set next Tuesday: 22 couples will be wed every five minutes on that day.

A total of 1,099 couples will tie the knot on that day, Valentine's Day which this year coincides with the 15th day of the Lunar New Year, *Yuan Xiao Jie* or the Chinese Valentine's Day.

To cater for this bumper crop of marriages, not only the Registry of Marriages but also the Ministry of Community Development (MCD)

marriage hall. And marriages will be solemnised throughout the day from 9 am to 7 pm.

Usually, the Registry sees about 66 marriages a day — almost double that number on Valentine's Day — and mainly during office hours.

Altogether, 89 Justices of Peace and grassroots leaders will help perform the ceremonies. They will be supplemented by 40 senior MCD officials who were appointed Deputy Registrars of Marriage just for the occasion.

day, MCD's permanent secretary, Mr Er Kwong Wah, said: "No place in the world does this except Singapore. Such a large number of couples, and each ceremony done individually.

"We went out of our way to meet the demand. After all, we will have to wait 19 years for the two dates to coincide again."

For the first time, the MCD building along Thomson Road will have 19 solemnisation rooms set up on the 13th,

Mr Er said the ministry chose the 18th floor specially, because of its auspicious number. That floor will also have eight solemnisation rooms, another auspicious number.

Altogether 790 ceremonies will be carried out at MCD, and 297 at the Registry, with 60 per cent of the marriages solemnised in English. The rest will be in Mandarin.

Apart from these, 12 other couples will have their marriages solemnised in commu-

temples on the same day.

About 99 per cent of the couples to be married on that day are Chinese. There are also seven Indian couples. About 20 couples met through the Social Development Unit.

Meanwhile, the soon-to-be wedded couples have been making their own preparations, such as dealing with the eternal dilemma — what to wear.

Said Miss Ngo Yuen Yin, a finance and administration manager in her late 20s:

last month, we have spent every weekend hunting for clothes. He'll wear his brother's light green jacket.

"I wanted a flared, long, white dress with some flowers. I haven't found it yet. So as a standby, I bought a beige slip dress."

Mr Er also promised an air of romance at the MCD building, which will be decorated specially. He said: "It will be romantic enough so that people coming in here will fall in love a second

Words Christians Shouldn't Use

1. Profanities, of course
2. Fortunate
3. Lucky
4. Fate
5. Accident
6. Chance

A hand is shown holding several colorful strings (pink, red, yellow, blue, orange) that are tied to large, blue, three-dimensional letters spelling out the word "WORDS". The background is a red brick wall. The letters are arranged in a slightly staggered fashion, with the 'W' on the left and the 'S' on the right.

WORDS



**The Parthenon
above the other
altars in Athens**

**"I saw altars to many gods —even to
the unknown god"
(Paul in Acts 17)**

Prayers for slaughtered chickens



"More than 70 Buddhist monks joined Abbot Wing Sink in a seven-day chanting marathon in Hong Kong yesterday to appease the souls of more than a million chickens, slaughtered since Monday to rid the territory of the deadly 'bird flu' virus. The Abbot entreated more than one million Buddhists in Hong Kong to join in the prayers." —Reuters picture, *The Straits Times*, Thursday, January 1, 1998

Pagan Religions

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Gnosticism



**How can the
existence of creation
be explained?**

**Gnosticism:
Perplexing
Questions**

**What is the
origin of evil?**

*How can a holy
God create a
universe with sin?*

Chart 43

Essential Components of Gnosticism

- (1) *Dualism***
- (2) *Emanations***
- (3) *Knowledge***

God
(Pure Spirit)

Demiurge

World

Man



Chart 44

Gnosticism's Concept of Salvation

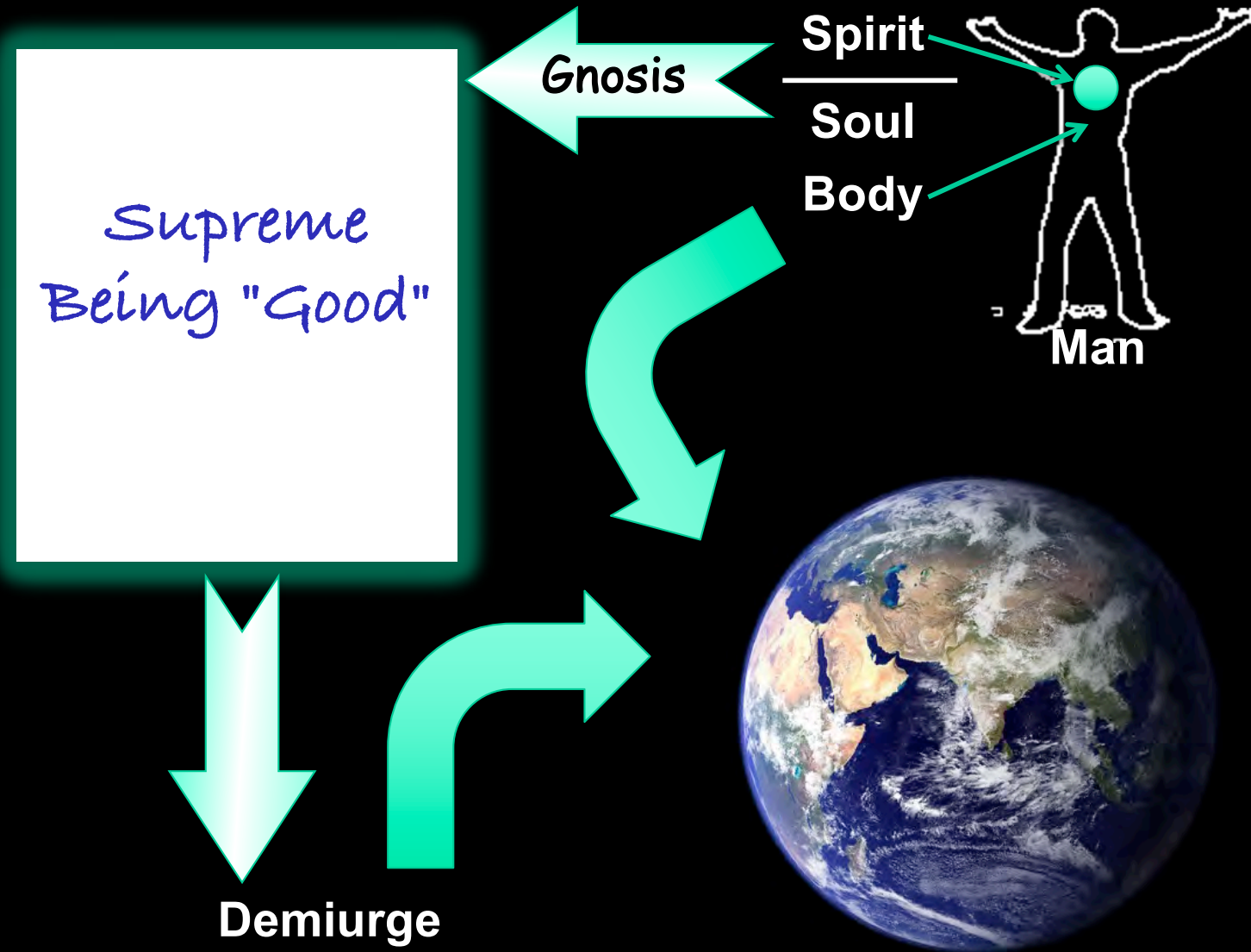


Chart 45

Two Types of Gnosticism are Addressed in 1 John

Docetic Gnosticism

**From *dokeo*, "to seem"
(Christ only *seemed* to
be a man)**

Matter is Evil

Depreciated Materialism

Denied Christ's Humanity

Touched Jesus (1:1)

Led to Asceticism

Immorality exalted

Cerinthian Gnosticism

**From Cerinthus, founder in Asia
(Christ only *seemed* to be
God)**

Spirit is Good

Exalted Knowledge (*gnosis*)

Denied Christ's Deity

Water & Blood (5:6)

Led to Pride

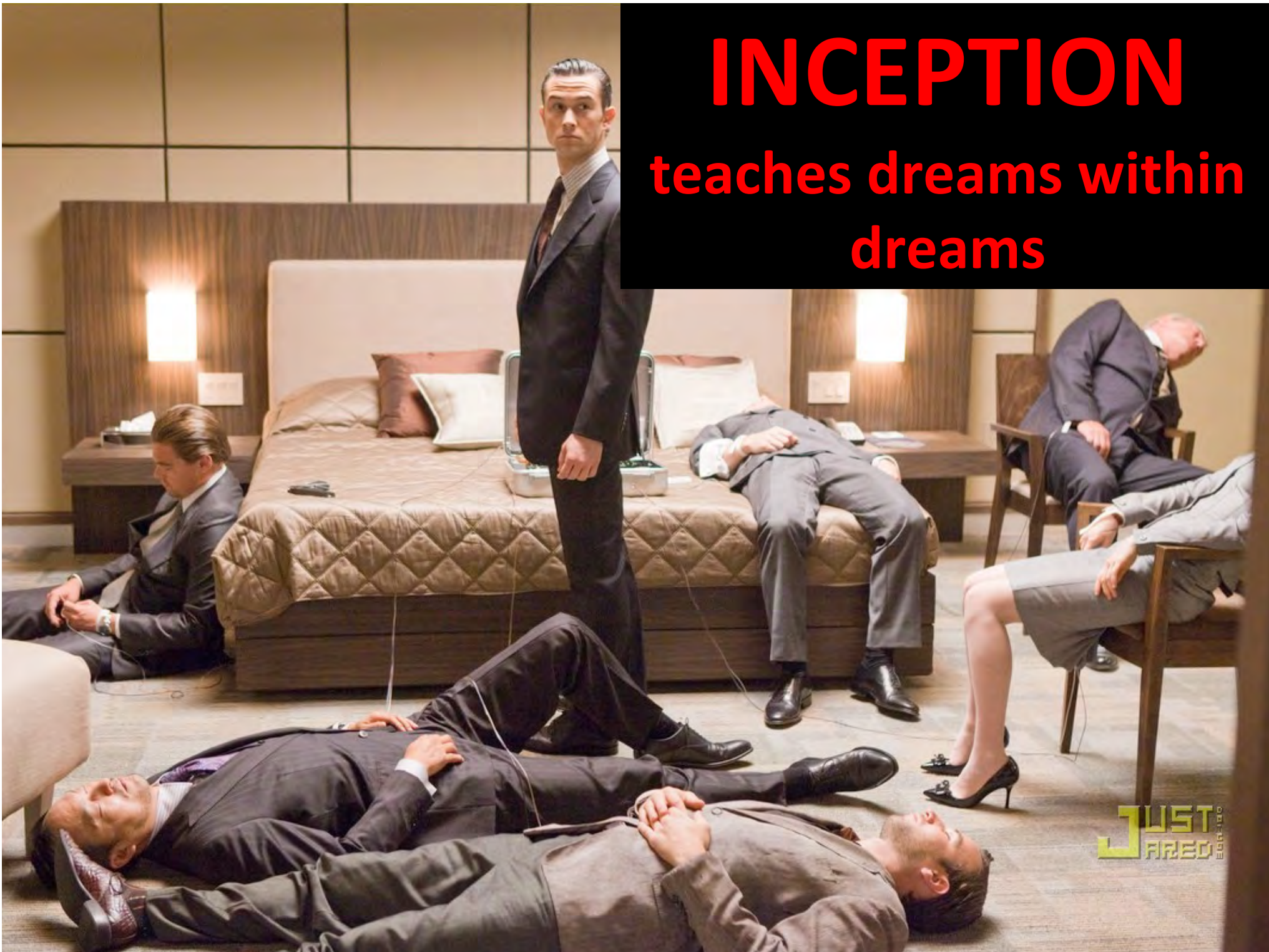
Education exalted



INCEPTION

INCEPTION

teaches dreams within dreams



JUST
JARED
ECCO-120

**Buddhism
encourages lack of
all desire**



The Apostle's Creed



153e

The Apostle's Creed

153e

Jesus didn't just become "the Christ" at his baptism, as Gnostics claimed. He was conceived by the Spirit.

A Gnostics taught that the world was created by a Demiurge and "Christ must have really been a man since he was born, he suffered, and he died."

... Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and buried

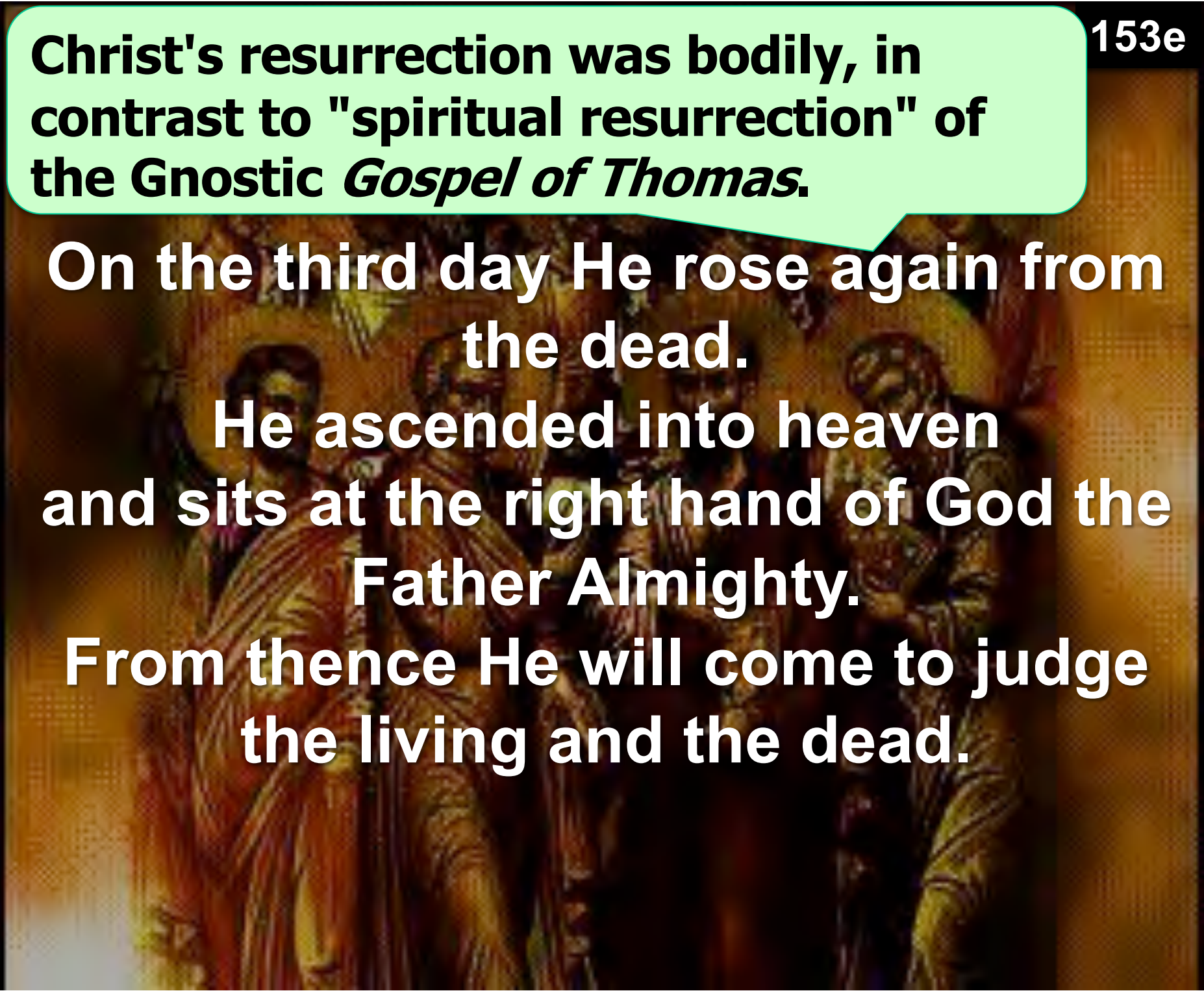
His death was not myth but in history during Pilate's rule (AD 26-36).

Christ's resurrection was bodily, in contrast to "spiritual resurrection" of the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*.

On the third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.



Instead of salvation by "special knowledge" (*gnosis*) for only a special few, all saints in the universal ("catholic") church hold these truths.

We don't need *enlightenment* from our *ignorance*. We need *forgiveness* of our *sins*.

the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen

Not just our *spirits* will join God after death. Heaven is a physical place where we will *physically* dwell with God for eternity.



Pagan Religion Today



Basic issues addressed...

1. Who is God?
2. Who am I?
3. What is the path to God?
4. How many chances for salvation do I get?
5. What is sin?
6. How can I be cleansed from sin?

Hindu "Hope" of Cleansing from Sin

Thursday, February 6, 2003

asia



DANGEROUS DIP

OBLIVIOUS to the pollution, an Indian woman takes a holy dip at the confluence of the Ganges River and the Bay of Bengal at Sagar island, 150 km south of Calcutta. Hindu priests, meanwhile, converge at a protest rally in Allahabad to push the authorities to clean up the river. Tests last year on the Ganges' waters showed that its human and animal waste content was 5,000 per cent above the acceptable level for humans.

Hindu holy men shun dirty Ganges

Although they believe the river can cleanse them of their sins, they refuse to bathe in it unless the govt cleans it up

By V. K. BACHUNATHAN

dispose of their dead in the

to clean it," said Hindu priest Chidatman Maharaj.

He has started a fast which he vowed to continue as long as the Indian authorities failed to take any action, according to The Hindu newspaper.

take action.

The protests took place in Allahabad, in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, where the Ganges meets the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati in a confluence called the Sangam, considered

Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

On its own, the Ganges flows for about 2,740 km down from the Himalayas and across the plains of Uttar Pradesh and Bengal before ending

under which it provided fun for these states to ensure the riverside industries set up efficient treatment plants.

But 15 years after the plan was launched, only 50 per cent of the industries responsible for polluting the riv

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