

# THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

**Date:** May of 381 – July 9, 381AD. Held in Constantinople

**Organizer:** Called to order by Theodosius. In total there were 150 bishops, exclusively from the east

**Geography Note:** The capital of the Roman Empire had been moved from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine in 330AD primarily because it was an important military boundary to guard off the attacks from the Turks in the east.

**The Significance:** The council met to clarify the divinity of the Holy Spirit which was challenged by the Macedonians. In addition, the church wanted to reiterate what was discussed at Nicaea and come to a consensus regarding Arianism, semi-Arianism, and what is known as Apollinarianism. The decisions here led to the endorsement of the Trinity as doctrine.

**The Controversy:** The role of the Holy Spirit within the godhead and the teaching associated with semi-Arianism. The Macedonians were a Christian sect of the 4th century AD, named after Bishop Macedonius of Constantinople. They professed a belief similar to that of Arianism, but apparently denying the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and regarding the substance of Jesus Christ as being the same in kind as that of God the Father.

**Another Significant Verdict:** Constantinople was referred to as the “New Rome” and the Gergory of Nazianzus, was instituted as the rightful Bishop of Constantinople. This was important because the bishop of Constantinople was determined by this council to be second in primacy after the bishop of Rome.

## The Macedonian Argument

Macedonius held that God the Son was of "similar substance" (*homoiousion*) to God the Father, but not of the "same substance" (*homoousion*), which had come to be the accepted definition of Christian orthodoxy.

1. Macedonius did not believe the Holy Spirit was divine
2. He believed the Holy Spirit was an eminent power—not a person
3. He also believed that Jesus was not of the same substance as the Father—but a similar one. (*homoiousion* vs. *homoousion*). This was known as Semi-Arianism
4. Key Scriptural Support:

### Luke 1:35

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” **35** And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

5. The Holy Spirit as a power: Scriptural Support: Acts 1:8; Acts 8:18-21; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 3:16;
6. Open for Discussion: What important theological implication would result if Macedonius was right?

## The Orthodox Argument

1. The church held that the Holy Spirit was Divine
2. The church believed the Holy Spirit was a person who administered power.
3. The church held to the Nicene Creed which stated the Son was of the same substance as the Father

#### 4. Key Scriptural Support

##### **John 15:26**

But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

##### **Acts 5: 3-4**

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

#### 5. The argument of personhood: Aristotle

- a. Intellect: John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10,11
- b. Will: John 15:26; Romans 8:26
- c. Emotion: John 14:6; Ephesians 4:30

#### 6. The Divine Attributes of God

- eternal, having neither beginning nor end (Hebrews 9:14),
- omni-potent, having all power (Luke 1:35);
- omni-present, being everywhere at the same time (Psalm 139:7); and
- omniscient, understanding all matters ( 1 Corinthians 2:10,11).

#### 7. Open for Discussion: What important theological implication would result if Macedonius was right?

### **Conclusion: Important Theological distinctions**

In the end, the bishops denounced the teachings of the Macedonians and the other heretical sects who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the creed that was established at Nicea in 325. Their creed came to be known as the Nicene Creed of 381.

1. The Holy Spirit is equated with the Lord and Giver of life
2. The Holy Spirit is to be worshipped like the Father and Son
3. The Holy Spirit was active in the work of God (i.e. speaking through the prophets)

In the end, Macidonius and his followers were denounced and the findings in the Council of Nicaea were affirmed. Consequently, Jesus is of the same substance of God and so is the Spirit. This was the first official endorsement of the doctrine known as the Trinity.

## The Nicene Creed 381

<b>First Council of Nicea (325)</b>	<b>First Council of Constantinople (381)</b>
We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.	We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, <b>Maker of heaven and earth</b> , and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;	And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father <b>before all worlds</b> , Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth];	by whom all things were made;
who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;	who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate <b>by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary</b> , and was made man;
he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven;	<b>he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate</b> , and suffered, <b>and was buried</b> , and the third day he rose again, <b>according to the Scriptures</b> , and ascended into heaven, <b>and sitteth on the right hand of the Father</b> ;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.	from thence he shall <b>come again, with glory</b> , to judge the quick and the dead;
	<b>whose kingdom shall have no end.</b>
And in the Holy Ghost.	And in the Holy Ghost, <b>the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father</b> , who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.
[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable' — they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]	