

The
Second
Ecumenical
Council:

Constantinople:
381 AD.

Background
Politically

Background
Theologically

B. The Second Ecumenical Council: Constantinople
381 AD.

1. Background

a. Political Foundations

(1) The division of the Empire begun under Diocletian and formalized with Constantine's sons had become more or less permanent. Theodosius ruled in the East while Gratian ruled in the west. The west had much more political instability and more spiritual stability than did the east (not easy to reason why) and this council dealt more with eastern problems than western.

(2) The difficulty arose from the fact that dissenting political views are not helped by dissenting social/religious views. While the present emperor was a very successful militarist, he still had all he could do to maintain his borders and the disruption from the on-going Nicene problem was more than the empire needed.

(3) In addition, there was a certain amount of rivalry among the various schools of the church. Alexandria and Antioch feuded almost endlessly in the theological lists and the rivalries did little to support a strong position for the emperor. While the Nicene affair was winding down, the confusion of many bodies made life hectic. Hence the eastern empire firmly desired peace in the church.

b. Theological Foundations

(1) in the face of the widespread discussions following Nicaea a whole host of groups had developed echoing the sentiments of one party or the other. We always like to mention them but the student need not know them all.

(a) Eunomians...an extreme Arian position that held the son was, in all parts, unlike the Father.

(b) Eudoxians...Arians who felt the Son was like the Father only in Moral Likeness.

(c) Macedonians...Those who denied the deity of the Holy Spirit...called Pneumatomachians.

(d) Sabellians: as before, those who asserted the Son and the Spirit to be modes in which the Father manifested himself.

(e) Marcellians...those who regarded the kingdom of Christ to be temporal, not eternal.