

APPENDIX 4*

The Dating of the First Oecumenical Council of Nicaea and the Beginning of the Christian Era

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1. A Date for the Council of Nicaea from the Easter Book

1.1. The accepted point of view. It is commonly accepted nowadays that the church calendar, used by the Orthodox Church till now, was canonized by the First Oecumenical Council, held in the town of Nicaea in Vafin in 325 A.D., in the reign of Emperor Constantine. The calendar consists of two parts, the flexible and the fixed one. The fixed part is the Julian calendar (the so-called "old style") with fixed festivals its dates. The flexible part is the Easter Book, which determines the position of Easter, changing from year to year, in the Julian calendar, and consequently the count of weeks and the position of flexible festivals. The two parts of the calendar together determine church services for every day of the year; thus, the canonization of the calendar is of fundamental significance for the Church. This makes the common opinion that the church calendar was canonized at the First Oecumenical Council look quite plausible. So it was thought in the Middle Ages, and so it is accepted today.

Not many, however, know that this opinion *sharply contradicts the present traditional dating of the Council of Nicaea to 325 A.D. (and any of the 4th century A.D.)*. Meanwhile, this contradiction was already noticed by paschalists at the beginning of 20th century. However, this contradiction hitherto received no perspicuous explanation.

Note that the dating of the Council of Nicaea is of exceptional importance because this date is a basis for all chronology assumed today of the events since the 4th century A.D. This date also provided a reason for the Gregorian calendar reform conducted by the Roman Church at the end of the 16th century (so-called "new style").

Thus, a revision of dating of the Council of Nicaea entails a revision of the entire chronological scale at least from the 4th to the 14th century. Apparently, this is the reason why those who noticed the contradictions between the contents of the Easter Book and the date of the Council of Nicaea did not decide to make any conclusions. We, however, digress for a while from these difficulties and consider the problem of dating the Council of Nicaea according to the Easter Book, leaving alone the chronology of other events.

*This Appendix contains the remarkable results of G. V. Nosovsky obtained in 1990. The short version of this work was published in 1992 (see [347]).