

The Second Council of Lyons

1274

In 1268 Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII liberated Constantinople from the Crusaders and asked Pope Clement IV (1265-68) to unify the East and West churches, believing the union would help prevent recapture of the city by western forces. Michael's request was opposed by many in the east and Clement had already approved a recapture of the city. Clement demanded full submission of the eastern Church and continued exchanges accomplished nothing. Pope Gregory X was elected in 1271 with a theme of liberating the Holy Land in spite of - or because of - the general failure of all previous crusades. He called a general council and presided over it with a 3-fold agenda: a new crusade, reunion with the Greek Church, and clerical reform. Gregory invited Michael VIII to send delegates to the council and granted safe conduct. Meanwhile, the best minds of the era were studying the natures of God and man, especially St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure.

Depiction of St. Thomas of Aquinas, Italy



St. Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican, an immensely influential philosopher, and a theologian. He was the foremost classical proponent of natural theology and the father of the Thomistic school of philosophy and theology. Much of modern philosophy was conceived as a reaction to his ideas.

St. Bonaventure was a Franciscan, a scholastic theologian, and a philosopher. He was instrumental in getting Pope Gregory X elected. He was first to provide a cohesive theological system based on clearly defined roles of reason and faith.

St. Bonaventure receives envoys of the Byzantine Emperor at *Lyons II*



Ironically, Thomas died on his way to *Lyons II* and Bonaventure died during the *Council*.

Lyons II tried to move the Church toward:

Recovery of the Holy Land, union with the Eastern Church, and clerical reform

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Recovery of The Holy land | ➡ | Set up a means for paying for a proposed crusade.
Obtained support of the kings of most of western Europe. |
| Unity of East and West Churches | ➡ | Eastern Delegates agreed to the Roman Creed that included 'filioque' and the primacy of the See of Rome.
An agreement to unify the Churches was signed. |
| Church Reforms | ➡ | Most notable was a more strict procedure for papal elections. |

Results of *The Second Council of Lyons*

The Western Rulers did not take the plans for a Crusade seriously and it was not undertaken. Return of the Eastern Delegates was met with hostility and the agreement to unify was abandoned. Papal elections after Gregory X's death continued to be controversial.

Pope Gregory was willing to take church reforms seriously. However, he died in 1276 and popes succeeding him were dominated by issues that had little to do with concern for spiritual and pastoral needs of the Church. The resulting problems would be left for future Councils.