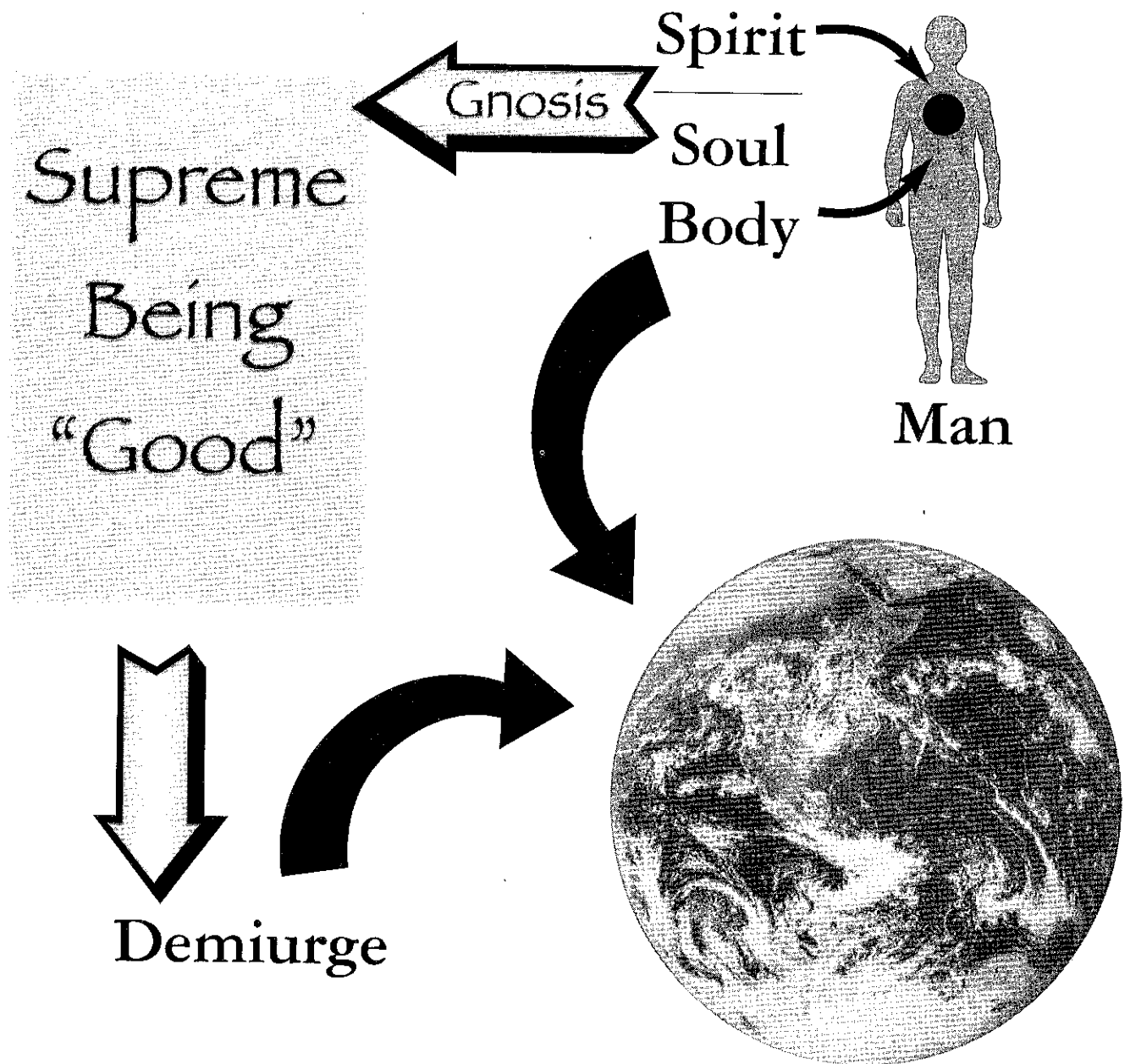


## The Earliest Church Fathers

The writers immediately after (or perhaps overlapping) the apostles produced a body of literature that singles them out as unique. Most of these writers and writings were from the eastern Mediterranean area. They employed the Greek language, the universal language of their day. Their writings were not as strident or polemical in tone as subsequent authors.

# Gnosticism's Concept of Salvation



Gnosticism's concept of salvation is as follows: God did not create the world, but a lesser yet powerful being (the Demiurge) made this evil world and mankind—though within man is a spark of good. Salvation results from enlarging the capacity of that nature while minimizing the hold of materialism, and it is accomplished by means of the secret teachings of Gnostic teachers. In resisting this teaching, Christian writers adopted a worldview that embraced the God of the Bible as the divine creator, affirmed the creation as good though marred by a subsequent devastation, and espoused the salvation of the body as well as the soul.

# The Major Churchmen of the Period

300 10 20 30 40 350 60 70 80 90 400 10 20 30 40 450

## ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Evagrius of Pontus

Basil of Caesarea

Gregory of Nazianzus

Gregory of Nyssa

Theodore of Mopsuestia

John Chrysostom

Synesius of Cyrene

Cyril of Alexandria

Theodoret of Cyrrhus

## AUGUSTINE

Leo the Great

Prosper of Aquitaine

John Cassian

Paulinus of Nola

Jerome

Ambrose

Martin of Tours

Hilary of Poitiers

Caius Marius Victorinus

300 10 20 30 40 350 60 70 80 90 400 10 20 30 40 450

Two great churchmen dominated the era—Athanasius, the champion of the equality of the Father and the Son, and Augustine, the champion of the inability of man and the absolute necessity of the grace of God. It was a remarkable period in which the church broke the bonds of repression to dominate intellectual endeavor.

# Pelagius and Augustine:

## A Study in Contrast

	<b>Pelagius</b>	<b>Augustine</b>
<b>Original Sin</b>	Denied	Affirmed
<b>Natural Will</b>	Plenary Ability	Inability
<b>Grace</b>	Gracious, Not Necessary	Absolute Necessity
<b>Predestination</b>	Based on Knowledge (foresight)	Based on Love (foreknowledge)

Pelagius and Augustine represented opposite views in terms of understanding the nature of man and the necessity of grace.