Synodical Letter of the Council of Gangra

Council of Gangra (c. AD 340)

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Eusebius, Aelian, Eugenius, Olympius, Bithynicus, Gregory, Philetus, Pappus, Eulalius, Hypatius, Proaeresius, Basil and Bassus, assembled in the holy Synod at Gangra, to our most honoured lords and fellow-ministers in Armenia wish health in the Lord.

Forasmuch as the most Holy Synod of Bishops, assembled on account of certain necessary matters of ecclesiastical business in the Church at Gangra, on inquiring also into the matters which concern Eustathius, found that many things had been unlawfully done by these very men who are partisans of Eustathius, it was compelled to make definitions, which it has hastened to make known to all, for the removal of whatever has by him been done amiss. For, from their utter abhorrence of marriage, and from their adoption of the proposition that no one living in a state of marriage has any hope towards God, many misguided married women have forsaken their husbands, and husbands their wives: then, afterwards, not being able to contain, they have fallen into adultery; and so, through such a principle as this, have come to shame. They were found, moreover, fomenting separations from the houses of God and of the Church; treating the Church and its members with disdain, and establishing separate meetings and assemblies, and different doctrines and other things in opposition to the Churches and those things which are done in the Church; wearing strange apparel, to the destruction of the common custom of dress; making distributions, among themselves and their adherents as saints, of the first-fruits of the Church, which have, from the first, been given to the Church; slaves also leaving their masters, and, on account of their own strange apparel, acting insolently towards their masters;

women, too, disregarding decent custom, and, instead of womanly apparel, wearing men's clothes, thinking to be justified because of these; while many of them, under a pretext of piety, cut off the growth of hair, which is natural to woman; [and these persons were found] fasting on the Lord's Day, despising the sacredness of that free day, but disdaining and eating on the fasts appointed in the Church; and certain of them abhor the eating of flesh; neither do they tolerate prayers in the houses of married persons, but, on the contrary, despise such prayers when they are made, and often refuse to partake when Oblations are offered in the houses of married persons; contemning married presbyters, and refusing to

touch their ministrations; condemning the services in honour of the Martyrs and those who gather or minister therein, and the rich also who do not alienate all their wealth, as having nothing to hope from God; and many other things that no one could recount. For every one of them, when he forsook the canon of the Church, adopted laws that tended as it were to isolation; for neither was there any common judgment among all of them; but whatever any one conceived, that he propounded, to the scandal of the Church, and to his own destruction.

Wherefore, the Holy Synod present in Gangra was compelled, on these accounts, to condemn them, and to set forth definitions declaring them to be cast out of the Church; but that, if they should repent and anathematize every one of these false doctrines, then they should be capable of restoration. And therefore the Holy Synod has particularly set forth everything which they ought to anathematize before they are received. And if any one will not submit to the said decrees, he shall be anathematized as a heretic, and excommunicated, and cast out of the Church; and it will behove the bishops to observe a like rule in respect of all who may be found with them.

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