

Gnosticism

The name **Gnosticism** (pronounced: **nos-ti-cizim**) derives from the Greek word "**Gnoses**", which means knowledge. Gnosticism was a form of Dualism, as it is fundamentally dualistic, making a clean break between spirit and matter, between God and the world.

Gnosticism evolved out of pagan Greek philosophies such as Plato's teachings concerning the material creation and a polytheistic divinity.

According to the Gnostics, they possessed a special, mystical knowledge reserved for those with true understanding. That knowledge was the secret key to salvation. Of course only the initiate who received this secret knowledge, could give the secret password(s) to the guardian Angel of the various stations or gateways, at the entrance to each level of spiritual enlightenment. This secret knowledge was given only to a select few. From this, it can be ascertained that there is fair amount of Angelology and Angel worship involved in Gnosticism.

Of all the differing interpretations of Christianity, none was as dangerous, nor as close to victory in overthrowing orthodox belief, as was Gnosticism. This was a vast and amorphous movement that existed within and outside the church. It was one of the first major heresies, after the legalism of the Judaizers, that the Christian church had to deal with. The apostle Paul was already confronting and doing battle with this heresy, in his life time, which is evidenced by the epistle to the Colossians.

What exactly was Gnosticism? Gnosticism arose out of paganism and Greek mystery religions, from teachers who said that they had special access to deity and or Jesus' "real teachings". Salvation was the main concern of the Gnostics. They concluded that all matter is evil, or at best unreal. A human being is in reality an eternal spirit that somehow has been imprisoned in a body. Since the body is in reality an eternal spirit that somehow has been imprisoned in a body. Since the body is a prison to the spirit, and since it misguides us as to our true nature, it is evil.

Therefore the Gnostics' final goal was to escape from the body and this material world in which we are exiled. The world is not our true home, but rather an obstacle to the salvation of the spirit.

How, then, is the origin of the world and of the body to be explained? Gnosticism affirmed that originally all reality was spiritual. The supreme being had no intention of creating a material world, but only a spiritual one. Thus a number of spiritual beings were generated. Gnostic teachers did not agree as to their exact number, with some systems positing 365 such spiritual beings or "EONS". In any case, one of these eons, far removed from the supreme being, fell into error and thus created the material world. According to one system, for instance. Wisdom, one of the EONS, wished to produce something by herself, and the resulting "abortion" was the world. That is what the world is in Gnosticism: an abortion of the spirit and not a divine creation.

But since this world was made by a spiritual being, there are still "sparks" or "bits" of spirit in it. It is these that have been imprisoned in human bodies and must be liberated through gnosis.

In order to achieve liberation, a spiritual messenger must come to this world to waken us from our "dream". Our spirits are "asleep", within our bodies, being driven by the impulses and passions of the body, and someone must come from beyond to remind us who we really are and to call us to struggle against our incarceration. This messenger bring the qnosis, the secret knowledge and inspiration

necessary for salvation. This is nothing more than trying to find a false self divinity within oneself, which is exactly what New Age Movements and U.F.O. Cults teach today.

Above us are the heavenly spheres, each ruled by an evil power whose aim is to impede our progress to the spiritual realm. In order to reach the spiritual "fulness", we must break through each of those spheres. The only way to do this is to have secret knowledge that opens the way - much like spiritual password.

The heavenly messenger has been sent precisely to give us that knowledge, without which there is no salvation.

In Christian Gnosticism, that messenger is Christ. Christ has come to earth to, remind us of our heavenly origin and to give us the secret knowledge without which we cannot return to the spiritual mansions.

Since Christ is a heavenly messenger, and since body and matter are evil, most Christian Gnostics rejected the notion that Christ had a body like ours. Some said His body was an appearance, a sort of ghost that miraculously seemed to be a real body; this of course being what the heretics of Docetism taught. In some cases, this was coupled with the notion that Jesus did have a body, but that this was a "spiritual matter", different from ours. Most denied the birth of Jesus, which would have put Him under the power of the material world.

Again, the relationship between Gnosticism and Docetism must be emphasized, as all these notions aforementioned are various degrees of Docetism - a name derived from a Greek word meaning "to seem", for all these doctrines implied, in one way or another, that the body of Jesus appeared to be fully human but was not. Some early Christians believed that Jesus, the pure Son of God, could not have really suffered, but only seemed to die. Some ingeniously argued that Jesus avoided death by miraculously changing places with Simon of Cyrene or Judas Iscariot. This was all a denial of Christ's perfect humanity> and His perfect sacrifice.

Meanwhile, how is this life to be lived? At this point. Gnostics gave two divergent answers. Most declared that, since the body is the prison of the spirit, one must control the body and its passions and thus weaken its power over the spirit. But there were also some who held that, since the spirit is by nature good and cannot be destroyed, we are to leave the body to its own devices and let it follow the guidance of its own passions. Thus while some Gnostics were extreme ascetics, others were libertines. Gnosticism continued to be a serious threat to Christianity through the second century, and onwards throughout history, making a strong comeback in the last fifteen years through New Age Philosophies.

taken from E. Yamauchi; pg.416-418; N.I.D.of C.C.

A Chronology Of Gnostic Teachers & Gnostic Movements

Essenes in 150 B.C., in the Qumran ascetic community, which gave us the "Dead Sea Scrolls", taught a form of Gnosticism, as their teaching was a teaching of Dualism between light vs. darkness and the forces of evil vs. the righteous. Most scholars though, who define Gnosticism more strictly, would require the presence of a cosmological dualism, before conceding that a document is Gnostic.

Simon Magus in Acts 8, is considered by patristic church fathers to be the fountain-head of all heresies. Although Acts 8 does not specifically state that Simon Magus was definitely a Gnostic, all the early church fathers were unanimously agreed that Simon Magus was the champion of Gnostic heresies.

Patristic Sources in the 2nd and 3rd century such as;

- Justin Martyr;
- Irenaeus;
- Hippolytus;
- Origen;
- Tertullian;
- Epiphanius (d.403);
 - Nag Hammadi treatises have confirmed some of the Patristic sources above that give evidences against Gnostic teachings, while other writings such as Syntagma (c.150 A.D.) by Justinian have been found to the Patristic sources legendary concerning Gnostic accounts.

Menander a Samaritan who taught at Antioch, was a follower of Simon Magus. He taught that whoever followed his teaching, would not die.

Samaritans by 150 A.D., as reported by Justin, had all become followers of Simon Magus.

Valentinus, probably the most famous Gnostic teacher, who taught at Alexandria, came to Rome in 140 A.D., and had many able disciples, including Ptolemy, Heracleon in the west, and Theodotus in the east.

Marcion of Pontus, who taught in Rome between 137-144 A.D., was excommunicated for his Gnostic like views in 144 A.D.

Saturninus, who unlike Simon Magus and Menander held that Christ was redeemer.

Cerinthus, in Asia Minor, was a contemporary of Polycarp of Smyrna

Alexandrian Gnostics, some of whom were;

- Basilides in 175 A.D.,
- Isadore (the son of Basilides),
- Carpocrates,
- Epiphanes (the son of Carpocrates)

Irenaeus in 180 A.D. writes "Against the Heresies", opposing Gnosticism.

Coptic Sources;

- Codex Askewianus, discovered in the 19th century were translated; in this codex were;
 - Pistis Sophia.
- Codex Brucianus, containing the
 - Books Of Jeu,
- Codex Berolinensis 8502, not fully published till 1955, it contained;
 - Gospel Of Mary (Magdalene),
 - A Sophia Of Jesus,
 - Acts Of Peter,
 - Apocryphon Of John.

Nag Hammadi Codices, in 1946 were discovered in Upper Egypt; 13 codices were discovered, containing some fifty-three treatises, of which more than one third have been translated; this cache was deposited in 400 A.D., and some of the ones translated are;

- i) The Gospel Of Truth , ascribed to Valencinus;
- ii) The Epistle Of Rheginos, a discourse on the resurrection of non-physical';
- iii) The Gospel According To Thomas, - which contains sayings of Jesus;
- iv) The Gospel Of Philip, which reflects a Valentinianism;
- v) The Apocryphon Of John, which gives a cosmogony like Sethians & Ophites;'
- vi) The Hypostasis Of The Archons, similar in cosmogony as
- vii) The Apocalypse Of Adam, editor A.Bohlig considers it to be non-Christian Gnosticism.

Mandaean Sources, the Mandaean communities in Iraq and Iran, are the sole surviving remnants of ancient Gnosticism. Dating from the 1st and 2nd centuries, they are still active, as a small sect, living south of Baghdad. They began as a small Christian community living east of the Jordan River. There are only a few thousand adherents left in this sect around Baghdad today. Three Mandaic texts have been translated by M. Lidzbarski early in the 20th century;

- i) The Ginza, representing a detailed cosmogony;
- ii) The Johannesbych, which contains some late traditions about John the Baptist, whom the Mandaeans highly revere;
- iii) The Qolasta, which is a collection of Mandaean liturgies;
- iv) Haran Gawaita, which is a migration account of the sect from Palestine;
- v) Mandate Magic Bowl Texts, (c. A.D. 600).

Manichaeism, founded by Mani, in 216-275 A.D., was born in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in Babylonia. He established a highly syncretistic form of Gnosticism called Manichaeism. St. Augustine of Hippo was probably the most well known Manichaean, before being converted to Christianity.

Other Early Gnostic Writings, are;

- i) Hermetica;
- ii) Syriac Odes Of Solomon;
- iii) Hymn Of The Pearl, in the 'Acts Of Thomas';
- iv) Writings Of Philo, of Alexandria;
- v) Minim References, in rabbinical sources;
- vi) Jewish "Merkabah" Mysticism;
- vii) Dead Sea Scrolls; already mentioned.

Paulicians, in 800's A.D., -who believed that only the Apostle Paul's writings were inspired, returned to forms of Gnosticism.

Albigenses, from a town in southern France called ALBI, in the 1200's, return to forms of Gnosticism.

Cathari, which means in Greek KATHAROI - "pure ones", was a name assumed by 3rd century Novatianists. The latter Cathari, probably arose in Armenia or the Balkans, possibly resulting from a fusion of Paulicians and Euchite doctrines. In Bulgaria, they were called BOGOMILES, but in France ALBIGENSES. Despite persecution they survived until the fourteenth century, when they were wiped out in the Roman Catholic Inquisition. Their doctrines were akin to Manichaeism and Gnosticism combined, with elements such as Dualism, Universalism, Docetism, and Metempsychosis. They were divided into two classes;

i) Credentes, ("Believers");

ii) Perfecti; this group received their spirit baptism by the imposition of hands, which was called Consolamentum, which was suppose to remove original sin and restore immortality. They also rejected marriage and sexual intercourse, practising a rigid asceticism. Infant baptism and purgatory were rejected, but they did practice; The Endura, a ritual suicide.

Monasticism, from 1200's and onwards, glorified through St. Francis Of Assisi, although gave no direct doctrinal espousal to Gnosticism, did much to popularize Gnostic lifestyles, in regards to hating the body and treatment of the flesh. Francis did seem to love God's creation, but his ascetic practices of subduing the flesh are condemned by the Apostle Paul in . Colossians 2:16-23. Although Francis Of Assisi cannot be classified as a classic Gnostic, he definately led the glorification Gnostic Asceticism.

“Theosophy” & Madame Blavatsky, revive modern day Gnosticism, but this revival of the old heresy is more evil than ever, as it is combined with the occult, and the Jewish Cabala; which is an especially wicked form of gnosticism.

“Anthroposophy” S. Rudolph Steiner, an Austrian mystic (1861-1925 A.D.), basically received his indoctrination from Theosophists, which he disagreed with, because of what he felt was an overly Oriental influence, attempted to combine Theosophy with Christianity.

“Aquarian” Culture Of The 1960's, revives many aspects of Gnostic philosophies, through Hippy movement and Hallucenogenic Drug Abuse.

New Age Movement, although the title is an anachronism, as this philosophy and is not really New Age, but instead really Old Age Polytheism masked and polished with a new title. This movement introduced a flood of Gnostic Occult books, literature, and teaching, glorifying the occult and metaphysical mind sciences, all centered around the teaching of "inherent godhood or deity"; Psychology and The Inner Healing Movement, such as 12-step programs, have been combined with professing Christianity as well as in secular practice, are united in these teachings.

All these practices of visualization, psychometry, codependancy, psycho-analysis, healing the child ego state, etc, ad-infinitum, all find their roots back in Gnosticism and the lie of Satan, as told in GENESIS 3:5; "YE SHALL BE AS GODS".

German Existentialist Bible Scholars, such as;

Rudolph Bultmann, and his disciples assume a pre-Christian origin of Gnosticism. These heretics believed that the writings of the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John gave evidence of Gnosticism in their writings. Bultmann held that the New Testament was dependent upon a pre-Christian Gnostic MYTH, of a "redeemed redeemer". This blasphemer led many a Bible scholar with his attack on Biblical Errancy, by using such hermeneutical methods as Redaction or Form Criticism. Space does not permit here to elucidate on the damage this demon has done to the Church Of Jesus Christ, but most Universities and Bible Colleges today, still take seriously his claims.

taken mostly from E. Yamauchi; pq.416-418; N-.I.D.of C.C.

Heaven's Gate U.F.O. Cult, members in the wealthy suburb of Rancho, Santa Fe, San Diego, U.S.A., were found at the "Heaven's Gate" mansion on March 26, 1997, to have committed suicide on mass, in a Gnostic style suicide ritual. Twenty women and nineteen men committed suicide, believing that their bodies were simply outer shells or casings, which must be thrown off, and they did this believing that they would be united with a U.F.O. that was following the Hale-Bopp Comet, which in turn would help them reach divinity, as is typical in the Gnostic Genre. The Gnostic Angelic worship in relation to U.F.O.'s is very interesting, considering there is ample evidence that U.F.O.'s are demonic in origin.