

Councils, Confessions, Creeds, and Catechisms

The last of the Orthodox ecumenical councils.

Constantinople – 553 A.D.

The problem: The influence of the “Three Letters”

Letter #1 – The writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia

He denied the inspiration of Job, the Song of Solomon, the apocryphal books, the “catholic epistles” (the general epistles, Hebrews through III John) with the exception of I and II Peter, and Revelation.

He taught that the consequence of Adam’s sin was mutability (change), and that as a result, all humans are mutable and therefore sin. The solution for salvation was for Christ, as immutable, to unite in essence with the Word at conception, then further at His baptism, and then ultimately at His resurrection. Mankind is saved as we unite with Christ through baptism.

Letter #2 – The writings of Theodoret of Cyrus

His most famous piece, *Eranistes*, “The Beggar” is devoted to the theological development of Christology. His critics accused him of teaching that Christ was actually two beings, not one because he taught the distinction of Christ’s awareness of the world, and His interaction with the world. He saw a distinction between Christ’s nature (actions) and His person (soul).

Letter #3 – A letter by Ibas of Edessa to Maris

The existence of this letter was debated for decades, but is generally acknowledged to have existed now. Still, the Eastern Orthodox Church believes it to be pseudepigraphal.

The summary of the letter is that it appears to be a detailed defense of Nestorian theology which denies vital elements of Christ’s deity.

The solution: To pass a measure eliminating these “Three Letters” from use in the church.

Constantinople – 680 A.D.

The two-fold problem: Monothelitism (Christ having one will), and monoenergism (Christ having one behavior).

The doctrine of Monothelitism was increasing in popularity with the continued teaching of Eutychian theology. The unity of Christ is condensed to a unique new nature and person from two natures and persons. This, of course, resulted in a consistent behavior born from a unique will.

The solution: An overwhelming vote to reject the doctrines.

Nicea – 787 A.D.

The problem: Iconolatry, the worship of icons.

The eastern church was beginning to recognize a form of idolatry, but the Roman Catholic church took the view that the painting, sculpture, crucifix, figurine, etc. was a representation of the reality, thus ok to objectify worship.

The solution: No solution. The Eastern Orthodox Church left very disheartened over the vote to reestablish this practice that they had already ruled upon.

Nicea, 787 was the last ecumenical council recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Church, though the Roman Catholics recognized another 14 after this.