

d. GNOSTICISM

Philosophy:

Gnosticism

Gnosticism was the great trial of the second century with a continuing influence in many points. The name comes from the Greek root "know" (knowledge) and gnosticism is a philosophy of higher knowledge. It is more an ideology than either a religion or a philosophy and so has been called a theosophy. It existed in several varied expressions with a wide divergency of expression among its teachers. It is called by Pelikan the "foremost of the systems of cosmic redemption." The concept is that deliverance is by knowledge...a special cosmic knowledge into which only a few are privileged to be admitted. We may make the following general observations about Gnosticism and they are rather accurate for all of the Gnostic schools without exhausting any.

(1) God is spiritual, good, exalted, all-perfect, and light; He is the head of the spiritual world of light. This God is NOT the God of the Old Testament, however. The God of the Old Testament, the Creator-God of this frightful place, was an un-just god, an evil demiurge. That is why you are in the fix you are in today.

General
Summary
of
Gnostic
Ideas

(2) The Universe is compartmentalized like this:

God Above

The Pleroma Between

We Below

Bits of truth come from the divine image and are scattered in the Pleroma. We seek to gain these in the mystery of the gnostic rites, attended to by Gnostic teachers. Getting this material from the pleroma calls for a good deal of denial of this life and an "overcoming" of this evil material world.

(3) Christ, although the son of an evil demiurge, still reveals bits of truth about the true God. He brings some true gnosis to man in spite of his "background" but he is not god incarnate and his resurrection is phantasmal at best. Followers of Christ can learn a good bit about getting out of this world but, as he is of the Jehovah line, not enough. His followers are obviously inferior to the followers of the great God...whose followers are all disciples of and among the gnostic teachers.

(4) Salvation is for some only...those who are able to receive the Gnosis, the true spiritual enlightenment, the secret teaching imparted by the apostles to their immediate disciples, who have