

c. Legalization

- Constantine and Licinius
- The resultant state
- Estimates of influence in the Church
- Factors to be remembered.

Whatever else we may say about this event, it marked a change in the whole social and ecclesiastical structure. As with almost any other move or development, the bad and the good come together.

2. Philosophy

In some ways this was a larger challenge to the church's survival. Its impact is different but countering it is much more difficult.

a. Gnosticism

The worship of knowledge..an overly-simplified concept of the Gnostic idea..is one of the older philosophies that contended with our faith. The essential idea is that by special knowledge one is able to escape the earthly limitations and be taken into the great impersonal oversoul called "God" for want of any better term. It does not happen all at once..gnosticism follows an idea of hierarchies..but it is possible although gnostic teachers rarely agreed on it.

There is some gnosticism identifiable in the century before Christianity entered the world (the body politic) and there seems to be a recognition of gnostic problems as in the Colossian epistle. But the 2nd century was the "heyday" so to speak.

Well known gnostic teachers included Cerinthus and Valentinus. Many of the church "fathers" spoke against it..perhaps the most cogent was Irenaeus. The chart on page 31 is intended to add to your confusion about this subject...as is also our class discussion.