

Excurses: a. There is insufficient evidence from the apostolic age to 313 A.D. to prove or disprove ideas of church government. Where Acts or the epistles do not take a definite stand we must be cautious and tolerant in our attitude.

b. The attitude which is most honoring to the Lord is the well balanced one. Not lax or compromising, yet not becoming unduly strict like the Montanists. One reserves however a respect for the later which he cannot extend to the former.

D. Gnosticism (ob.cit. p. 10)

1. The gnostics represent a complete departure from the faith. They branded the God of the O.T. an evil God and did not believe in Christ as Saviour. They attempted to pour Christ into the mold of Greek Philosophy and exerted a great attraction for early Gentile Christians.
2. The gnostics were not an organized group but merely the scattered followers of many leaders who claimed to have a higher knowledge, even esoteric books, at their command.

E. Neo-Platonism

1. Neo-Platonism is the highpoint of paganism. Knowledge is supreme, one must abstract the good from Christianity and assimilate it into the Platonic system. Rather than an anthropomorphic concept of God, they espoused abstract concepts. Alexander Severus (R. emp. 225-235) typified the attitude by adding statues of Abraham and Christ to his private chapel.
2. Porphyry and Hierocles the ultra-rationalists became literary opponents of Christianity looking upon Christ as a "distinguished sage."

Note: Christianity in these early centuries faced not only the sword but also an intellectual attack as capable as any of our day.

F. Development of the Church Organization

1. Christ desired the church in matters which are not clearly and specifically taught in the scripture to be adaptable to various environments.
2. There is a tendency in the church to adhere to methods and practices which were expedient in the past but are no longer relevant.