

(3) Soul is the third force. It is the heart or the nature of the universe. There is a sense in which one, as a person, is a "division" of this great "world-soul". But soul exists in two levels or economies:

--higher aspects, a more transcendent form corresponding to mind...whereby the party involved is able to perceive some of the concepts of mind.

--lower aspects, a more immediate form approximating nature.

(4) Individual souls (from the over-soul) come at this point and they also have a twofold sort of being:

--higher...the human mind

--lower...the human body

(5) Matter, as an entity in itself is last in the power structure and it is evil...contrary, that is, to the real being which is spirit.

A system like this is known as an "hierarchial development" (reason: the universe ordered by hierarchies). As devised by Plotinus, the reach of the soul must be upward. It must be divested from material occupations and put its emphasis on "mind concepts". If this is done to a sufficient degree, it is possible for the soul to reach such ecstatic heights as to entertain the person (the being) of God...a state of supreme ecstasy to which Plotinus occasionally succeeded in liberating himself. The philosophy has no need or atonement, redemption or sacrifice. It is somewhat upgrading to man, however, and if not pushed to extremes, tends to evoke in him a desire to rise above his world on the ability of enjoying the eternal mind beyond him. The teacher in this class hopes you can see how this sort of thinking was on a course of collision with Christianity.

Neo-Platonic  
Emphasis.

(Plotinus)

Porphyry, chief disciple of Plotinus, was more than adequate to expand his master's teachings. In church history he is more important for his vigorous attacks on Christianity. He was an early Bible critic and most of his suggestions are still repeated by those hunting for contradictions, etc., in the Bible. As did his teacher, he taught an on-going asceticism and detachment from worldly things. This influence would affect Christianity in that non-sequeter sort of device whereby we say..."Even though their doctrine is wrong, why do they live better than we do?" In a note of sarcastic humor I suggest that neither doctrine nor practice are well learned from those who have no absolute grip on Truth.

(Porphyry)