Smithsonian Associates

A Milestone in Church History: The Council of Nicaea

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Wednesday, January 28, 2026 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. ET

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA: A TIMELINE

303-313	The Great Persecution (Donatist Schism)
312	The "Vision of Constantine" and the Battle of Milvian Bridge
c.318/321	Outbreak of the "Arian Controversy", expulsion of Arius by Alexander of Alexandria
324	Constantine's conquest of the east, death of Licinius
Early 325	Constantine's *Letter to Alexander and Arius*; Council of Antioch
May-July 325	COUNCIL OF NICAEA (first ecumenical council, *homoousios*); Eusebius of Caesarea's *Letter to his church*
328	Athanasius consecrated bishop of Alexandria
330	Dedication of Constantinople
335	Council of Tyre; first exile of Athanasius
336	Death of Arius
337	Baptism and Death of Constantine; accession of Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans
c.340	Ulfila begins his Christian mission to the Goths
341	Dedication Council of Antioch
343	Council of Serdica
358-9	Councils of Ariminum-Seleucia
378	Battle of Adrianople; accession of Theodosius I
381	Council of Constantinople (second ecumenical council)
431	Council of Ephesus (third ecumenical council)

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA: SOME SUGGESTED READING

The Council of Nicaea (325) was a momentous event for both the Christian Church and the Roman empire, and the 1700th anniversary in 2025 attracted renewed attention from academic and popular audiences. The following suggestions provide some possible starting points for those who wish to read further on the council, its controversies, and the wider historical context.

General Reading

Av. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire, AD 284-430* (1993)
H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society* (2001)
P. Esler (ed.), *The Early Christian World* (2nd edition, 2017)
P. Heather, *Christendom: The Triumph of a Religion* (2022)

The Council of Nicaea and the "Arian Controversy"

L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (2004)
R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (1988)
Y.R. Kim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea* (2021)
M. Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (1996)
R.D. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (2nd impression, 2001)

Constantine and the Bishops

T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981)
H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (2000)
D.M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (2012)
A.P. Johnson, *Eusebius* (2014)
P. Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor* (2011)

Primary Sources

All the surviving documents from the period surrounding the Council of Nicaea are translated with introductions in D.M. Gwynn, R. Price, and M. Whitby, with P.M. Forness, *Documents of the Early 'Arian' Controversy and the Council of Nicaea* (2025). Extracts from these and other key texts can also be found in D.M. Gwynn, *Christianity in the Later Roman Empire: A Sourcebook* (2015).

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