

History IA

II.4 Church
life
develops

DEVELOPMENT OF CHURCH LIFE

This is an interesting study ...to see how that simple band of dedicated followers of Jesus became an organization of considerable import and power. We will summarize it often in the course but for the moment the following steps have been observed.

1) The Didache shows us the growth of forms, ceremonies, and human procedures in the apostolic church. We learn how quickly the body politic was given to the instructional methods that were almost more important than the heart of the faith. We can see how this happens but will not enjoy the view.

2) Meanwhile Ignatius the father shows us how the offices of the church developed into powerful central authority structures. The need for leadership would rapidly become an infatuation.

3) Archaeology (most of it is later) helps us see how the church assimilated and created signs, symbols, sacred thoughts, etc., as guides and standards in religious practice. The Sign of the Fish, the Sign of the Cross, the Paternoster rectangle, and many other things quickly became the means of uniting the people in spiritual thrust.

And see on page 45 our chart on the growth of authority and power in the body.

II.5

SUMMARY OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The church as a body politic began at Pentecost.

By 150 AD it had spread as far east as Burma and China and down the east African coast as far as Madagascar and on the west to near what is now Ivory Coast. It had penetrated the British isles, moved into south central Europe and occupied the territories around the Black Sea and on to the Caspian. Upper central Europe had not been touched and central Africa was not penetrated so far as we know.

Through all of this time the church was illegal and subject to sporadic persecution at the whim of rulers. It had no organizational unity but an understood oneness that bound it together in fibre and morale.