

III.2.d
(continued)Troublesome Questions

Internal struggles are often founded on questions that are unsettled or lacking in resolve. A number of these existed in the pre-Nicene church and we will look at them for the sake of completeness in this regard:

The Date of Easter

Easter arguments are still with us. The establishment of the occasion is at the heart of this early question. Eastern churches favored celebrating easter on the 14th of Nisan in connexion with the Passover ideology. The commemorative date would therefore fall on any day of the week as the calendar demanded. This position is known as quartodecimanian or the "fourteenth day". The western churches did not favor it as they wanted easter to fall on a Sunday and thereby it would coincide with the New Testament day of worship as they conceived it. The arguments were many. Victorinus of Rome (190) was tempted to excommunicate those holding the eastern view but he gave into the better judgment of Irenaeus and it is amazing how much bad blood there was in the matter.

Eventually the arguments were heard at Nicaea (325) and it was decided by the leaders gathered there (and the vast majority were from the east) that a fixed date would be best. Easter, as we call it, would be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon following the vernal equinox. So while Easter moves around on the calendar, it is always celebrated on a Sunday, going back to this decision. There was broad general agreement but many eastern fathers in later years would view it as an unnecessary concession to western opinion.

Later in this material we have a discussion of easter as a sacred holiday and the rites given it thereby but we never discuss colored eggs or hot-cross buns.

The Authority of the Sees

The "see" was the territory in which any one bishop had oversight. Since territorial lines are not carved in stone, it was inevitable that bishops would overstretch their bounds and make