

# Essay on gnosticism



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Gnostic's beliefs were so radical the church tried to eradicate any trace of them. They believed that god did not intend to create the physical universe because he would not create a place with imperfections, suffering and hurt. They believe god's divine essence came out of him to fill existence.

The essence mutated to form aeons, which were beings less than god and imperfect, but still had some of his divine powers. They lived together in the spiritual realm of pleroma. One aeon, named sophia, went out to find knowledge and wisdom. She tried to be like god and create a being, but since she wasn't as powerful, the being was flawed and evil.

His name was demiurge, and in his flaws, thought he was the supreme god, then he created this physical universe corrupted by his own evil. So we as his creations are also flawed. This explains why there is pain in the world when god is pure and good.

## **Dualism**

While humans are flawed, they still have enough of the divine spark to recognise the difference between good and evil. Demiurge and his slaves the archons know that most people are unaware of the spark. If they knew, they could be freed from the pain and suffering of demiurge's universe.

To escape his universe, humans must realize their divine spark, and nurture it during a process called gnosis. People like Jesus Christ, the prophet Mani, and Seth, the third child of Adam and Eve were considered messengers of light who would come to earth to help people awaken their sparks. Some people are so far gone from the spark that it's lost on them. These people are some of the most evil in history.

Since the early church couldn't fit these ideas in with the old testament or apostolic writings, they were rejected.

Gnostics believed the material world was corrupt. Some took this to mean the body is also corrupt, so they could freely indulge in fleshly desires. The majority however, strictly disciplined themselves to avoid all fleshly desires.

This created internal conflict about how how Jesus Christ could be the physical embodiment of God. Some gnostics thought Christ only looked like a physical form. Others believed Jesus was a real man and that the Christ spirit entered and left the Jesus body. As for the resurrection, they cannot come to a united consensus about that either. Some say the spirit abandoned Jesus to die on the cross alone, others say someone took Jesus' place and died for him. The general idea was that the crucifixion was a spiritual event, and made up their own details about it at their leisure.

Parts of gnostic ideas existed before the early church was established. Its thought that other gnostic manuscripts were directly reactionary of writings and oral teachings of orthodox history based Christianity. This is mostly due to the fact that at the time, spreading the intended information was difficult. Some of the apostolic writings didn't reach everywhere, and other writings that were left out of the New Testament were accepted instead.

Valentinus was the founder of gnostic Christianity. He knew that unless he presented himself to have received instructions from the apostle Paul that he would be ignored by early churchgoers. Him and others like him are thought to be the "wolves in sheep's clothing" Paul and other apostles warn about. His writings come from 2nd century AD or later. Almost all of the books in the

new testament were written by then, and several gnostic texts allude to them. To stave off the influence of his false teachings, late 2nd century orthodox leaders were motivated to write more books disproving him.

Early church leaders discredited gnostic teachings because they did not align with the original old testament and apostle teachings and because they were written over a hundred years after the original texts, were more likely to contain misinformation. Orthodox leaders feared that gnostic leaders were trying to deceive the disciples by claiming that knowledge could make them more like god.

" The three main results of the battle with Gnosticism were an increased emphasis on apostolic succession, the tightening of the church hierarchy and the definition of the Scriptural canon. One way to counter the inventions of the Gnostics was to show that as a church leader you had the truth because you had been trained and commissioned by a man who was trained and commissioned by a man who had been trained and commissioned by an apostle who had been trained and commissioned by Christ: thus the church developed the idea of apostolic succession."

Gnosticism has been so widely rejected because early christians held very strongly to their beliefs. Theirs was and still is a religion back by years of written accounts, and proof for them to hold on to, as opposed to gnostics, whose religion is loosely based on the old testament and altered on a whim.

### **Works cited**

- " Gnosticism: Beliefs & Symbols | Study. Com". Study. Com, 2018, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/gnosticism-beliefs-symbols.html>. Accessed 24 Apr 2018.
- Graves, Dan. " Gnosticism". Christianity. Com, 2018, <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1-300/gnosticism-11629621.html>. Accessed 24 Apr 2018.