

skeptics and those who simply wanted better information. Striving for the latter led many men into statements that were not correct in terms of the more fully developed understanding of later years. This must be kept in mind when we read the earlier writers..the historical problem conditioned much of their work. But the value of it is not totally lost on us. It is simply that in zeal and eagerness to refute, overstatement was easy. Apologetics is a necessary voice in theology and we should all be interested in such as a useful means in declaring the adequacy of the Gospel.

### III.3.b. Polemicists

#### Polemicists

Whereas an apologist seeks to explain the faith to those without, the polemicist desires to resolve the problem within. Naturally there is some overlap. The term comes from the Greek work "to make war" and the polemicist is one who "makes war" on contrary opinions that affect the life of the church. Note that the categories are not absolute but have a relative significance that is fairly accurate.

#### Irenaeus (200)

One of the strongest voices in solving the internal problems of early Christianity, Irenaeus was one of the most meaningful fathers of the age and we feel a quick identification with him. His name is derived from the Greek "peace" complex of words and he sought to be this by the emphasis of correct doctrine and practice. Originally from Asia Minor, he lived most of his life around Lyons (southern France) and served as leader in the Christian community in that place. His great work in polemics was given against the gnostics and particularly against the influence they were having in the Christian community with believers of less sophistication. AGAINST HERESIES therefore, is a work that sets out to show that the supposed holders of knowledge really knew nothing at all. We have a prejudiced seat in this debate but the work certainly seems to demolish uniformity and compatibility of expression among gnostics and near gnostics.

The influence of Irenaeus is profound. He was the major thinker in the west and while he gave considerable authority to the office of the Bishop, he still