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Second Council of Nicaea – 787 A.D.

Council Fathers - 787 A.D.

INTRODUCTION

A recommendation to summon an ecumenical council, in order to correct the **iconoclast heretics**, had been addressed to Empress Irene, then acting as regent for her son Emperor Constantine VI (780-797) who was still a minor, both by Patriarch Paul IV of Constantinople (who had repented of his earlier iconoclast views) before his abdication from the see in 784 and by his successor as patriarch, Tarasius. The aim was to unite the church and to condemn the decrees passed by the council of 338 bishops held at Hiereia and St Mary of Blachernae in 754.

The convocation of the council was announced to Pope Hadrian I (772-795) in a letter of Constantine VI and Irene, dated 29 August 784. They urged him either to attend in person or to send legates. Patriarch Tarasius sent the same message in synodal letters to the pope and the three eastern patriarchs. Pope Hadrian I gave his approval for the convocation of the council, stipulating various conditions, and sent as his legates the archpriest Peter and Peter, abbot of the Greek monastery of St Sabas in Rome.

The council, which was summoned by an imperial edict in the summer of 786, met for the first time on 1 August 786, in the presence of Emperor Constantine and Empress Irene. When the proceedings were interrupted by the violent entry of iconoclast soldiers, faithful to the memory of Emperor Constantine V (741-775), the council was adjourned until the arrival of a reliable army under Staurakios. It assembled again at Nicaea on 24 September 787, the papal legates having been recalled from Sicily.

After the bishops suspected of heresy had been admitted, 263 fathers embraced the doctrine concerning the cult of *sacred images* as explained in the letters of Pope Hadrian I, which were read out at the second session.

The question of the *intercession of saints* was dealt with in the fourth session.

Once all these matters had been approved, a doctrinal definition was decreed at the seventh session.

At the eighth and last session, which was held at the request of Constantine and Irene in the Magnaura palace in Constantinople, the definition was again decreed and proclaimed and 22 canons were read out. The papal legates presided over the council and were the first to sign the acts; but in reality it was Patriarch Tarasius who presided, and it was he, at the command of the council, who informed Pope Hadrian I about it: “the occasion when the letters of your fraternal holiness were read out and all acclaimed them”.

Pope Hadrian I wrote no letter in reply, yet the defence he made of the council in 794 against Charlemagne shows that he **accepted what the council had decreed**, and that he had sent no acknowledgement because the concessions which he had requested in his letter of 26 October 785 to Constantine and Irene had not been granted to him, especially concerning the restoration of the papacy’s patrimony to the state at which it had been prior to 731, that is, before Illyricum had been confiscated by the emperor Leo III. Emperor Constantine VI and his mother Irene signed the acts of the council but it is unclear whether or not they promulgated a decree on the matter.

The translation is from the Greek text, since this is the more authoritative version. {Material in curly parentheses ,{ }, paragraphing, italicizing and bolding, are added by the hypertext editor. The material in square brackets [ ] is found in the hardcopy book from which the translation was taken.}

Definition

The holy, great and universal synod, by the grace of God and by order of our pious and Christ-loving emperor and empress, Constantine and his mother Irene, **assembled for the second time in the famous metropolis of the Nicaeans** in the province of the Bithynians, in the holy church of God named after Wisdom, following the tradition of the catholic church, **has decreed what is here laid down.**

{The council bases itself on the inspiration of Tradition & of itself}

The one who granted us the light of recognizing him, the one who redeemed us from the darkness of idolatrous insanity, **Christ our God, when he took for his bride his holy catholic church**, having no blemish or wrinkle, **promised he would guard her and assured his holy disciples saying,** *I am with you every day until the consummation of this age***. This promise however he made not only to them but also to us**, who thanks to them have come to believe in his name. To this gracious offer some people paid no attention, being hoodwinked by the treacherous foe they abandoned the true line of reasoning, and setting themselves against the tradition of the catholic church they faltered in their grasp of the truth. As the proverbial saying puts it, they turned askew the axles of their farm carts and gathered no harvest in their hands. Indeed they had the effrontery to criticise the beauty pleasing to God established in the holy monuments; they were priests in name, but not in reality. They were those of whom God calls out by prophecy, Many pastors have destroyed my vine, they have defiled my portion. For they followed unholy men and trusting to their own frenzies they calumniated the holy church, which Christ our God has espoused to himself, and they failed to distinguish the holy from the profane, asserting that the icons of our Lord and of his saints were no different from the wooden images of satanic idols.

Therefore **the Lord God**, not bearing that what was subject to him should be destroyed by such a corruption, **has** by his good pleasure **summoned us** together through the divine diligence and decision of Constantine and Irene, our faithful emperor and empress, **we who are those responsible for the priesthood everywhere**, in order **that the divinely inspired tradition of the catholic church should receive confirmation by a public decree**. So having made investigation with all accuracy and having taken counsel, setting for our aim the truth, we neither *diminish* nor *augment*, but simply *guard* intact all that pertains to the catholic church.

{Recapitulation and re-affirmation of everything taught by any previous ecumenical council}

Thus, following the six holy universal synods, in the first place that assembled in the famous metropolis of the Nicaeans {{**1**}Nicea I}, and then that held after it in the imperial, God-guarded city: {i.e. {**2**} Constantinople I} We believe in one God …[the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed follows]. We abominate and anathematize – *Arius* and those who think like him and share in his mad error; also *Macedonius* and those with him, properly called the *Pneumatomachi*; we also confess **our Lady**, the holy Mary, to be really and truly the God-bearer, because she gave birth in the flesh to Christ, one of the Trinity, our God, just as the first synod at {**3**}Ephesus decreed; it also expelled from the church *Nestorius* and those with him, because they were introducing a duality of persons. Along with these synods, we also confess the two natures of the one who became incarnate for our sake from the God-bearer **without blemish**, Mary the **ever-virgin**, recognizing that he is perfect God and perfect man, as the synod at {**4**}Chalcedon also proclaimed, when it drove from the divine precinct the foul-mouthed *Eutyches* and *Dioscorus.* We reject along with them *Severus Peter* and their interconnected band with their many blasphemies, in whose company we anathematize the mythical speculations of *Origen, Evagrius* and *Didymus*, as did the fifth synod, that assembled at {**5**}Constantinople. Further we declare that there are two wills and principles of action, in accordance with what is proper to each of the natures in Christ, in the way that the sixth synod, that at {**6**}Constantinople, proclaimed, when it also publicly rejected *Sergius, Honorius, Cyrus, Pyrrhus, Macarius*, those uninterested in true holiness, and their likeminded followers.

To summarize, **we** declare that we **defend** free from any innovations **all the**

- **written and unwrittenecclesiastical traditions that have been entrusted to us**.{Council formulates for the first time what the Church has always believed regarding icons}**One of these is the production of representational art**; this is quite in harmony with the history of the spread of the gospel, as it provides confirmation that the becoming man of the Word of God was real and not just imaginary, and as it brings us a similar benefit. For, things that mutually illustrate one another undoubtedly possess one another's message.Given this state of affairs and stepping out as though on the royal highway, following as we are

- the God-spoken teaching of our holy fathers and the tradition of the catholic church —
- for we recognize that this tradition comes from the holy Spirit who dwells in her–
- we decree with full precision and care that,
- like the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, the revered and holy images,
- whether painted or
- made of mosaic
- or of other suitable material,
- are to be exposed
- in the holy churches of God,

- on sacred instruments and vestments,
- on walls and panels,
- in houses and by public ways,

- these are the images of

- our Lord, God and saviour, Jesus Christ, and of
- our Lady **without blemish**, the holy God-bearer, and of
- the revered angels and of
- any of the saintly holy men.

- The more frequently they are seen in representational art, the more are those who see them drawn to remember and long for those who serve as models, and to pay these images the tribute of salutation and respectful veneration. Certainly this is not the full adoration {latria} in accordance with our faith, which is properly paid only to the divine nature, but it resembles that given to the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, and also to the holy books of the gospels and to other sacred cult objects. Further, people are drawn to honour these images with the offering of incense and lights, as was piously established by ancient custom. Indeed, *the honour paid to an image traverses it, reaching the model*, and he who venerates the image, venerates the person represented in that image.
- So it is that the teaching of our holy fathers is strengthened, namely, the tradition of the catholic church which has received the gospel from one end of the earth to the other.
- So it is that we really follow Paul, who spoke in Christ, and the entire divine apostolic group and the holiness of the fathers, clinging fast to the traditions which we have received.
  So it is that we sing out with the prophets the hymns of victory to the church: Rejoice exceedingly O daughter of Zion, proclaim O daughter of Jerusalem; enjoy your happiness and gladness with a full heart. The Lord has removed away from you the injustices of your enemies, you have been redeemed from the hand of your foes. The Lord the king is in your midst, you will never more see evil, and peace will be upon you for time eternal.Therefore **all those who dare to think or teach anything different**, or who follow the accursed heretics in rejecting ecclesiastical traditions, or who devise innovations, or who spurn anything entrusted to the church (whether it be the gospel or the figure of the cross or any example of representational art or any martyr's holy relic), or who fabricate perverted and evil prejudices against cherishing any of the lawful traditions of the catholic church, or who secularize the sacred objects and saintly monasteries, we order that they be **suspended** if they are bishops or clerics, and **excommunicated** if they are monks or lay people.

Anathemas concerning holy images

1. If anyone does not *confess* that Christ our God can be represented in his humanity, let him be **anathema**.
2. If anyone does not *accept* representation in art of evangelical scenes, let him be **anathema**.
3. If anyone does not *salute* such representations as standing for the Lord and his saints, let him be **anathema**.
4. If anyone *rejects* any *written or unwritten* tradition of the church, let him be **anathema**.

CANONS

1

For those to whom the priestly dignity is allotted, the guide-lines contained in the canonical regulations are testimonies and directives. We accept them gladly and sing out to the Lord God with David, the revealer of God: In the path of your testimonies I have taken delight, as with all manner of wealth; and, You have enjoined justice, your testimonies are for ever; instruct me to give me life. And if the prophetic voice orders us for all eternity to observe the messages of God and to live in them, it is

obvious that they remain unshakeable and immoveable; thus Moses, who looked on God, declares, To these there is no addition, and from these there is no subtraction. The divine apostle takes pride in them when he cries out, These things which the angels long to gaze upon, and, If an angel brings you a gospel contrary to what you have received, let him be accursed.

Since these things really are such and have been testified to us in these ways, we exult in them as a person would if he were to come across a great mass of booty. We joyfully embrace the sacred canons and we maintain complete and unshaken their regulation, both those expounded by those trumpets of the Spirit, the apostles worthy of all praise, and those from the six holy universal synods and from the synods assembled locally for the promulgation of such decrees, and from our holy fathers. Indeed all of these, *enlightened by one and the same Spirit*, decreed what is expedient. In the case of those whom they sent away under an anathema, we also anathematize them, those whom they suspended, we also suspend; those whom they excommunicated, we also excommunicate; those whom they placed under penalties, we also deal with in the same way. **Let your conduct be free from avariciousness**, contenting yourself with what you have, cried out with all explicitness the divine apostle Paul, who mounted to the third heaven and heard words that cannot be uttered.

2

Since we make an undertaking before God as we sing, I shall *meditate on your judgments, I shall not neglect your words*, it is essential to our salvation that *every* Christian should observe these things, but more *especially* those who have been invested with priestly dignity. Therefore **we decree that**

- everyone who is to be advanced to the grade of **bishop** should have a thorough knowledge of the psalter, in order that he may instruct all the clergy subordinate to him, to be initiated in that book.
- He should also be examined without fail by the metropolitan to see if he is willing to acquire knowledge–a knowledge that should be searching and not superficial–of the sacred canons, the holy gospel, the book of the divine apostle, and all divine scripture;
- also if he is willing to conduct himself and teach the people entrusted to him according to the divine commandments.

- "The substance of our hierarchy are the words handed down from God", that is to say, the true knowledge of the divine scriptures, as the great *Dionysius* made plain. If someone is doubtful and ill at ease with such conduct and teaching, let him not be ordained. For God said through the prophet: You rejected knowledge, and I shall reject you, so that you may not serve me in a priestly function.

3

Any election of a bishop, priest or deacon brought about by the rulers is to be null and void in accordance with the canon that says: **"If any bishop, through the influence of secular rulers, acquires responsibility for a church because of them, let him be suspended and let all those who are in communion with him be excommunicated"**.

It is necessary that the person who is to be advanced to a bishopric should be elected by bishops, as has been decreed by the holy fathers at **Nicaea** in the canon that says: "It is by all means desirable that a bishop should be appointed by all [the bishops] in the province. But if this is difficult because of some pressing necessity or the length of the journey involved, let at least three come together and perform the ordination, but only after the absent bishops have taken part in the vote and given their written consent. But in each province the right of confirming the proceedings belongs to the metropolitan".

4

The herald of the truth, Paul, the divine apostle, laying down a sort of rule for the presbyters of Ephesus, or rather for the whole priestly order, declared firmly: I have not coveted silver or gold or anybody's clothing; I have made completely plain to you that it is by working in this fashion that we should provide for the weak being convinced that it is blessed to give.

Therefore we also, having been taught by him, decree that **a bishop should never have any sort of design on foul profit, inventing excuses for his sins, nor demand any gold or silver or anything similar from the bishops, clerics and monks subject to him.** For the apostle says: The unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God; and, It is not children who should heap up treasures for their parents, but parents for their children.

So **if** it is discovered that **somebody, because of a demand for gold or something similar, or because of some private infatuation of his own, has excluded from the liturgy or excommunicated one of the clerics under his authority, or has closed off one of the holy churches, preventing the celebration of God's liturgies in it**, pouring out his own madness against insensible things, then he is truly senseless himself and **he should be subjected to suffer what he would inflict and the penalty imposed by him** will turn upon his own head, because he has transgressed both the law of God and the rulings of the apostles. For Peter also, the spokesman of the apostles, urges: Be pastors to the flock of God entrusted to you, not under compulsion, but willingly as pleasing to God, not for sordid gain but with enthusiasm, not as men who lord it over those entrusted to you, but as being models for the flock. Then when the chief shepherd is disclosed, you will carry off the imperishable crown of glory.

5

It is a sin leading to death when sinners remain uncorrected, but still worse is it when people flaunt their sin as they override holiness and truth, both preferring mammon to obedience to God and neglecting his legally formulated instructions. The Lord God is not present among such persons unless they humbly turn from their fault. Their duty is to approach God with a contrite heart and implore his forgiveness for their sin and his pardon, rather than to take pride in an unholy distribution of gifts: For the Lord is close to the contrite of heart. Therefore in the case of **those who boast that they have been appointed in the church by distributing gifts** of gold, and who pin their hopes on this evil custom, which alienates a person from God and from all priesthood, and who take this as a reason for deriding quite shamelessly and openly those who have been chosen by the holy Spirit and appointed for the virtue of their lives, without any distribution of gifts of gold, when they first do this each **should take the lowest rank in his order, and if they persist they should be corrected with a penalty.**

If someone is found to have done this at any time in connection with an ordination, let matters proceed in accordance with the apostolic canon which says: **"If some bishop or priest or deacon has obtained his dignity by means of money, let him and the person who performed the ordination be suspended, and let them be excluded completely from the communion, as Simon Magus was by me, Peter**".

Similarly, in accordance with **canon 2 of our holy fathers at Chalcedon**, which says "If any bishop performs an ordination for money and puts the unsaleable grace on sale, and ordains for money a bishop, a chorepiscopus, a presbyter or deacons or some others of those numbered among the clergy; or appoints a manager, a legal officer or a warden for money, or any other ecclesiastic at all for personal sordid gain; let him who has attempted this and been convicted stand to lose his personal rank, and let the person ordained profit nothing from the ordination or appointment he has bought; but let him be removed from the dignity or responsibility which he got for money. And if anyone appears to have acted even as a go-between in such disgraceful and unlawful dealings, let him too, if he is a cleric, be demoted from his personal rank, and if he is a lay person or a monk, let him be anathematized".

6

Although there is indeed a canon which says, "In each province the **canonical investigations should take place twice yearly by means of a gathering of the bishops**", because of the trouble and because those attending the meetings lack the resources for such journeys, the holy fathers of the sixth synod decreed "they should be held **in any case and despite all excuses, once a year**, and all that is incorrect should be put right". *We also renew this canon*, and should a ruler be found who prevents its observance, let him be excommunicated; however if one of the metropolitan bishops neglects its fulfillment, let him be subject to canonical penalties, unless it is a case of necessity, constraint or some other reasonable cause.

When such a synod is held to discuss canonical and evangelical matters, the gathered bishops should pay particular care and attention to the divine and life-giving laws of God: There is a great reward for their observance; for *a law is a lamp, a regulation is a light, and reproof and discipline are the path of life* indeed the law of the Lord gives light to the eyes. However, **the metropolitan bishop does not have the right to demand anything that a bishop may have brought with him**, such as a beast or some other thing; and if he is convicted of doing so, let him pay back fourfold.

7

The divine apostle Paul said: The sins of some people are manifest, those of others appear later. Some sins take the front rank but others follow in their footsteps. Thus in the train of the impious heresy of the defamers of Christians, many other impieties appeared. Just as those heretics removed the sight of venerable icons from the church, they also abandoned other customs, which should now be renewed and which should be in vigour in virtue of both written and unwritten legislation. Therefore we decree that **in venerable churches consecrated without relics of the holy martyrs, the installation of relics should take place along with the usual prayers. And if in future any bishop is found out consecrating a church without relics, let him be deposed as someone who has flouted the ecclesiastical traditions.**

8

Since some of those who come from the religion of **the Hebrews** mistakenly think to make a mockery of Christ who is God, **pretending to become Christians**, but denying Christ in private by both secretly continuing to observe the sabbath and maintaining other Jewish practices, we decree that they **shall not be received to communion or at prayer or into the church**, but rather let them openly be Hebrews according to their own religion; **they should not baptize their children or buy, or enter into possession of, a slave**. But if one of them makes his conversion with a sincere faith and heart, and pronounces his confession wholeheartedly, disclosing their practices and objects in the hope that others may be refuted and corrected, such a person should be welcomed and baptized along with his children, and care should be taken that they abandon Hebrew practices. However if they are not of this sort, they should certainly not be welcomed.

9

All those childish baubles and bacchic rantings, **the false writings** composed against the venerable icons, should be given in at the episcopal building in Constantinople, so that they can be put away along with other heretical books. If **someone** is discovered to be **hiding such books**, if he is a bishop, priest or deacon, let him be **suspended**, and if he is a lay person or a monk, let him be **excommunicated**.

10

As some **clerics, who** despise the canonical ordinance, **abandon their own dioceses** and run off into other dioceses–something that happens with special frequency in this imperial, God-guarded city–and there they lodge with rulers, celebrating the liturgy in their chapels, **let it not be permitted for them to be received in any house or church without the approval of their own bishop and that of the bishop of Constantinople**. If they do so and persist therein, they are to be suspended.

In the case of those who do this with the approval of the above-mentioned prelates, it is not permitted for them to assume worldly and secular responsibilities, since they are forbidden to do so by the sacred canons; and if someone is misled into occupying himself with the responsibility of the so-called high stewards, he is to desist or be suspended. Rather **let him busy himself with** the **teaching** of the children and servants, lecturing them on **the divine scriptures** because it is for such activity that he received the priesthood.

11

Since we are obliged to observe all the sacred canons, we ought also to maintain in all its integrity the one that says that **there should be administrators in each church**. Therefore if each metropolitan bishop installs an administrator in his own church, that is well and good; but if not, the bishop of Constantinople on his own authority has the right to appoint one over the other's church, and similarly with metropolitan bishops, if the bishops under them do not choose administrators to hold these posts in their own churches. The same rule is also to be observed with respect to monasteries.

12

If it is discovered that a bishop or a monastic superior is transferring episcopal or monastic farmland to the control of the ruler, or has been conceding it to another person, the transaction is null and void in accordance with the canon of the holy apostles which stipulates: "Let the bishop take care of all ecclesiastical affairs, and let him administer them as if under God's inspection. It is not permitted him to appropriate any of these things, nor to make a present of the things of God to his own relatives. Should the latter be poor, let him care for them as for other poor people, but let him not use them as an excuse for selling off the church's possessions." However, if he pretends that the land is a loss and brings in no profit at all, let him make a present of the place to clerics or landworkers, but even in these circumstances it should not be given to the local rulers. If they use evil cunning and the ruler buys up the land from the landworker or the cleric in question, this sale shall also be null and void in such circumstances, and the land should be restored to the bishopric or monastery. And the bishop or monastic superior who acts thus should be expelled, the bishop from the episcopal house and the monastic superior from the monastery, because they wickedly waste what they have not gathered.

13

On account of the disaster which came about in the churches due to our sins **certain venerable houses**–episcopal buildings as well as monasteries–were seized by certain men and became public inns. Now **if those who hold them choose to restore them**, so that they are established once more as formerly they were, this is **good** and excellent. However **if such is not the case**, should they be inscribed in the list of priests, we order that they be **suspended**, and if they are monks or lay persons, that they be **excommunicated**, seeing that they are criminals condemned by the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit, and let them be assigned there where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched, because they oppose the voice of the Lord declaring, You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade.

14

It is perfectly clear to everyone that a certain order has been established in the priesthood, and that it is God's good pleasure that the appointment to priestly offices should be observed with care. However we have noticed that some, without the imposition of hands, are **adopting the clerical tonsure** while still youngsters, and **without having received the imposition of hands from the bishop** they are undertaking to read publicly from the ambo during the church service, even though they are acting uncanonically. We urge therefore that this **be discontinued**, and that the same regulation be observed among monks.

Each monastic superior has permission for the imposition of hands on a reader for his own monastery, and only for that monastery, provided that the monastic superior has himself received from the bishop the imposition of hands to rule there, and obviously provided that he is himself a priest. Similarly it is an ancient custom that chorepiscopi, with the permission of the bishop, should appoint readers.

15

From now on, **no cleric should be appointed to office in two churches**. Such a procedure savours of commerce and sordid profit-making, and is quite foreign to ecclesiastical custom. We have learned from the Lord's own voice: No one can serve two masters, because either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. Therefore, following the advice of the apostle, Each should stay where he has been called, and remain in one church. **In ecclesiastical matters, whatever is done for the sake of sordid gain constitutes something alien to God**. But as far as the needs of this present life are concerned, there are various gainful occupations; each may use these, as he prefers, to procure what is needed for the body. As the apostle said: These hands of mine have provided for my own needs and for the persons accompanying me. These are the regulations for this God-protected city; for what concerns places in the country, a concession may be granted because of the lack of population.

16

All **indulgence and adornment bestowed on the body is alien to the priestly order**. Therefore all those bishops and clerics who deck themselves out in brilliant and showy clothes should be called to order, and if they persist let them be punished. The same holds for those who use perfumes. However, since the root of bitterness has sprouted, there has appeared in the catholic church the plague of a heresy which delights in the defamation of Christians. Those who adopt this heresy not only heap insults on representational art, but also reject all forms of reverence and make a mockery of those who live pious and holy lives, thus fulfilling in their own regard that saying of scripture, For the sinner piety is an abomination. So if persons are found who make fun of those who wear simple and respectful clothing, they should be corrected with punishment. Indeed, from the earliest times all those ordained to the priesthood have been accustomed to present themselves in public dressed in modest and respectful clothing, and anyone who adds to his apparel for the sake of decoration and not out of necessity deserves, as the great Basil remarked, to be accused of "vainglory". Neither did anyone dress in variegated clothes made of silk, nor did they add various coloured ornaments to the fringes of their garments. They had heard the tongue that spoke God's words declare, Those who dress in soft clothes are in the houses of kings.

17

Some **monks** abandon their own monasteries because they desire to be in authority and disdain obeying others, and then they **attempt to found houses of prayer, although they lack adequate resources**. If somebody undertakes to do this, **let him be prevented by the local bishop**. If someone possesses adequate resources, however, his plans should be brought to completion. The same ruling holds for both laity and clerics.

18

Be irreproachable even for those outside, says the divine apostle. Now **for women to live in the houses of bishops or in monasteries is a cause for every sort of scandal**. Therefore if anybody is discovered to be keeping a woman, whether a slave or free, in the bishop's house or in a monastery in order to undertake some service, let him be censured, and if he persists let him be deposed. Should it happen that women are living in the suburban residence and the bishop or monastic superior wishes to journey there, no woman should be allowed to undertake any sort of work during the time that the bishop or monastic superior is present; she should stay on her own in some other area until the bishop has retired, in order to avoid all possible criticism.

19

The blight of avarice has spread to such an extent among ecclesiastical authorities that even some so called pious men and women, forgetting the Lord's commands, have been tricked into **authorizing, for the sake of cash payments, the entry of those presenting themselves for the priestly order and the monastic life**. Thus it happens, as the great Basil says, "when people begin wrongly, all they do is to be rejected", for it is not possible to serve God through mammon. So, if somebody is found out to be doing this, if he is a bishop or a male monastic superior or one of the priests, let him **stop or be deposed**, in accordance with canon 2 of the holy council of Chalcedon. If the person is a female monastic superior, let her be expelled from the monastery and put under obedience in another monastery, and similarly for a male monastic superior who has not received priestly ordination.

With regard to gifts given by parents under the concept of **dowries** for their children, or with regard to the personally acquired goods that the latter present provided that those presenting them declare that these are gifts offered to God, we have decreed that these gifts **are to remain in the monastery**, whether the person stays or leaves, in accordance with their explicit undertaking, unless there is a reprehensible cause on the part of the person in charge.

20

We decree that from now on **no more double monasteries are to be started** because this becomes a cause of scandal and a stumbling block for ordinary folk. If there are persons who wish to renounce the world and follow the monastic life along with their relatives, the men should go off to a male monastery and their wives enter a female monastery, for God is surely pleased with this.

The **double monasteries that have existed up to now should continue** to exist according to the rule of our holy father Basil, and their constitutions should follow his ordinances. Monks and nuns should not live in one monastic building, because adultery takes advantage of such cohabitation. No monk should have the licence to speak in private with a nun, nor any nun with a monk. A monk should not sleep in a female monastery, nor should he eat alone with a nun. When the necessary nourishment is being carried from the male area for the nuns, the female superior, accompanied by one of the older nuns, should receive it outside the door. And if it should happen that a monk wishes to pay a visit to one of his female relatives, let him speak with her in the presence of the female superior, but briefly and rapidly, and let him leave her quickly.

21

It is not right for a monk or a nun to leave his or her own monastery and transfer to another. However should this occur, it is obligatory that hospitality be given but such a person should not be accepted as a member without the agreement of his or her monastic superior.

22

It is very important to dedicate everything to God and not to become slaves of our own desires; for whether you eat or drink, the divine apostle says, do all for the glory of God. Now Christ our God has instructed us in his gospels to eradicate the beginnings of sins. So not only adultery is rebuked by him, but also the movement of one's intention towards the performance of adultery, when he says: He who looks on a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Thus instructed we should purify our intentions: For if all things are lawful, not all things are expedient, as we learn from the words of the apostle. Now everybody is certainly obliged to eat in order to live, and in the case of those whose life includes marriage and children and the conditions proper to layfolk it is not reprehensible that men and women should eat in one another's company; though they should at least say

grace to thank the giver of their nourishment, and they should avoid certain theatrical entertainments, diabolical songs, the strumming of lyres and the dancing fit for harlots, against all such there is the curse of the prophet which says, Woe on those who drink their wine to the sound of lyre and harp, those who pay no attention to the deeds of the Lord and have never a thought for the works of his hands. If ever such people are found among Christians, they should reform, and if they do not, let the canonical sanctions established by our predecessors be imposed on them.

Those whose mode of life is contemplative and solitary should sit and be silent, because they have entered into a contract with the Lord that the yoke they carry will be a solitary one. Indeed, all those who have chosen the life of priests are certainly not free to eat privately in the company of women, but at the most in the company of certain God-fearing and pious men and women, in order that such a meal taken in common may draw them to spiritual betterment. Let the same be done in the case of relatives.

As for another situation, if a monk or even a man in priestly orders happens to be making a journey and is not carrying with him his indispensable provisions, and then wishes to satisfy his needs in a public inn or in someone's house, he is allowed to do so when it is a case of pressing necessity.

Introduction and translation taken from *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner

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