

The Fourth Council of Constantinople

869-870

The differences between the western and eastern church communities were becoming more evident. Eastern communities consisted of those east of a north-south line drawn just past the boot of Italy as shown on the map. The differences were cultural (eg. Latin spoken in the west, Greek in the east), political (European powers in the west, Muslim conquests in the east), and theological (eastern communities, represented mainly by the See of Constantinople, increasingly saw themselves equal rather than subservient to the papacy in Rome as signified by canon 28 at the Council of Chalcedon). The eastern community had been more sensitized by dealing with heresies and thus believed strongly that the creed of Constantinople I should not be changed. When the Western Church added the 'Filioque' (Latin for "and (from) the Son" i.e. 'the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and from the Son') to the creed, the Eastern Church rejected the addition.

The Church of 869: Western and Eastern



In 858, Emperor Michael III deposed Ignatius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and appointed Photios in his place. Pope Nicholas I ordered that Ignatius be restored. When Photios ignored the order, Nicholas excommunicated him. In retaliation, Photios excommunicated Nicholas! In 867, Basil I became emperor and one of his first actions was deposing Photios and restoring Ignatius. In 869, Basil invited Pope Hadrian II to send representatives to a Council in Constantinople to settle the matter.

Photios, Patriarch



The Fourth Council of Constantinople tried to move the Church:

- The See of Rome → asserted that the place of the bishop of Rome held 'honor' over the bishop of Constantinople
- Ignatius/Photios → Upheld the restoration of Ignatius and the condemnation of Photios

But it was only temporary:

Hadrian II died in 872 and John VIII was elected Pope. John had an immediate concern with protecting Italy from attack by the Saracens but he also had to try to make peace with Constantinople. In 877, Ignatius died and Basil re-appointed Photios as patriarch of Constantinople. John VIII agreed to this appointment only if Photios acknowledged his past errors.

In 879 Basil and Photios held a Council in Constantinople with Photios presiding. This council annulled the findings of the Council of 869-70. The Council also condemned the "Filioque" phrase, "as a novelty and augmentation of the Creed". The communications between Rome and Constantinople are contested regarding the council of 879. However, the 'eventual' Eastern Orthodox Church would come to recognize the Council of 879 as the 8th General Council of the Church, named it the '2nd Council of Nicaea', and would not recognize the Council of 869-70. The Eastern would also come to recognize Photios as a Saint and give him the title: 'the Great'.

From 850-880, the west-east communities created impasses described recently: 'impasses' [The Witness](#), pg 21, 6/28/09.