

Evangelicalism's Hidden Heresy: Understanding Gnosticism and Why the Body Is So Important

This workshop exposes the widespread Gnostic error—that the spiritual or immaterial is good, while the physical or material is inherently evil—and its insidious impact on evangelical theology and practice. A definition of embodiment (the state of human existence between conception and death, and again after the resurrection of the body and for all eternity; the normal state of human existence is an embodied existence) will be offered. Then, attention will be paid to outlining a theology of human embodiment that treats issues such as creation as embodied beings, genderedness, sexuality, bodily discipline, sanctification, clothing, worship, suffering and healing, death, and eschatological embodiment.

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I. Introduction

II. Human embodiment: definition and biblical/theological themes

A. The creation of the body

1. Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:7, 18-25)
2. All human beings (Psalm 139:13-15)

B. The gendered body

1. Creation in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28)
2. Genderedness: a fundamental given

C. The sexual body

1. The biblical perspective on human sexuality

2. The perversion of sexuality (1 Cor. 6:12-20; 7:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:1-3-8)

D. The disciplined body

1. The body as temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20)
2. Physical discipline, yet not asceticism (1 Tim. 4:1-8; Col. 2:16-23)
3. Disciplining the body (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

E. The sanctification of the body

1. A holistic sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23)
2. The deadly sins of the body: lust, gluttony, sloth
3. The body conformed to the image of Christ

F. The clothing of the body

1. From nakedness to shame (Gen. 2:25-3:1-7)
2. The purpose of clothing the body, and how we dress
3. Principles for clothing the body (Deut. 22:5; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-4)

G. The body and the worship of God

1. Physical posture in worship
2. Physical space for worship
3. Physical elements in worship: baptism, the Lord's Supper

H. The suffering and healing of the body

1. The suffering of the body (2 Cor. 4:7-18)
2. The healing of the body (James 5:13-16)

I. The death of the body

1. What is death?
2. How we face death

J. The future of the body

Suggested Readings:

Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996)

John Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (2d. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989)