

The Sixth Ecumenical Council

Constantinople III
680-681

F. The Sixth Ecumenical Council: Constantinople

1. The Background

a. Governmentally the eastern empire is caught in the throes of a growing Mohammedanism. Most of Palestine is under the Islamic forces and much of Asia Minor is threatened.

b. Theologically a faction has arisen urging that though Christ may have two natures, he has but one will. This is called monothelitism and among those who champion it is the Roman Bishop Honorius. The idea may have been propagated first by Sergius in Constantinople. In seeking support for his overall scheme he enlisted the aid of Honorius (d. 638) and began a campaign which he thought would placate the monophysites and strengthen the church. It did just the opposite.

2. The affairs

The council covered a ten month span of time in meeting with a wildly fluctuating attendance. After 18 sessions it condemned monothelitism as a crude compromise and not characteristically true of the person of the Savior. The current Roman bishop Agatho I, agreed with the decision and so did condemn his predecessor. Later Roman scholars would argue that Honorius did not speak "ex cathedra".

3. Contributions

Perhaps the only meaningful contribution came in the monothelite matter in that it suggested a further refinement in the matter of Christ's will. This was a small christological find. In Ecclesiology there was shown the record that the council spoke with more authority than individual teachers even though that teacher should be the bishop of Rome.

G. The Seventh Ecumenical Council: Nicaea 787

1. The Background

The Islamic force was the big menace in the eastern world. Leo the Isaurian, the eastern emperor d. 741 had had some success in defeating the Arab forces and felt that he could avoid much of the problem if he eliminated "idolatry" from the religion of the east. The Muslim cause was very keen on removing idols and to Leo the pictures and statues in the churches, etc., inflamed the problem with Islam. In keeping with this, in 726, he banned idols, images, statues, pictures, etc. (all icons) in the eastern churches and had his army remove them.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council:

Nicaea 787 II

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