

CURRENT EVENTS

Gnosticism

Perhaps the greatest visible evidence of Gnosticism in America is found in America's emerging and pervading sexual beliefs/practices.

For example, marriage has been traditionally defined spiritually and materially. Marriage is defined as the union of a husband and wife in heart, body, and mind – for the purpose of the procreation of children (i.e., material) and for the husband and wife to find delight in each other (i.e., spiritual).

However, in certain denominations, the definition of marriage has changed by the omission of 'the procreation of children.' In fact, some emerging vows do not even reference the terms husband and wife but rather state that marriage is the union of two people who are intimate and close. To the point; in America, marriage is no longer defined according to anything in the material world. The terms procreation, husband, and wife constitute specific reproductive physiology, which has been removed from the definition. To the point; if the realm of the spiritual is superior to the material, then marriage has less to do with creating children with compatible physiology and more to do with intense emotional and spiritual companionship. Again, Christianity recognizes marriage as a union of heart (seat of desire), body (sexual union), and mind (mind of discernment) – material and spiritual. Whereas the influence of Gnosticism either diminishes the physical realm or eliminates it altogether. Frankly, Gnosticism destroys God's design for marriage, as expressed in Genesis 2:24.

Another place that Gnosticism comes into focus in America is with respect to gender and sex. Traditionally, gender and sex were synonymous. Gender, as defined in the early English language meant, "the sex of a human being." Later on, though, it came to reference social attributes, as well as biological qualities. However, now in the twenty-first century, sex is narrowly defined as one's reproductive organs at birth, whereas gender goes beyond the reproductive organs and includes a person's perception, understanding, and inner sense about who they are. It has been stated that gender is the realized gender of the human soul. To the point; regarding gender, the influence of Gnosticism has eliminated the physical realm of biological qualities (i.e., material) and replaced it with the gender of the soul (i.e., spiritual). And since Gnosticism elevates the spiritual above the material, a female soul with male biological qualities equals not a male but a female. For the Gnostic, the spiritual defines reality, not the material.

The rejection of the body in Gnosticism can also lead to recklessness with the human body. If the body is a mere shell that we dispose of after death, what is the point of keeping the body pure? Deviate sexual acts, drug abuse, neglecting the body, etc., all flow out of a Gnostic worldview. But Paul teaches that our bodies are not our own. It is a member of Christ (1 Co. 6:15), the shrine of the Spirit (6:19), been bought with a price (1 Co. 6:20), and belongs to one's spouse (1 Co. 7:4).

The term, 'my body, my choice,' simply does not work with Christianity. Our bodies do not solely belong to us. They belong to the Lord and our spouses. Paul clearly and deliberately reverses the Gnostic assumption that the spirit took precedence over the body in with the human self.

GENERAL DEFINITION:

Gnosticism covers a wide range of ideas. However, for the sake of this study the key component of focus is the teaching that the spiritual is good and the physical is bad. Simply stated, Gnosticism teaches a 'dualism' but a dualism where 'matter' is bad and 'spiritual' is good.

TAUGHT BY:

This false teaching confronted the early church in the second and third centuries. It is also confronted in the books of 1 Corinthians and 1 John.

BROADER CONTEXT:

It is true that Plato emphasized the spiritual (idea) above and over the material (form). Aristotle, though, emphasized the material. We Christians emphasize both – both body and soul are important to God. Jesus was divine and human. In communion there is a physical and spiritual eating. We are both body *and* soul. And so, if we elevate the body above the soul, we can err. If we elevate the soul above the body, we can err as well.



