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Gnostic Views Of God & Creation

The ideas of the ancient Gnostics are intricate and confusing when an attempt is made to understand them. Briefly stated, the Gnostics held to many differing ideas of the universe and its origins. The physical world in which we live is seen as being flawed, owing to the nature of the material world and sin in the family of mankind. The God of creation is seen as being an imperfect being who does not reflect the nature of God as revealed in the scriptures. According to Gnostic interpretations, the true God exists in a realm that does not have any contact with the flawed creation. The God of creation, having created a world that is flawed, must also be imperfect. The scriptures reveal that God is not tempted with evil, neither tempts any man (**Jas 1.13**). The account of creation in the book of Genesis states that as God completed each day of creation he looked on that which was made and saw that it was good. It was through the weakness of man, not the imperfection of God, that sin entered into the world. God created mankind with the ability to do good, that is, to obey his commands. Throughout the scriptures the Bible speaks of God as our Father, and as such He has the right to limit the activities and behavior of the created being man. Perhaps this was too much for the ancient Gnostics, as it is for many today, to understand the need for obedience and service to God. Man strives for an answer to the question of why this happened, and the Gnostic interpretation, while being a search for deeper understanding, only populated the minds of its followers with more confusion. This confusion in turn led to many schools of thought on the role of God and filled Gnostic thinking with multiple layers of beings who in turn demonstrate varying degrees of spiritual imperfection. The true God was seen as existing in a realm so far removed from the world that one can only know the truth indirectly by refining one's inner experience of the search for divine ultimate truth. The image of God was thus corrupted, transformed into something that the scriptures do not teach. Paul speaks of the way in which the mind of man, in the rise of paganism, turned the knowledge of God into a lie. ***"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."*** (**Rom 1.22-23**). Paul states that the world, while viewed as flawed by the Gnostics as a reflection of an imperfect god, tells us otherwise. ***"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse..."*** (**Rom 1.20**). The creation was completed in perfection, man was created in the image of God, not as a flawed being, but in sinlessness. The rejection of the knowledge of God, as occurred in the garden of Eden when Eve was tempted, led to a transformation of the truth. ***"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."*** (**Rom 1.25**). The idea that God was imperfect, and created the sinful creature man, places responsibility for the existence of sin on the creator, not the created being. A reasonable person can see the contradiction in this. If God created a world filled with sin and corruption, how is it that we know this is so? Why do we not accept the world as it is and concentrate on dealing with things as they are, not as we imagine they could be? The Gnostic view appears to be that there is within the individual the ability to perceive a greater truth discerned through inner reflection and learning. What is to be learned, and where does this come from? In other words, how can we know what we cannot know?

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