

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

First Ecumenical Council: Nicaea I (325)

The Council of Nicaea lasted two months and twelve days. Three hundred and eighteen bishops were present. The Emperor Constantine summoned the council. To this council we owe The Nicene Creed, defining against Arius the true Divinity of the Son of God (*homoousios*), and the fixing of the date for keeping Easter (against the Quartodecimans).

Second Ecumenical Council: Constantinople I (381)

The first general council of Constantinople, under the Emperor Theodosius I, was attended by 150 bishops. It was directed against the followers of Macedonius, who impugned the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. To the above-mentioned Nicene Creed it added the clauses referring to the Holy Spirit and all that follows to the end.

Third Ecumenical Council: Ephesus (431)

The Council of Ephesus, of more than 200 bishops, including the persuasive, orthodox Bishop, St. Cyril of Alexandria, defined the true personal unity of Christ, declared Mary the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) against Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and renewed the condemnation of Pelagius.

Fourth Ecumenical Council: Chalcedon (451)

The Council of Chalcedon-- 150 bishops under Emperor Marcian -- defined the two natures (Divine and human) in Christ against Eutyches, who was excommunicated. Pope Leo, provided the foundation of the council with his *Tome*. The two natures of Christ were not to be mingled or confused (*Monophysitism*) nor divided or separated (*Nestorianism*).

Fifth Ecumenical Council: Constantinople II (553)

The Second General Council of Constantinople, of 165 bishops under Emperor Justinian I, condemned the errors of Origen and certain writings (The Three Chapters) of Theodoret, of Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia and of Ibas, Bishop of Edessa; it further confirmed the first four general councils, especially that of Chalcedon whose authority was contested by some heretics.

Sixth Ecumenical Council: Constantinople III (680-681)

The Third General Council of Constantinople, under Emperor Constantine Pogonatus, was attended by the Patriarchs of Constantinople and of Antioch, 174 bishops, and the emperor. It put an end to *Monothelitism* ("one will") by defining two wills in Christ, the Divine and the human, as two distinct principles of operation. It anathematized Pope Honorius, Patriarch Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, Macarius, and all their followers.

Seventh Ecumenical Council: Nicaea II (787)

The Second Council of Nicaea was convoked by Emperor Constantine VI and his mother Irene. It approved the veneration of holy images and relics against the iconoclasts. Because God had become man in Jesus Christ, it was possible to depict Christ, as well as all the saints transformed by his grace.