

(2) Therefore the simplicity of what would seem to the ready eye to be the heart of the Gospel message is often obscured unless one takes the time to read the total picture. He will find that salvation was clearly preached in the Ante-Nicene period, eagerly believed, and made its way through the known world. But it was an educational experience as well as a movement of ideas and heart.

#### 4. Ecclesiology

### Ecclesiology

#### Summary

The doctrine of the church was born to a large extent out of experience. More than any other doctrine, it suffered from the circumstances of the world about the Fathers...due somewhat to the fact that the doctrine of the church is twofold: i.e., the truth about the spiritual company and the truth about its physical organization. Accordingly the developments in ecclesiology reflect less theological base (often) and more empirical character and observation. It does have a central corps in the reality of the Christian community, an ideal that is very pronounced in the Ante-Nicene Period. That means, the reality of oneness without a structural organized whole. In the later periods the various branches of the church will take over and we will have the formalized segments but in this period the concept of an essential oneness without an enforced superstructure is pronounced.

#### a. Summary:

(1) On the character of the church we note this: It is viewed as a community for the worship of God and constructive improvement of the worshippers. It is seen as "one" and not "many" and what we would think of as "denomination" today would have been called "schism" in this period of history. Through the various schools, there was a counter part to the modern denominationalism but the setting of Christianity was marked with an organic, as well as an inorganic oneness that is very stimulating

(2) As far as the officers go, the terms "presbyters" and "deacons" are very common. The term "bishop" is employed as a word designating a set pastoral office very early in the second century. The presbyters are thought of as successors to the Apostles and the directors of the church. A chief presbyter...in our language...presides over the whole of a given church gathering but as a "first among equals" economy.

(3) Great authority is centered in the church