

SECOND ECUMENICAL COUNCIL¹

A Brief History between the 2 Councils:

- The Christological controversy did not end with the Nicean council even Emperor Constantine² regretted his acceptance of the decrees of this council. He granted amnesty to the Arian leaders and exiled Athanasius who said in his exile: "Athanasius against the world."
- The 1st Ecumenical council championed the party saying of the two natures of Christ and that declared the Son's consubstantiality (*homoousios*) with the Father; of one (same) in essence.
- As a reaction to this Apollinarius favored and taught the one nature of Christ (monophysitism). He rejected that Christ has a human mind. He championed Christ's divinity. His teachings were condemned by Basil the Great, Theodoret, in 362 at the synod of Alexandria presided by Athanasius of Alexandria and at the 2nd Ecumenical council.
- The 1st Ecumenical council did not clarify the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. So it became a topic of debate around 360 by the Pneumatomachianism, the Macedonians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit (who is the creation of the Son and His servant). The Macedonians also gave rise to (*Homoiousius*), which means "of similar essence" with the Father; "two essences" compared to "one essence" (*Homoousios*), which was confirmed at the Council of Nicea.
- Another outcome of the 1st Ecumenical Council is the (Sabelian heresy),³ which taught monarchism/non-trinitarian; God is one and has 3 faces or 3 masks. He is not one in three hypostases.
- A third heresy called Anomeanism arose, which is attributed to Aetius who introduced the word *anomoion*, of "different in essence"; the Father and the Only Begotten Son do not share the same divine substance.
- Eunomios, his student, took the heresy further by teaching a hierarchical subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Holy Spirit to the Son and who rechristened into the "death of Christ" those who came to him, denying the baptism in the Name of the Trinity.
- Valentius and Ursacius created another heresy by refusing the usage "of one in essence" on the ground that it is not biblical.
- Marcellianism which is attributed to Marcellus (c+374) bishop of Ancyra taught that the pre-existing Word has no distinct existence. The son is an "active energy" of God in creation and redemption.

The Council:

- It is called the 1st council of Constantinople, which convened from May to July 381 at Agia Sophia. The council of 150 Bishops.

¹ References is attributed to many resources as: Wikipedia, the *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second series, Vol XIV, and *The Church of the ancient Councils*, Peter l'Huilier, SVS Press, 1996.

² 327.

³ Attributed to Sabelius, a priest who taught in Rome and was named by St Basil the Great as the Libyan.

- It was confirmed as ecumenical at the 4th Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon 451 although it was intended to be a local council.
- The Pope of Rome was not invited and no representatives from any Diocese of the West were present.
- St Gregory the Theologian revered it as one of the holy Gospels.
- It was called the council of Saints for the many bishops who were present were known for their saintly life and their confession of faith as: Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebaste, Amphilovhius of Iconium, Diodorus of Tarsus and Cyril of Jerusalem.
- It was presided by 3 consecutive presidents; first by Meletius of Antioch⁴ who died and was styled a saint in the panegyric delivered over him, and then by Gregory the Theologian who resigned from his Episcopal duties.⁵ And thirdly by Nectarios⁶ a senator was selected to preside over the council. Nectarios was accepted by Emperor Theodosius, but he was not yet baptized. Cyriacus of Adana took upon himself to teach Nectarios his duties as a pastor, then was baptized and consecrated a bishop of Constantinople.⁷

The Outcome of the Council:

- The following was added to the Nicene creed *“And (We believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the Prophets. In One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge One Baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”* The Creed was thereafter known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed or Symbol of Faith. This addition approved indirectly the Nicene Creed, which was against Arianism and proclaimed the Catholic faith of the Holy Spirit against the pneumatomachianism.

⁴ He is not Meletius of Lycopolis of Egypt, the father of the Meletian schism, although another schism occurred under the same name caused by the election of the successor of Meletius of Antioch and the presence of parallel bishops at the same time from the Arians and the Nicenes. His position regarding Christ is as stated here: “Now, to believe in Christ is to believe that the Son is like unto the Father, His image, Who is in everything, creator of all; and not an imperfect but an adequate image, even as the effect corresponds to the cause. The generation of the only begotten Son, anterior to all time, carries with it the concepts of subsistence, stability, and exclusivism,” which quoted from the Catholic Encyclopedia. His stand was not clear, both sides the Arians and the Nicene thought him on their sides. He was so gentle and liked to have unity among Christians. But he is famous for extending three fingers towards the people, then closed two and said, “Three Persons are conceived in the mind but it as though we addressed one only.” (Ibid)

⁵ St Gregory words at his resignation because he found bishops proclaiming illegitimacy of his position in Constantinople: “Let me be as the Prophet Jonah! I was responsible for the storm, but I would sacrifice myself for the salvation of the ship. Seize me and throw me... I was not happy when I ascended the throne, and gladly would I descend it.” Quoted from Wikipedia.

⁶ Nectarius was praetor of Constantinople. An elderly man born at Tarsus in Cilicia of a noble family, he was widely known for his admirable character, but was still only a catechumen. His appearance and manners struck Diodorus bishop of tarsus who was attending this council so forcibly that he at once determined that he should be advanced as a candidate for Bishop. The bishop of Antioch put his name at the end of the list of candidates that was submitted to the Emperor Theodosius I who chose him. Quoted from Wikipedia.

⁷ 2 canons from the Council of Nicea were used in this council. One was used to reject the legitimacy of Gregory the Theologian and the other that forbade the ordination of a neophyte was disregarded.

- This addition was not the invention of this council. It was said that it was ready in use by Epiphanius by the year 374 as a symbol of faith recited by those who are ready to be baptized by the Church of salamis.
- The council initiated 7 canons:
 1. Confirms the Faith of the 1st ecumenical Council and condemns (Anathema) every heresy; Eunomians or Anomeans, Arians, Sabellians, Apollinarians, Macedonians, Marcellians and Photinians.
 2. Confirms the canon adopted at Nicea concerning the observance of diocesan and patriarchal limits. The word diocese was used for the first time.
 3. Issues a controversial canon which gave honor to the See of New Rome (Constantinople) over Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. The Church of Rome did not accept this canon though it has accepted 4 canons out the 7 canons that were issued at this council. It did accept the dogmatical canons as contested by Gregory the Great, bishop of Rome.
 4. Decrees the invalidity of the consecration of Maximus as bishop of Constantinople.
 5. This canon is not very clear and it may have been produced in 382 in Constantinople too. It speaks about the Tome of Westerners and the acceptance of the Antiochians who confessed one single divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 6. Limits the ability to accuse bishops of wrongdoing. It clarifies: a) who may accuse a bishop and under what conditions the complaints may be received, b) who is defined by the term heretic and c) what are the normal tribunals for judging a bishop.
 7. Speaks about receiving heretics who wish to return to Orthodoxy. 2 customs were introduced; a) the Arians, Macedonians, Novatianists and Apollinarians would be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Chrismated), while b) who are baptized by single immersion, Montanists and Sabellians, will be received as pagans.

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