

In connexion with this aspect of church life there are two or three points that need greater particularization:

a. The religious calendar

The development of a calendar that regulated the religious life of the people through a sequence of special days was a continuation of the Old Testament pattern of worship. It cannot, in itself, be conceived of as defective for the general idea is given by God with regard to the festivals of the law, etc. Not celebrating these, the church necessarily came up with days of its own occasioning and, setting these apart, gave special significance and, in some cases, grace to their observation. You will think of Christmas and Easter, for a beginning idea but a liturgical calendar will take you far beyond this and tend to make the organizing of personal duties a study in whom is what at what time and on what occasion.

b. The martyr identification

Linking the present community with the past, the choice of patron saints and emulation of same becomes a strong voice in ecclesiological mission. It will be closely related to the concepts of relics and to be born and not given a saintly name is one of the poorer things that could happen to one. This will be coupled, in the mind at least, with the concepts of guardian angels, godfathers, etc.

c. Religious duty

The church becomes the prescriber of deeds that may be done for the earning of grace and spiritual credit: everything from pilgrimages to acts of contrition.

In the case of all these, the increase is proportionate to the passage of time from the apostolic age and the movement into the dark ages. The ideas arose in a world that needed further assurance of truth...and the turning to these means rather logically followed the magnification of the office of the bishop and the legalization of the institutional body.

D. The Growth of Church Authority

1. General note

That the body politic has legitimate authority over its communicants is plain in the New Testament. To what extent that authority may be activated is one of those points not made explicit in the Scriptures and so left to the understanding of men and women in descending ages. The most basic authority structure, as in the Didache, showed the pattern of life desired for the members and the attitudes given towards the servants of the community. And this is the general concept of church authority until the Edict of Milan.