

Church History Glossary

Term	Definition
apologist	One who defends the faith by its logical and rational arguments.
apostolic	Pertaining to the writings of the Apostles and/or those closely associated with them. That which is foundational or referring to the practices of the churches while the Apostles still lived.
catholic Christianity	Refers to the period from 1 AD through 325 AD where the churches were basically independent assemblies holding to the rule of faith or certain creeds where unity and agreement was in the main. (“Catholic” denotes the concept of “universal”—not referring to the Roman Catholic church.)
church “fathers”	Those who rose to the occasion to combat error and to define and defend the faith.
diocese	A carryover from the Roman Empire which was normally a district or a designated governmental territory administered by the monarchical bishop. The term literally means “to keep house”.
ecumenical church council	A gathering of mostly bishops, presbyters and deacons, usually instigated by the Roman emperor to discuss doctrinal heresies and schisms in order to reach a conclusion reestablishing peace and tranquility throughout the empire. The first notable council was the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.
heresies	Comes from the Greek which means “choosing” or “faction”. Pertaining to various teachers who proposed controversial ideas about Christ, God, salvation, and any other biblical theme. A heresy is simply an error or false teaching with regards to biblical truth.
imperial Christianity	Approximately from 325 AD through the 6 th century. A period of time where church and state were inseparably joined together by imperial edict. This period would eventually evolve into papal Christianity.
monarchical bishop	A concept that gradually developed during the second and third centuries where one bishop ruled over a certain diocese like a little mini-king. The individual assemblies under his rule normally had one elder who was referred to as a priest and was answerable only to the bishop. Examples of monarchical bishops would eventually be found in Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch in Syria.
orthodox	Pertaining to or conforming to the approved form of any doctrine, philosophy, or ideology. Conforming to beliefs, attitudes or modes of conduct that are generally approved. Customary or conventional; that which is established, sound or correct in opinion, doctrine, and esp. theological or religious. Conforming to the Christian faith as represented in the creeds of the early church.
Pax Romana	A period of peace and prosperity which ended after 180 AD. During this period, the Christian faith spread basically unhindered throughout the Roman Empire. Certain Roman Caesars went to great lengths to maintain this period of peace and prosperity.
schism	From the Greek meaning “to tear or to split”, thus a division, usually from an organization or a movement. Refers to a person who creates or incites division in a group or a church, or a defined organization with a hierarchy.
Ante or Pre-Nicene vs. Post-Nicene “Fathers”	The Council of Nicea was conducted in 325 AD. Therefore, all of the “church fathers” who lived and wrote prior to that historical occasion are designated “Ante- or Pre-Nicene”, while those who followed the council are designated “Post-Nicene”.