

Worldliness: That time-honored problem is still here to haunt the church. The standard answers were found in increased legalism, asceticism, and formalism. With the greater acceptance of the church in its society this particular sort of problem increased greatly and the ability to define it or to establish answers became less obvious.

IV.2.f.
Practical
Problems

Problems in Practical Areas

All problems are practical, of course but in this category we mean the sort of problems that have a pragmatic cast rather than one that is essentially spiritual or mystical...or directly church related.

Intrusion of the government into the church: With the legalized status came the giving of the government funds, the granting of special privilege, and a host of other things that would make the fellowship seek after secular favor at the cost of spiritual standards..in many instances. Governmental favor never comes without charge (an important lesson to be remembered in our present economy) and any source of favoritism or preference is likely to diminish the spiritual force of the church.

Ecclesiastical development: The simple and unadorned company of believers is becoming a multi-national corporation. There are new offices to be filled and with more people in the ranks the tendency is to make bureaus and create steps in the official structure of the fellowship. The simplicity that marked the church of Acts has long been gone but its memory grows more shady with every decade. The church is becoming an institution and the looseness of its general connection will soon be a possibility no longer.

Pagan Barbarian threats: These are a constant threat to the Empire and as the church is dependent on the government, they are threats to the church as well. There is a keen pressure on all aspects of society and the closer one lives to the border, the more keenly the issue is felt. The church sense of mission is not what it might be and while we do see some work in the barbarian world, it is not very much and not very reassuring.