

**I'm glad you asked:**

**What is Gnosticism?**

**Don Reigstad**

Gnosticism was the primary heresy dealt w/ before the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325. Teachings varied greatly, but generally accepted beliefs by all/most Gnostics included:

1. Creation of material world was not of God, the father of Jesus, but by Demiurge, either a wicked angel or a lesser god.
2. All matter is therefore inherently flawed.
3. The God of the O.T. is this Demiurge, harsh, always concerned about justice, to the fault of any compassion.
4. Jesus' Father is the "good God", who loves mankind and desires his salvation. He sent Jesus to show mankind the way of salvation.
5. Jesus never actually became man, since flesh is inherently evil. Docetist (Grk. "to seem/appear") Gnostics held that Jesus only "appeared to be" human. Other Gnostics held that Jesus was an actual man whom God "possessed", perhaps at baptism, and abandoned at the cross. (God would never allow himself to undergo the humiliation of human birth and death.)
6. Most rejected the physical sacraments of baptism and communion, and also the resurrection of the body (Remember Paul getting laughed out of Athens? Acts 17).
7. Gnostic teachers often claimed that the apostles had passed on a "secret knowledge (gnosis)" for the most devout followers. Supposedly this was conveyed upon initiation into their group.

Much of the influence upon Gnostic belief can be traced to Platonic thought. Plato taught a dualism between the spirit and matter.

Second Century Gnostic Christians: Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerinthus and Valentinus. The most noted 2nd century Gnostic Christian was Marcion who is responsible for the earliest compilation of N.T. Holy Scripture. He eliminated the entire O.T. and named only the Gospel of Luke, Acts and the Pauline letters (Luke, of course was the close associate of Paul).

(Most of the above comes from A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, Bercot, Ed.)

Some quotes from early Christian writers:

"You may have fallen in with some [Gnostics] who are called Christians, but who do not admit this. For they venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham...and say that there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven. Do not imagine that they are Christians." Justin Martyr (c. 160)

"They deny that the Son assumed anything material. For [according to them] matter is incapable of salvation..." Irenaeus (c. 180)

"We refute those who think that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a different God from Him who gave the answers of the Law to Moses, of commissioned the prophets." Origen (c. 225)

"I see the heretics attacking the holy church of God in these days, under the pretense of having 'higher wisdom.' They bring forth works in many volumes in which they offer expositions of the evangelical and apostolic writings...Therefore, it seems to me that it is necessary for someone to refute those dealers of 'falsely called knowledge'. Someone who is able to present the doctrine of the church in a genuine manner should take a stand against these historical fictions and oppose them with the true and lofty evangelical message." Origen (c. 228)

The Nicene Creed, agreed to in A.D. 325, Nicea, Turkey, addressed both Gnostic and the related Arian heresy:

"We believe in one God....And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father...from the same substance of the Father...through whom all things were made...and was incarnate, was made man, suffered and rose again..."