The Capitula of the Council

Council of Constantinople (AD 553) (AD 553)

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Introduction

(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. V., col. 568.)

I.

If anyone shall not confess that the nature or essence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is one, as also the force and the power; [if anyone does not confess] a consubstantial Trinity, one Godhead to be worshipped in three subsistences or Persons: let him be anathema. For there is but one God even the Father of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit in whom are all things.

II.

If anyone shall not confess that the Word of God has two nativities, the one from all eternity of the Father, without time and without body; the other in these last days, coming down from heaven and being made flesh of the holy and glorious Mary, Mother of God and always a virgin, and born of her: let him be anathema.

III.

IF anyone shall say that the wonder-working Word of God is one [Person] and the Christ that suffered another; or shall say that God the Word was with the woman-born Christ, or was in him as one person in another, but that he was not one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, incarnate and made man, and that his miracles and the sufferings which of his own will he endured in the flesh were not of the same [Person]: let him be anathema.

IV.

If anyone shall say that the union of the Word of God to man was only according to grace or energy, or dignity, or equality of honour, or authority, or relation, or effect, or power, or according to good pleasure in this sense that God the Word was pleased with a man, that is to say, that he loved him for his own sake, as says the senseless Theodorus, or [if anyone pretends that this union exists only] so far as likeness of name is concerned, as the Nestorians understand, who call also the Word of God Jesus and Christ, and even accord to the man the names of Christ and of Son, speaking thus clearly of two persons, and only designating disingenuously one Person and one Christ when the reference is to his honour, or his dignity, or his worship; if anyone shall not acknowledge as the Holy Fathers teach, that the union of God the Word is made with the flesh animated by a reasonable and living soul, and that such union is made synthetically and hypostatically, and that therefore there is only one Person, to wit: our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Holy Trinity: let him be anathema. As a matter of fact the word "union" (thj enwsewj) has many meanings, and the partisans of Apollinaris and Eutyches have affirmed that these natures are confounded inter se, and have asserted a union produced by the mixture of both. On the other hand the followers of Theodorus and of Nestorius rejoicing in the division of the natures, have taught only a relative union. Meanwhile the Holy Church of God, condemning equally the impiety of both sorts of heresies, recognises the union of God the Word with the flesh synthetically, that is to say, hypostatically. For in the mystery of Christ the synthetical union not only preserves unconfusedly the natures which are united, but also allows no separation.

V.

If anyone understands the expression ”one only Person of our Lord Jesus Christ” in this sense, that it is the union of many hypostases, and if he attempts thus to introduce into the mystery of Christ two hypostases, or two Persons, and, after having intro- duced two persons, speaks of one Person only out of dignity, honour or worship, as both Theodorus and Nestorius insanely have written; if anyone shall calumniate the holy Council of Chalcedon, pretending that it made use of this expression [one hypostasis] in this impious sense, and if he will not recognize rather that the Word of God is united with the flesh hypostatically, and that therefore there is but one hypostasis or one only Person, and that the holy Council of Chalcedon has professed in this sense the one Person of our Lord Jesus Christ: let him be anathema. For since one of the Holy Trinity has been made man, viz.: God the Word, the Holy Trinity has not been increased by the addition of another person or hypostasis.

VI.

IF anyone shall not call in a true acceptation, but only in a false acceptation, the holy, glorious, and ever-virgin Mary, the Mother of God, or shall call her so only in a relative sense, believing that she bare only a simple man and that God the word was not incarnate of her, but that the incarnation of God the Word resulted only from the fact that he united himself to that man who was born [of her]; if he shall calumniate the Holy Synod of Chalcedon as though it had asserted the Virgin to be Mother of God according to the impious sense of Theodore; or if anyone shall call her the mother of a man anqrwpotokon or the Mother of Christ (Xristotokon), as if Christ were not God, and shall not confess that she is exactly and truly the Mother of God, because that God the Word who before all ages was begotten of the Father was in these last days made flesh and born of her, and if anyone shall not confess that in this sense the holy Synod of Chalcedon acknowledged her to be the Mother of God: let him be anathema.

VII.

IF anyone using the expression, ”in two natures,” does not confess that our one Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed in the divinity and in the humanity, so as to designate by that expression a difference of the natures of which an ineffable union is unconfusedly made, [a union] in which neither the nature of the Word was changed into that of the flesh, nor that of the flesh into that of the Word, for each remained that it was by nature, the union being hypostatic; but shall take the expression with regard to the mystery of Christ in a sense so as to divide the parties, or recognising the two natures in the only Lord Jesus, God the Word made man, does not content himself with taking in a theoretical manner the difference of the natures which compose him, which difference is not destroyed by the union between them, for one is composed of the two and the two are in one, but shall make use of the number [two] to divide the natures or to make of them Persons properly so called: let him be anathema.

VIII.

IF anyone uses the expression ”of two natures,” confessing that a union was made of the Godhead and of the humanity, or the expression ”the one nature made flesh of God the Word,” and shall not so understand those expressions as the holy Fathers have taught, to wit: that of the divine and human nature there was made an hypostatic union, whereof is one Christ; but from these expressions shall try to introduce one nature or substance [made by a mixture] of the Godhead and manhood of Christ; let him be anathema. For in teaching that the only-begotten Word was united hypostatically [to humanity] we do not mean to say that there was made a mutual confusion of natures, but rather each [nature] remaining what it was, we understand that the Word was united to the flesh. Wherefore there is one Christ, both God and man, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood. Therefore they are equally condemned and anathematized by the Church of God, who divide or part the mystery of the divine dispensation of Christ, or who introduce confusion into that mystery.

IX.

IF anyone shall take the expression, Christ ought to be worshipped in his two natures, in the sense that he wishes to introduce thus two adorations, the one in special relation to God the Word and the other as pertaining to the man; or if anyone to get rid of the flesh, [that is of the humanity of Christ,] or to mix together the divinity and the humanity, shall speak monstrously of one only nature or essence (fusin hgoun ousian) of the united (natures), and so worship Christ, and does not venerate, by one adoration, God the Word made man, together with his flesh, as the Holy Church has taught from the beginning: let him be anathema.

X.

IF anyone does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in the flesh is true God and the Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity: let him be anathema.

XI.

IF anyone does not anathematize Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, as well as their impious writings, as also all other heretics already condemned and anathematized by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and by the aforesaid four Holy Synods and [if anyone does not equally anathematize] all those who have held and hold or who in their impiety persist in holding to the end the same opinion as those heretics just mentioned: let him be anathema.

Notes.

Hefele. (Hist. Councils, Vol. iv., p. 336.) Halloix, Garnier, Basnage, Walch and others suppose, and Vincenzi maintains with great zeal, that the name of Origen is a later insertion in this anathematism, because (a) Theodore Ascidas, the Origenist, was one of the most influential members of the Synod, and would certainly have prevented a condemnation of Origen; further, (b) because in this anathematism only such heretics would be named as had been condemned by one of the first four Ecumenical Synods, which was not the case with Origen; (c) because this anathematism is identical with the tenth in the omologia of the Emperor, but in the latter the name of Origen is lacking; and, finally, (d) because Origen does not belong to the group of heretics to whom this anathematism refers. His errors were quite different.

All these considerations scent to me of insufficient strength, or mere conjecture, to make an alteration in the text, and arbitrarily to remove the name of Origen. As regards the objection in connection with Theodore Ascidas, it is known that the latter had already pronounced a formal anathema on Origen, and certainly he did the same this time, if the Emperor wished it or if it seemed advisable. The second and fourth objections have little weight. In regard to the third (c) it is quite possible that either the Emperor subsequently went further than in his omologia, or that the bishops at the fifth Synod, of their own accord, added Origen, led on perhaps by one or another anti-Origenist of their number. What, however, chiefly determines us to the retention of the text is: (a) that the copy of the synodal Acts extant in the Roman archives, which has the highest credibility, and was probably prepared for Vigilius himself, contains the name of Origen in the eleventh anathematism; and (b) that the monks of the new Lama in Palestine, who are known to have been zealous Origenists, withdrew Church communion from the bishops of Palestine after these had subscribed the

Acts of the fifth Synod. In the anathema on the Three Chapters these Origenists could find as little ground for such a rupture as their friends and former colleague Ascidas; it could only be by the synod attacking their darling Origen. (c) Finally, only on the ground that the name of Origen really stood in the eleventh anathematism, can we explain the widely-circulated ancient rumour that our Synod anathematized Origen and the Origenists.

XII.

IF anyone defends the impious Theodore of Mopsuestia, who has said that the Word of God is one person, but that another person is Christ, vexed by the sufferings of the soul and the desires of the flesh, and separated little by little above that which is inferior, and become better by the progress in good works and irreproachable in Iris manner of life, as a mere man was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and obtained by this baptism the grace of the Holy Spirit, and became worthy of Sonship, and to be worshipped out of regard to the Person of God the Word (just as one worships the image of an emperor) and that he is become, after the resurrection, unchangeable in his thoughts and altogether without sin. And, again, this same impious Theodore has also said that the union of God the Word with Christ is like to that which, according to the doctrine of the Apostle, exists between a man and his wife, "They twain shall be in one flesh. The same [Theodore] has dared, among numerous other blasphemies, to say that when after the resurrection the Lord breathed upon his disciples, saying, "Receive the Holy Ghost," he did not really give them the Holy Spirit, but that he breathed upon them only as a sign. He likewise has said that the profession of faith made by Thomas when he had, after the resurrection, touched the hands and the side of the Lord, viz.:

"My Lord and my God," was not said in reference to Christ, but that Thomas, filled with wonder at the miracle of the resurrection, thus thanked God who had raised up Christ. And moreover (which is still more scandalous) this same Theodore in his Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles compares Christ to Plato, Manichaeus, Epicurus and Marcion, and says that as each of these men having discovered his own doctrine, had given his name to his disciples, who were called Platonists, Manicheans, Epicureans and Marcionites, just so Christ, having discovered his doctrine, had given the name Christians to his disciples. If, then, anyone shall defend this most impious Theodore and his impious writings, in which he vomits the blasphemies mentioned above, and countless others besides against our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and if anyone does not anathematize him or his impious writings, as well as all those who protect or defend him, or who assert that his exegesis is orthodox, or who write in favour of him and of his impious works, or those who share the same opinions, or those who have shared them and still continue unto the end in this heresy: let him be anathema.

XIII.

IF anyone shall defend the impious writings of Theodoret, directed against the true faith and against the first holy Synod of Ephesus and against St. Cyril and his XII. Anathemas, and [defends] that which he has written in defence of the impious Theodore and Nestorius, and of others having the same opinions as the aforesaid Theodore and Nestorius, if anyone admits them or their impiety, or shall give the name of impious to the doctors of the Church who profess the hypostatic union of God the Word; and if anyone does not anathematize these impious writings and those who have held or who hold these sentiments, and all those who have written contrary to the true faith or against St. Cyril and his XII. Chapters, and who die in their impiety: let him be anathema.

XIV.

IF anyone shall defend that letter which Ibas is said to have written to Maris the Persian, in which he denies that the Word of God incarnate of Mary, the Holy Mother of God and ever-virgin, was made man, but says that a mere man was born of her, whom he styles a Temple, as though the Word of God was one Person and the man another person; in which letter also he reprehends St. Cyril as a heretic, when he teaches the right faith of Christians, and charges him with writing things like to the wicked Apollinaris. In addition to this he vituperates the First Holy Council of Ephesus, affirming that it deposed Nestorius without discrimination and without examination. The aforesaid impious epistle styles the XII. Chapters of Cyril of blessed memory, impious and contrary to the right faith and defends Theodore and Nestorius and their impious teachings and writings. If anyone therefore shall defend the aforementioned epistle and shall not anathematize it and those who defend it and say that it is right or that a part of it is right, or if anyone shall defend those who have written or shall write in its favour, or in defence of the impieties which are contained in it, as well as those who shall presume to defend it or the impieties which it contains in the name of the Holy Fathers or of the Holy Synod of Chalcedon, and shall remain in these offences unto the end: let him be anathema.

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.