

The Third Council of Constantinople

680-681

The Arab conquest of North Africa was almost complete causing the attendance from Africa to the Ecumenical Councils to virtually cease, a great loss for the Church. The conquest had continued toward Europe but had had been temporarily diverted from Constantinople in 672. In Rome, things were more positive. The relationship with Constantinople had turned more friendly. Monothelism, approved by pope Honorius in 634, emerged as a compromise formula between Monophysitism (Jesus had one nature, divine) and orthodox (the doctrine defined at Chalcedon that Jesus had two natures, human and divine). The formula changed the term 'one will' to 'one energy' that was satisfactory to the Monophysites but not to most others.

Emperor Constantine IV(678-81) and retinue



Constantine had no desire to placate the Monothelites nor the Monophysites. He proposed a council to address the issue of the wills of Christ and unity between Constantinople and Rome. He deposed the Monothelite Patriarch of Constantinople.

Pope Agatho prepared well for the Council, sending an impressive delegation including two future popes and findings of a preliminary conference that stressed that Rome was the custodian of the true faith and condemned Monothelitism

Pope Agatho (678-681)



The Third Council of Constantinople moved the Church:

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| Earlier Councils | ➔ | Reaffirmed the faith expressed of the previous Councils, particularly that of Chalcedon. |
| The Nature of Christ | ➔ | Christ had two natures and two wills in the unity of the divine and the human into one person. |
| Monothelitism | ➔ | Condemned Monothelitism and teachers of the movement, including Pope Honorius. |
| Pope Agatho | ➔ | Praised Agatho, saying that Peter had spoken to the Council through him. |

Saint Basil's Cathedral

The Byzantine church is popularly symbolized by St. Basil's (Basil of the 16th Century) Cathedral in Moscow, Russia. *The Third Council of Constantinople* seems quite positive regarding the unity of Rome and Constantinople and the primacy within the Church of the See of Rome (i.e. at least the papal office if not the pope). The *Council* also seemed to be the last word in dealing with heresies.

Would this unity and primacy last?
Would the heresies finally die out?

