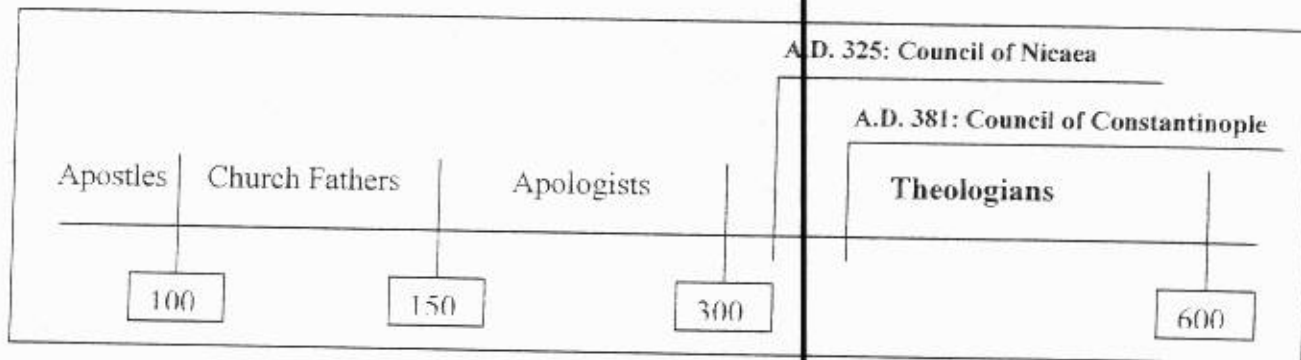


Foundations

Mount Shasta Evangelical Free Church

And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth...

Acts 1:8b



- The Council of Nicaea was convened primarily to settle the Arian Heresy. Two other issues were brought before the Council. These were the Meletian Schism (an Egyptian form of Donatism) and the day upon which Easter was to be observed.
 1. The Council found against the Meletians, but was lenient on the group.
 2. The question of Easter was a bit more divisive, but the Council ultimately decided on celebrating the day on a Sunday rather than whatever day was the 14th of Nisan.
- At the Council, the focus of debate was the nature of the relationship between the Son and the Father.
 1. Arians held that the Son was a creature created by the Father.
 2. The church maintained that the Son was God, eternal with the Father, separate yet one.
 3. The way the defenders of orthodoxy chose to defend their position was through the use of the word *homousios*, which means "same substance" or "same essence".
 4. By adopting this language, the Council sought to emphasize the oneness and threeness of God.
- The Council declared Arianism heretical. Nonetheless, the Arians considered to operate in the background.
 1. Near the end of his life, Constantine increasingly falls under the influence of Eusebius of Nicomedia.
 2. One of Constantine's heirs, Constantius II fully associated himself with the Arians.
 3. The proponents of Arianism cast the debate as a matter of language. Before the emperor, they ignore the metaphysical aspects.
 4. In an attempt to make themselves seem as orthodox as possible, Arians adopt the term *homoiousios*, which means "similar substance" or "similar essence".

5. Under the imperial patronage of Constantius II, the Arians are able to make a powerful resurgence. They combine their efforts with the Meletians.
6. Nonetheless, their victories are always political, never theological.

- During this period, the primary defender of orthodoxy was Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria.

1. Constantius exiled Athanasius several times for his defense of the Trinity. Constantius lacked the theological nuance to really care about the spiritual issues. Rather, the Arians who had his ear portrayed Athanasius as a political rabble-rouser.
 - A. During one of Athanasius' exiles, he wrote a letter to his congregation in Alexandria on the occasion of Easter. In the letter he lists the complete list of the 27 books of the New Testament. This is the first complete list of the NT Canon.
2. Athanasius' book "On the Incarnation" is considered a masterpiece of Trinitarian writing.

- In the midst of this period, an Arian missionary named Ulfilas traveled beyond the bounds of the Roman Empire. There he converted the Goths to Arian Christianity. From this point, the heretical teachings were spread to other barbarian tribes.

- Arianism was focused primarily in the east, where it originated. The west was relatively untouched by the issue and remained orthodox in its teachings.

- In the middle of the 4th century a new, more virulent form of Arianism appeared under the leadership of Aetius and Eunomius. They rejected not only the orthodox teaching on the Trinity but the *homoiousion* of the post-Nicene Arians. They taught absolutely that Christ was a created being lacking any touch of divinity.

- While Arianism was in the ascendant (due to political connections) orthodoxy was honing its language and refutation of Arian teachings.

1. The Cappadocian Fathers were the leaders of this. They were:

Basil of Caesarea
Gregory of Nazianzus
Gregory of Nyssa.

2. They formulated much of the Trinitarian language that we use today.
3. An emphasis in their teachings was on the nature of Persons within the Trinity.

- In A.D. 379 the Romans suffered one of their greatest defeats at Adrianople. The Emperor Valens (an Arian) was killed and the Goths were allowed to roam the Roman Empire unchecked.

- Valens' successor was Theodosius the Great. He was a staunch supporter of orthodoxy.

- Shortly after stabilizing the situation in fallout of the defeat at Adrianople, Theodosius convenes the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. There Arianism is repudiated once and for all the final form of the Nicene Creed is drafted.