

It was! Membership or being a part of the constituted Christian community was not only a profession of faith but also an adherence to a body and participation in the life processes thereof. This matter will be treated more fully in the next period when we can see the church as a legal institution, but the ideal of simple faith making one part of the body and bringing one to the fellowship of the whole, is an idea clouded with enactments. The truth of the feeling of oneness still remains, however, and that is worthy of note.

The authority of the bishop has grown considerably. He has come to be a replacement for the apostles and in some cases exercises more energetically than the apostles might have done. The bishop is still confined, in a practical way, to his own area (see). And so long as there is persecution and martyrdom, the having of ecclesiastical office is really more service than honor...most want it for the doing of the will of God. But the prestige that came with it indicated that before long men would want it for the honor more than for the joy of service.

The rise in episcopal authority was due to several things:

- leadership gap following the loss of the apostles
- vulnerability of the community to cults, etc.
- decimation of the community from persecution, etc.
- insufficiency of study opportunity
- natural gravitation to persons of ability

And these can be augmented by others. It must be plain that the development of the episcopate was a threat to the individuality of the local congregations and the exercise of individual priesthood by each believer. But it was a risk to be run in time and most groups move that way as the line of least resistance.

III.4.c. Life ideal

The Christian Life Ideal

The intended aim of the church was to show a communion of saints (believers) and an agency of salvation. This was founded in the practical application of the Scripture and the practice of