Shorter writings

Council of Constantinople (AD 381) (AD 381)

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Canons of the One Hundred and Fifty Fathers

Who Assembled at Constantinople During the Consulate of Those Illustrious Men, Flavius Eucherius and Flavius Evagrius on the VII of the Ides of July.
The Bishops out of different provinces assembled by the grace of God in Constantinople, on the summons of the most religious Emperor Theodosius, have decreed as follows:

Canon I.
The Faith of the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers assembled at Nice in Bithynia shall not be set aside, but shall remain firm. And every heresy shall be anathematized, particularly that of the Eunomians or [Anomoeans, the Arians or] Eudoxians, and that of the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachi, and that of the Sabellians, and that of the Marcellians, and that of the Photinians, and that of the Apollinarians.

Notes.
Ancient Epitome of Canon I. Let the Nicene faith stand firm. Anathema to heresy. There is a difference of reading in the list of the heretics. The reading I have followed in the text is that given in Beveridge's Synodicon. The Greek text, however, in Labbe, and with it agree the version of Hervetus and the text of Hefele, reads: "the Eunomians or Anomaeans, the Arians or Eudoxians, the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachi, the Sabellians, Marcellians, Photinians and Apollinarians." From this Dionysius only varies by substituting "Macedonians" for "Semi-Arians." It would seem that this was the correct reading. I, however, have followed the other as being the more usual. Hefele. By the Eudoxians, whom this canon identifies with the Arians [according to his text, vide supra,] is meant that faction who, in contradistinction to the strict Arians or Anomaeans on one side, and the Semi-Arians on the other side, followed the leadership of the Court Bishop Eudoxius (Bishop of Constantinople under the Emperor Valens), and without being entirely Anomaean, yet very decidedly inclined to the left of the Arian party-probably claiming to represent the old and original Arianism. But this canon makes the Semi-Arians identical with the Pneuma-tomachians, and so far rightly, that the lattersprang from the Semi-Arian party, and applied the Arian principle to their doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Lastly, by the Marcelliansare meant those pupils of Mar-

cellus of Ancyra who remained in the errors formerly propounded by him, while afterwards others, and indeed he himself, once more acknowledged the truth.

Council of Constantinople- the Synodical Letter

a.d. 382. To the right honourable lords our right reverend brethren and colleagues, Damasus, Ambrosius, Britton, Valerianus, Ascholius, Anemius, Basilius and the rest of the holy bishops assembled in the great city of Rome, the holy synod of the orthodox bishops assembled at the great city of Constantinople sends greeting in the Lord.

To recount all the sufferings inflicted on us by the power of the Arians, and to attempt to give information to your reverences, as though you were not already well acquainted with them, might seem superfluous. For we do not suppose your piety to hold what is befalling us as of such secondary importance as that you stand in any need of information on matters which cannot but evoke your sympathy. Nor indeed were the storms which beset us such as to escape notice from their insignificance. Our persecutions are but of yesterday. The sound of them still rings in the ears alike of those who suffered them and of those whose love made the sufferers' pain their own. It was but a day or two ago, so to speak, that some released from chains in foreign lands returned to their own churches through manifold afflictions; of others who had died in exile the relics were brought home; others again, even after their return from exile, found the passion of the heretics still at the boiling heat, and, slain by them with stones as was the blessed Stephen, met with a sadder fate in their own than in a stranger's land. Others, worn away with various cruelties, still bear in their bodies the scars of their wounds and the marks of Christ. Who could tell the tale of fines, of disfranchisements, of individual confiscations, of intrigues, of outrages, of prisons?

In truth all kinds of tribulation were wrought out beyond number in us, perhaps because we were paying the penalty of sins, perhaps because the merciful God was trying us by means of the multitude of our sufferings. For these all thanks to God, who by means of Such afflictions trained his servants and, according to the multitude of his mercies, brought us again to refreshment. We indeed needed long leisure, time, and toil to restore the church once more, that so, like physicians healing the body after long sickness and expelling its disease by gradual treatment, we might bring her back to her ancient health of true religion. It is true that on the whole we seem to have been delivered from the violence of our persecutions and to be just now recovering the churches which, have for a long time been the prey of the

heretics. But wolves are troublesome to us who, though they have been driven from the fold, yet harry the flock up and down the glades, daring to hold rival assemblies, stirring seditious among the people, and shrinking from nothing which can do damage to the churches. So, as we have already said, we needs must labour all the longer.

Since, however, you showed your brotherly love to us by inviting us (as though we were your own members) by the letters of our most religious emperor to the synod which you are gathering by divine permission at Rome, to the end that since we alone were then condemned to suffer persecution, you should not now, when our emperors are at one with us as to true religion, reign apart from us, but that we, to use the Apostle's phrase, should reign with you, our prayer was, if it were possible, all in company to leave our churches, and rather gratify our longing to see you than consult their needs. For who will give us wings as of a dove, and we will fly and be at rest? But this course seemed likely to leave the churches who were just recovering quite uncle-fended, and the undertaking was to most of us impossible, for, in accordance witch the letters sent a year ago from your holiness after the synod at Aquileia to the most pious emperor Theodosius, we had journeyed to Constantinople, equipped only for travelling so far as Constantinople, and bringing the consent of the bishops remaining in the provinces of this synod alone. We had been in no expectation of any longer journey nor had heard a word about it, before our arrival at Constantinople.

In addition to all this, and on account of the narrow limits of the appointed time which allowed of no preparation for a longer journey, nor of communicating with the bishops of our communion in the provinces and of obtaining their consent, the journey to Rome was for the majority impossible. We have thereforeadopted the next best course open to us under the circumstances, both for the better administration of the church, and for manifesting our love towards you, by strongly urging our most venerated, and honoured colleagues and brother bishops Cyriacus, Eusebius and Priscianus, to consent to travel to you.

Through them we wish to make it plain that our disposition is all for peace with unity for its sole object, and that we are full of zeal for the right faith. For we, whether we suffered persecutions, or afflictions, or the threats of emperors, or the cruelties of prince, s, or any other trial at the hands of heretics, have undergone all for the sake of the evangelic faith, ratified by the three hundred and eighteen fathers at Nicaea in Bithynia. This is the faith which ought to be sufficient for you, for us, for all who wrest not the word of the true faith; for it is the ancient faith; it is the faith of our baptism; it is the faith that teaches us to believe in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. According to this faith there is one Godhead, Power and Substance of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; the dignity being equal, and the majesty being equal in three perfect hypostases, i.e. three perfect persons. Thus there is no room for the heresy of Sabellius by the confusion of the hypostases, i.e. the destruction of the personalities; thus the blasphemy of the Eunomians, of the Arians, and of the Pneumatomachi is nullified, which divides the substance, the nature, dud the godhead, and super-induces on the uncreated consubstantial and co-eternal Trinity a nature posterior, created and of a different substance. We moreover preserve unperverted

the doctrine of the incarnation of the Lord, holding the tradition that the dispensation of the flesh is neither soulless nor mindless nor imperfect; and knowing full well that God's Word was perfect before the ages, and became perfect man in the last days for our salvation.

Let this suffice for a summary of the doctrine which is fearlessly and frankly preached by us, and concerning which you will be able to be still further satisfied if you will deign to read the tome of the synod of Antioch, and also that tome issued last year by the Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople, in which we have set forth our confession of the faith at greater length, and have appended an anathema against the heresies which innovators have recently inscribed.

Now as to the particular administration of individual churches, an ancient custom, as you know, has obtained, confirmed by the enactment of the holy fathers of Nicaea, that in every province, the bishops of the province, and, with their consent, the neighbouring bishops with them, should perform ordinations as expediency may require. In conforming with these customs note that other churches have been administered by us and the priests of the most famous, churches publicly appointed. Accordingly over the new made (if the expression be allowable) church at Constantinople, which, as through from a lion's mouth, we have lately snatched by God's mercy from the blasphemy of the heretics, we have or-dained bishop the right reverend and most religious Nectarius, in the presence of the Ecumenical Council, with common consent, before the most religious emperor Theodosius, and with the assent of all the clergy and of the whole city. And over the most ancient and truly apostolic church in Syria, where first the noble name of Christians was given them, the bishops of the province and of the eastern diocese have met together and canonically ordained bishop the right reverend and most religious Flavianus, with the consent of all the church, who as though with one voice joined in expressing their respect for him. This rightful ordination also received the sanction of the General Council.

Of the church at Jerusalem, mother of all the churches, we make known that the right reverend and most religious Cyril is bishop, who was some time ago canonically ordained by the bishops of the province, and has in several places fought a good fight against the Arians. We beseech your reverence to rejoice at what has thus been rightly and canonically settled by us, by the intervention of spiritual love and by the influence of the fear of the Lord, compelling the feelings of men, and making the edification of churches of more importance than individual grace or favour. Thus since among us there is agreement in the faith and Christian charity has been established, we shall cease to use the phrase condemned by the apostles, I am of Paul and I of Apollos and I of Cephas, and all appearing as Christ's, who in us is not divided, by God's grace we will keep the body of the church unrent, and will boldly stand at the judgment seat of the Lord.

Letter of the Same Holy Synod to the Most Pious Emperor Theodosius the Great

(Found in Labbe, Concilia, Tom. II., 945.) To the most religious Emperor Theodosius, the Holy Synod of Bishops assembled in Constantinople out of different Provinces. We begin our letter to your Piety with thanks to God, who has established the empireof your Piety for the common peace of the Churches and for the support of the true Faith. And, after rendering due thanks unto God, as in duty bound we lay before your Piety the things which have been done in the Holy Synod. When, then, we had assembled in Constantinople, according to the letter of your Piety, we first of all renewed our unity of heart each with the other, and then we pronounced some concise definitions, ratifying the Faith of the Nicene Fathers, and anathematizing the heresies which have sprung up, contrary thereto. Besides these things, we also framed certain Canons for the better ordering of the Churches, all which we have subjoined to this our letter. Wherefore we beseech your Piety that the decree of the Synod may be ratified, to the end that, as you have honoured the Church by your letter of citation, so you should set your seal to the conclusion of what has been decreed. May the Lord establish your empire in peace and righteousness, and prolong it from generation to generation; and may he add unto your earthly power the fruition of the heavenly kingdom also. May God by the prayers (eu0kai=j tw=n a9giw/n) of the Saints, show favour to the world, that you may be strong and eminent in all good things as an Emperor most truly pious and beloved of God.

The Holy Creed

The reader should know that Tillemont (Memoires, t. ix., art. 78 in the treatise on St. Greg. Naz.) broached the theory that the Creed adopted at Constantinople was not a new expansion of the Nicene but rather the adoption of a Creed already in use. Hefele is of the same opinion (Hist. of the Councils, II., p. 349). and the learned Professor of Divinity in the University of Jena, Dr. Lipsius, says, of St. Epiphanius: "Though not himself present at the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, a.d.: 381, which ensured the triumph of the Nicene doctrine in the Oriental Churches, his shorter confession of faith, which is found at the end of his Ancoratus, and seems to have been the baptismal creed of the Church of Salamis, agrees almost word for word with the Constantinopolitan formula." (Smith and Wace, Dict. Chr. Biog., s. v. Epiphanius). "The Ancoratus," St. Epiphanius distinctly tells us, was written as early as a.d. 374, and toward the end of chapter cxix., he writes as follows. "The children of the Church have received from the holy fathers, that is from the holy Apostles, the faith to keep, and to hand down, and to teach their children. To these children you belong, and I beg you to receive it and pass it on. And whilst yon teach your children these things and such as these from the holy Scriptures, cease not to confirm and strengthen them, and indeed all who hear you: tell them that this is the holy faith of the Holy Catholic Church, as the one holy Virgin of God received it from the holy Apostles of the Lord to keep: and thus every person who is in preparation for the holy laver of baptism must learn it: they must learn it themselves, and teach it expressly, as the one Mother of all, of you and of us, proclaims it, saying." Then follows the Creed as on page 164.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the Right Hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead. Whose kingdom shall have no end. (I)

And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver-of-Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. And [we believe] in one, holy, (II) Catholic and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, [and] we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Note I.
This clause had already, so far as the meaning is concerned, been added to the Nicene Creed, years before, in correction of the heresy of Marcellus of Ancyra, of whose heresy a statement will be found in the notes on Canon I. of this Council. One of the creeds of the Council of Antioch in Encaeniis (a.d. 341) reads: "and he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and he shah come again to judge both the quick and the dead, and he remaineth God and King to all eternity."

Note II.
The word "Holy" is omitted in some texts of this Creed, notably in the Latin version in the collection of Isidore Mercator. Vide Labbe, Conc., II., 960. Cf. Creed in English Prayer-Book.

Notes.
The Creed Found IN Epiphanius's Ancoratus (Cap. cxx.) We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible: and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, that is of the substance of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father: by whom all things were made, both in heaven and earth who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, and was made man, was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and on the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and from thence he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father; who, with the Father and the Son together is worshipped 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. And those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, and before he was begotten he was not, or that he was of things which are not, or that he is of a different hypostasis or substance, or pretend that he is effluent or changeable, these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.

Epiphanius thus continues: "And this faith was delivered from the Holy Apostles and in the Church, the Holy City, from all the Holy Bishops together more than three hundred and ten in number." "In our generation, that is in the times of Valentinus and Valens, and the ninetieth year from the succession of Diocletian the tyrant, you and we and all the orthodox bishops of the whole Catholic Church together, make this address to those who come to baptism, in order that they may proclaim and say as follows:" Epiphanius then gives this

creed: We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things, invisible and visible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, 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 which be in heaven and in earth, whether they be visible or invisible. Who for us men and for our salvation came down, and was incarnate, that is to say was conceived perfectly through the Holy Ghost of the holy ever-virgin Mary, and was made man, that is to say a perfect man, receiving a soul, and body, and intellect, and all that make up a man, but without sin, not from human seed, nor [that he dwelt] in a man, but taking flesh to himself into one holy entity; not as he inspired the prophets and spake and worked [in them], but was perfectly made man, for the Word was made flesh; neither did he experience any change, nor did he convert his divine nature into the nature of man, but united it to his one holy perfection and Divinity.

For there is one Lord Jesus Christ, not two, the same is God, the same is Lord, the same is King. He suffered in the flesh, and rose again, and ascended into heaven in the same body, and with glory he sat down at the right hand of the Father, and in the same body he will come in glory to judge both the quick and the dead, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And we believe in the Holy Ghost, who spake in the Law, and preached in the Prophets, and descended at Jordan, and spake in the Apostles, and indwells the Saints. And thus we believe in him, that he is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the perfect Spirit, the Spirit the Comforter, uncreate, who proceedeth from the Father, receiving of the Son (e0k tou= Patro\j e0kporeuo/menon, kai\ e0k tou= Ui9ou= lambano/menon), and believed on. (kai\ pisteuo/menon, which the Latin version gives in quem credimus; and proceeds to insert, Proeterea credimus in unam, etc. It certainly looks as if it had read pisteu/omen, and had belonged to the following phrase.)

[We believe] in one Catholic and Apostolic Church. And in one baptism of penitence, and in the resurrection of the dead, and the just judgment of souls and bodies, and in the Kingdom of heaven and in life everlasting. And those who say that there was a time when the Son was not, or when the Holy Ghost was not, or that either was made of that which previously had no being, or that he is of a different nature or substance, and affirm that the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are subject to change and mutation; all such the Catholic and Apostolic Church, the mother both of you and of us, anathematizes. And further we anathematize such as do not confess the resurrection of the dead, as well as all heresies which are not in accord with the true faith. Finally, you and your children thus believing and keeping the commandments of this same faith, we trust that you will always pray for us, that we may have a share and lot in that same faith and in the keeping of these same commandments. For us make your intercessions you and all who believe thus, and keep the commandments of the Lord in our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom and with whom, glory be to the Father with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.