

2. Paragraphic summary of the Periods. Part of the overview and you will discover a much more detailed discussion of each period when we come to the notes that identify it.

The Ante-Nicene Period

Pentecost to 325 AD.

Apostolic Period to 100

Post-Apostolic to 325.

Major Study: Theology Proper

a. The Ante-Nicene Period...The name for this period comes from the Nicene Council of 325 AD which is the "cut-off" date for the period. (Literal meaning "Before Nicea") It effectively covers the time from Pentecost until 325 and is divided into two major periods: the Apostolic (during which time apostolic influence did much to control the thinking of the Christian community) and the Post-Apostolic period when the church depended on the development of apostolic thought. (The time division is about 100 AD) The period was historically influenced by the fact that Christianity was illegal and, although not widely persecuted at all times, was still frequently subjected to widespread terrorism. The academic world was overrun, so to speak, with philosophies both new and old...strong "mystical" schools existed and while the older paganism was hardly a serious spiritual threat, the attachment for the older order was still a realistic force. The church was not an institutionalized whole but a loose knit body of many arms and divisions. During much of the time there was no finalization of canon and the search for authority was a primary problem. This, coupled with challenges about the character of God, gave the ante-Nicene economy its largest headaches. Therefore most of the doctrinal interest in the church was geared in the area of theology proper and in the search for right authority. Most of the apologetic influence was to stress the fact that Christianity had a right to exist on one hand and that it was markedly superior to rivals on the other.

The Conciliar Period

325 to 1200 (ca)

Ecumenical 325-450

Early Mediaeval 450-800

Mediaeval 800-1200

b. The Conciliar Period derives its name from the word "council" and the idea is that during this time solutions to problems were sought in "ecclesiastical councils". The designation of this period in my notes is something you are not likely to find in any other course and my suggestion for the end of it is actually 1215 and the third Lateran Council which we will come to in time. During the period there were 8 churchwide councils and some after the east-west division.

During the first part of the period the church was essentially "one" (due to politics of the Empire and the feeling of kinship) although not an organizational one. The civilized western world became "Christian" and the edicts of the councils