

The Eighth Council:  
Constantinople: 869-880

This is one of the most confusing parts of the Conciliar history. The Bishops at Rome and Constantinople were feuding and the heart of it centered on the filioque Problem: the question of whether

the Holy Spirit

came from the Father or

from the Father and the Son.

You can surmise the Biblical data behind it all and it was a hot debate. Two attempts were made to call a gathering, the first in 869 and the second in 880. The rival bishops excommunicated one another amidst great confusion and in some ways helped lay the foundation for the Great Schism of 1054. The Eighth council is not formally included in the list of the ecumenical efforts and this is about all you need to know of it besides what you will read in our texts. The bishops called their own machinery into service and each gained at his council what he wanted but it had no effect on the other party besides strong irritation.

Observation on the Councils

The conciliar movement as an effective tool in church life and growth has waned. Councils will meet in the east and west..in the west they will center around the Vatican and Lateran palaces while in the east they will center around the Trullan palace. Diversity of backgrounds, ideals, national spirit, etc., all worked against the continuing force of the earlier councils. In our recent history there have been many calls for ecumenical councils...protestant, catholic, etc., but there have not been any true ones since Nicaea II. We will see some successes on local issues in local places but the age of the large councils is over for the time being. Whether in this age any more truly ecumenical councils can be gathered is doubtful. All churches will seek to use the means in time to come and for their individual needs will know some success but the overall body will not be helped this way up to the present.