

Gnosticism: Yesterday and Today

Eschatology: -

Study of God Developing People in His Image

Dr. Leon L. Sanders

Gathering Our Thoughts

Historical (Material)

- Premillennial
- Preterist

Transcendence

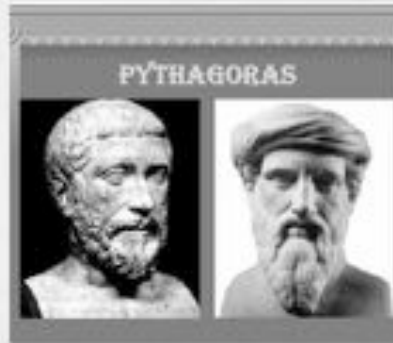
- Amillennial
- Postmillennial

Why Two Divisions?

Gnosticism

Pythagoras

- Coined the terms
 - Philosopher
 - μαθηματικός
 - ακουσματικός
- Joined Eastern and Western faiths into one
- Foundation of Gnosticism



Plato (Transcendent)

- Built on the works of
 - Socrates
 - Pythagoras
- Laid foundation for
 - Aristotle
 - Who taught Alexander
 - Who took his learning to the East (India)



Before Gnosticism—The Mysteries

- Early Gnostic sects (before they became Gnostic)
 - Orpheans (Both masculine and feminine)
 - Mithraism (Mainly masculine)
 - Herakles
- Little is known of their specific beliefs but their fundamental worldview is well known, even today

Old System-New Package

Matter (Physical)

- Evil
- Demiurge (Yahweh/OT)
- Ignorant of Spirituality
- Inferior
- Scientists

Light (Spiritual)

- Good
- Revealer, (Jesus/NT)
- Source of all Knowledge
- Superior
- Artists

<http://gnosis.org/gnintro.htm>

Jewish Gnosticism-Kabbalah

- Cosmogonic-theological speculations, philosophemes on God and the world, constitute the substance of gnosis. They are based on the first sections of Genesis and Ezekiel
- In the gnosticism of the second century "three elements must be observed, the speculative and philosophical, the ritualistic and mystical, and the practical and ascetic" (Harnack, l.c. p. 219). These three elements may all be traced to Jewish sources. (Hellenistic sources first)

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6723-gnosticism>

Judaism Absorbed Gnosticism

- Gnosis was originally a secret science imparted only to the initiated
- Gnosis was concealed because it might prove disastrous to the unworthy and uninitiated, like magic formulas. By "correct knowledge" the upper and the lower world may be put in motion (Ez 8)
- Gnosis was regarded as legitimate by Judaism. Its chain of tradition is noted in the principal passage in Hagigah

Gnosticism and the Church

- Orpheanism, and other neo-Platonists and neo-Pythagoreans, became known as Gnosticism during the 3rd century when it imitated then infiltrated Christianity and was accepted by Constantine
 - Christ became the Logos (spiritual)
 - Docetism grew (Christ never had a body, just a spirit)

Early Church Gnostic “Fathers”

- Gnosticism infiltrated Christianity through these men
 - Clement of Alexandria (150-215)
 - Origen (185-254)
 - Augustine (354-430)
 - Jerome (347-420)
- Roman Catholicism grew from Gnostic Christianity

Gnosticism to Amillennialism

- Gnosticism transcendent and material views were morphed into Amillennialism
- Sinful man on earth could attain the transcendent
 - Saints immediately go to heaven
 - Believers not so enlightened would go to Purgatory first
 - Those refusing enlightenment, salvation, go to hell

How This Happened

- There is a growing realization in the theological world that the crux of the millennial issue is the question of *method* of interpreting Scripture.
- The Alexandrian school of theology which came into prominence about 300 A.D. followed a principle of interpretation which regarded all Scripture as an allegory. They succeeded in arousing a considerable opposition to premillennarians of their days even if it was at the price of subverting not only the millennial doctrine but all other Christian doctrine as well.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/millennial-series-part-5-amillennialism-method-interpretation>

Why This Happened

- It remained for Augustine to give a more moderate application of this principle of interpretation. In general, he held that only prophecy should be spiritualized and that in the historical and doctrinal sections of Scripture the 'historical-grammatical' *literal* method should be used.
- Because of the weight of Augustine in other major issues of theology where he was in the main *correct*, Augustine became the model for the Protestant Reformers who accepted his amillennialism along with his other teachings.

Gnosticism Remains Today

- Because amillennialism was adopted by the Reformers, it achieved a quality of orthodoxy to which its modern adherents can point with pride. They could rightly claim many worthy scholars in the succession from the Reformation to modern times such as Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, and in modern times, Warfield, Vos, Kuyper, Machen, and Berkhof. If one follows traditional Reformed theology in many other respects, it is *natural* to accept its amillennialism. The weight of organized Christianity has largely been on the side of amillennialism (*gnosticism*).

Amillennialism Condemns God

- Amillennialism is not simply a difference of opinion:
 - Mixing of Gnosticism with Scripture
 - Encapsulates Gnosticism with the guise of true faith using the Scriptures to legitimize their deception
 - Their "spiritual" truths violate then replace the Bible's spiritual truths, believers then worship gnosticism
 - Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and now many Evangelicals (Billy Graham) support Gnosticism

Before Leaving Gnosticism

- The predecessors to Gnosticism, the "mystery religions", influenced the early (Corinthian) churches
 - Mysterious initiation rites and secret knowledge
 - Utterances in "unknown spiritual" languages
 - Uncontrolled or ecstatic behavior
- These religions found fertile ground in early Christian churches as they sought to define their doctrines

Never Left the Fold

- Roman Catholicism in its search for miracles and special "people" for sainthood encouraged gnosticism
- Anabaptists had ecstatic utterances and miracles in their rites like the gnostics
- The "Quakers" and "Shakers" were pre-Pentecostal faiths carrying on the gnostic practices (Franklin)

Today's Confusion of Faith

- Descendants of Gnostic corruptions of Christianity
 - Amillennialists
 - Roman Catholics
 - Mainline denominations
 - Reformed faiths
 - Postmillennialists
 - Pentecostal-Charismatic sects
 - Premillennialists (Progressive Dispensationalists)

The Lost Are Not Forgotten

- Pythagorean mysteries eventually morphed into the Masons, emulated by others (Rosicrucian's)
- Psychology (sociology, education, nursing) is gnosticism
 - Carl Jung the most obvious source of Gnosticism for psychology/psychiatry (https://www.gnosticonline.org/wiki/Carl_Jung)
 - Humanism represents a temporary struggle out of this pit in an effort to fill the vacuum, but its final destiny is the same. In turn it was the Human Potential Movement which provided the bridge that was needed if psychology was again going to be reunited with its sibling, philosophy, through their common parent, religion (gnosticism) (https://www.gnosticonline.org/documents/TheGnosticInfluenceOnPsychology_V01.pdf)

Modern Philosophy

- When philosophers separated the material (science) from the transcendence (philosophy) they were only demonstrating their gnosticism (1830s)
- Philosophy has long vacillated between
 - Material-Empiricism (Rationalism)
 - Transcendence-Romanticism (Spiritualism)

Gnosticism in Societies

- This has percolated throughout every aspect of the world's cultures merging East and West (again) [UN]
 - Material (Atheism)
 - Socialism
 - Communism
 - Fascism
 - Spiritual (Secular humanism common to all false faiths)

Gnosticism: Leavening the Kingdom of God

- Gnosticism's Goals:
 - Unity through Diversity
 - Satan as Angel of Light
 - Biblical Christianity-evil
 - Goal: Transcendence
 - To be as gods
- Eschatology: End Times?

