

Cults & Counterfeits — Gnosticism

"The following may be regarded as the chief points in the characteristics of the Gnostic systems:

- (1) A claim on the part of the initiated to a special knowledge of the truth, a tendency to regard knowledge as superior to faith, and as the special possession of the more enlightened, for ordinary Christians did not possess this secret and higher doctrine.
- (2) The essential separation of matter and spirit, the former of these being essentially evil, and the source from which all evil has arisen.
- (3) An attempt at the solution of the problems of creation and of the origin of evil by the conception of a Demiurge, i.e. a Creator or Artificer of the world as distinct from the Supreme Deity, and also by means of emanations extending between God and the visible universe. It should be observed that this conception merely concealed the difficulties of the problem, and did not solve them.
- (4) A denial of the true humanity of Christ, a docetic Christology, (which looked upon the earthly life of Christ and especially on His sufferings on the cross as unreal).
- (5) The denial of the personality of the Supreme God, and the denial also of the free will of man.
- (6) The teaching, on the one hand, of asceticism as the means of attaining to spiritual communion with God, and, on the other hand, of an indifference which led directly to licentiousness.
- (7) A syncretistic tendency which combined certain more or less misunderstood Christian doctrines, various elements from oriental and Jewish and other sources.
- (8) The Scriptures of the Old Testament were ascribed to the Demiurge or inferior Creator of the world, who was the God of the Jews, but not the true God. Some of these characteristic ideas are more obvious in one, and some of them in others of the Gnostic systems. The relation of these ideas to Christian facts and doctrines is dealt with more particularly below."

— John Rutherford "Gnosticism"

Website Reference: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/gnosticism.html>