

b. Sacerdotalism

Although the ideas of a self-salvation as espoused by Pelagius had been set aside, there remained a trace of desire for human means to effect the work of grace. (There seems to be a little of it in all of us... an unwillingness to admit the divine capability to achieve salvation on God's own terms.) Thus, as ignorance increased in the dark ages, there was a push to have people do things that earned merit. Pilgrimages, etc., special devotions, serving the church became means of earning favor. A biblical soteriology is almost impossible in a system where such means are on hand and in use.

c. The Hierarchy

The ecclesiastical leaders tended to identify the church more and more with themselves and in the west this went from an "ecclesia in episcopoi" to an "ecclesia in Popae". The declarations that would come from Gregory VII, etc., made the submission to the hierarchy the thing that saves.

(In thinking of these, let your mind return to the confessional statements and note how often the writers gave the foundational ideas to God. It is God who works to do these things...men have their place under Him. Our confessional footing is intent on emphasizing the absolute role of the Lord in providing salvation and in receiving men to the eternal fold. The student would do well to study this concept in the sections of the confession identified as Adoption, Justification, and Sanctification in particular.)

2. The results of defection

Mediaeval man found himself at the mercy of the institution. He could not have access to the Divine materials in themselves (most cases) and was dependent on secondary sources for most of what he knew. His salvation was almost a thing of barter...exchanging his own being in suffering for an imparted joy from God. Following is an excerpt from Gregory I and his dialogues as quoted by Petry, A History of Christianity, Vol. I, p 162...Gregory is talking about the overcoming work in the life of Benedict...Benedict is in a place of great temptation and struggle:

Just then he noticed a thick patch of nettles and briars next to him. Throwing his garment aside, he flung himself naked into the sharp thorns and stinging nettles. There he rolled and tossed until his whole body was in pain and covered with blood. Yet once he had conquered pleasure through suffering, his torn and bleeding skin served to drain off the poison of temptation from his body. Before long the pain that was burning his whole body had put out the fires of