

it has experienced some common realities along this line.

In truth we find in the period and within the fold of oneness, many bitter rivalries occurred and outside the oneness was a constant preying of apostates, heretics, cultists, etc., on the more simple of the flock. In other words, the problems common to Christianity in all other places and times were here as well but they were not complicated by a diversity of church organizations and structure...each propagating itself often at the expense of others. To some extent the organism lacked the pique of individual identification and it was also helpful that all parts of the church easily fell under the same scourge of persecution. It is remarkable what a common foe can do.

Thus the church was marked by oneness but in a non-organizational state. The oneness was emotive and spiritual. It is what is seen in the New Testament when a collection was taken for the saints in Jerusalem...the poor of the moment who had little. There was no direct compulsion but there was a powerful interest of heart that often led to more open actions. Perhaps it was only natural but the church had difficulty maintaining this sense of oneness as it grew. So long as the Roman empire welded the west and east, believers were able to accept a commonality of cause without the dangers of a centralized power-structure. But the power cliques were coming and with them would be an end to the concept of inorganic unity in Christ as the dominant expression of Christian experience.

III.2.b
Church
Literature

The Literature of the Church

Literary productions are helpful in knowing the spiritual level of a body at any time. There is a flow in the direction of literary production that is of general interest.

--The early church in the Apostolic period tended to produce literature in the form of pastoral letters, apologetics intended as "life-pleas", and romantic literature that in heroic fashion, showed the value of a Christian life.

--As time passed and the danger of persecution was dissipated (although never totally lost) there was more time for thought and academic considerations of the problems the church faced. Thus the literature is less romantic and more polemic: less epistolary and