

centuries, therefore this was the time of the First Oecumenical Council. This was, apparently, the way the chronologists of the 16th century (Scaliger) reasoned. But while the first of these considerations is doubtful (it does not ensue directly from the Easter Book), the second is erroneous because it presupposes that the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea had at their disposal an exact date (in the 4th century) for the spring equinox, while in the 14th century this date was sometimes determined with a 6-day error.

*1.9. Where the date for the Council of Nicaea came from.* The date of the Council of Nicaea we derive above from the Easter Book differs essentially from the traditionally accepted one. In this connection it is useful to retrace the way the tradition to assign the Council of Nicaea to 4th century A.D. was established. Recall that the acts of the Council of Nicaea did not survive, and no available acts of the posterior Councils contain the dates they were held at. Thus, dating the Oecumenical Councils is far from easy.

We begin our review of dating the Council of Nicaea with a quotation from the chronological introduction to the "Rules" by Matthew Vlastar (Constantinople, 14th century A.D.):

"On the First Oecumenical Council of Nicaea. The First Oecumenical Holy Council of 318 Church fathers gathered in Nicaea, in Vafin, in the year 20 of the reign of Constantine the Great. As many years had passed since the human incarnation of our Lord, apparently, as there were Church fathers at the Council, that is, 318" [331, sheet 6].

Matthew Vlastar writes that since the human incarnation of Christ (i.e., since the birth of Christ) as many years had passed, as there were Church fathers present at the Council, that is, 318. This "method of dating" (Vlastar does not particularly insist on it) could seem insubstantial to the modern reader. We should not, however, be too supercilious about Vlastar's dating because this very date is at the basis of the modern "scientific" dating the Council of Nicaea. After the 14th century this date only got a slight specification (correction).

First, a 7-year correction was done (Scaliger, 16th century): "The First Oecumenical Council was the Nicaean one gathered after an order of tzar Constantine the Great in Nicaea in Vafin on May 20 of the Christian year 325. 318 bishops were present there ..." [334, sheet 183].

The second correction amounted to several weeks (20th century, Encyclopaedia of Brockhaus-Evfron, "Council of Nicaea"):

"On July 4 or 5, the Emperor arrived at Nicaea (325 A.D. is meant—G. Nosovsky) and the next day the inauguration of the Council took place in the grand hall of the emperor's palace ... The Council decided the question of the time of celebrating Easter ..."

Not dwelling on the analysis of these specifications, let us ask a question: On what did the founder of the "scientific" chronology, I. Scaliger, base his confirmation of the "rough" dating the Council of Nicaea to 4th century A.D.? Recall that the activities of I. Scaliger were at the time of the Gregorian calendar reform. We have already observed that the reform leaned heavily upon the conviction that the Council of Nicaea had canonized the Easter Book just in the 4th century A.D. This assignment to the 4th century conformed to the astronomical analysis (rather superficial) of the contents of the Easter Book (a more thorough analysis refutes this assignment, see subsection 8). Evidently, this conviction was shared by Scaliger. But this means that his dating the Council of Nicaea (or, at least, the "scientific" part of this dating)