The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon

Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) (AD 451)

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(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. IV., col. 562.) The holy, great, and ecumenical synod, assembled by the grace of God and the command of our most religious and Christian Emperors, Marcian and Valentinan, Augusti, at Chalcedon, the metropolis of the Bithynian Province, in the martyry of the holy and victorious martyr Euphemia, has decreed as follows:

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when strengthening the knowledge of the Faith in his disciples, to the end that no one might disagree with his neighbour concerning the doctrines of religion, and that the proclamation of the truth might be set forth equally to all men, said, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." But, since the evil one does not desist from sowing tares among the seeds of godliness, but ever invents some new device against the truth; therefore the Lord, providing, as he ever does, for the human race, has raised up this pious, faithful, and zealous Sovereign, and has called together unto him from all parts the chief rulers of the priesthood; so that, the grace of Christ our common Lord inspiring us, we may cast off every plague of falsehood from the sheep of Christ, and feed them with the tender leaves of truth. And this have we done with one unanimous consent, driving away erroneous doctrines and renewing the unerring faith of the Fathers, publishing to all men the Creed of the Three Hundred and Eighteen, and to their number adding, as their peers, the Fathers who have received the same summary of religion. Such are the One Hundred and Fifty holy Fathers who afterwards assembled in the great Constantinople and ratified the same faith. Moreover, observing the order and every form relating to the faith, which was observed by the holy synod formerly held in Ephesus, of which Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria, of holy memory, were the leaders, we do declare that the exposition of the right and blameless faith made by the Three Hundred and Eighteen holy and blessed Fathers, assembled at Nice in the reign of Constantine of pious memory, shall be pre-eminent: and that those things shall be of force also,

Notes. Anatolius of Constantinople
(Ep. to St. Leo. Migne, Pat. Lat., Tom. LIV. [Leo. M., Opera, Tom. I.] col. 978.)

Since after judgment had been delivered concerning him, there was need that all should agree in the right faith (for which purpose the most pious emperor had with the greatest pains assembled the holy Synod) with prayer and tears, your holiness being present with us in spirit and co-operating with us through those most God-beloved men whom you had sent to us, having as our protector the most holy and most comely Martyr Euphemia, we gave ourselves up entirely to this salutary work, all other matters being laid aside. And when the crisis demanded that all the most holy bishops gathered together should set forth an unanimous definition (su/mfwnon o\#ron) for the explanation and clearer understanding of our confession of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord God was found appearing to them that sought him not, and even to them that asked not for him. And although some from the beginning contentiously made opposition, he shewed forth nevertheless his truth and so disposed flyings that an unanimous and uncontradicted writing was published by us all, which confirmed the souls of the stable, and inviting to the way of truth all who had declined therefrom. And when we had subscribed with unanimous consent.

the chart, we all with one consent, that is our whole synod, entered the martyry of the most holy and triumphant martyr Euphemia, and when at the prayer of our most pious and beloved of Christ Emperor Marcian, and of our most pious and in all respects faithful Empress, our daughter and Augusta Pulcheria, with joy, and hilarity we placed upon the holy altar the decision which we had written for the confirmation of the faith of our fathers in accordance with that holy letter you sent us; and then handed it to their piety, that they might receive it as they had asked for it. And when they had received it they gave glory with us to Christ the Lord, who had driven away the darkness of wicked opinion, and had illustrated with the greatest unanimity the word of truth, etc. which were decreed by the One Hundred and Fifty holy Fathers at Constantinople, for the uprooting of the heresies which had then sprung up, and for the confirmation of the same Catholic and Apostolic Faith of ours.

The Creed of the three hundred and eighteen Fathers at Nice.We believe in one God, etc. Item, the Creed of the one hundred and fifty holy Fathers who were assembled at Constantinople.We believe in one God, etc.

This wise and salutary formula of divine grace sufficed for the perfect knowledge and confirmation of religion; for it teaches the perfect [doctrine] concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and sets forth the Incarnation of the Lord to them that faithfully receive it. But, forasmuch as persons undertaking to make void the preaching of the truth have through their individual heresies given rise to empty babblings; some of them daring to corrupt the mystery of the Lord's incarnation for us and refusing [to use] the name Mother of God (Qeoto/koj) in reference to the Virgin, while others, bringing in a confusion and mixture, and idly conceiving that the nature of the flesh and of the Godhead is all one, maintaining that the divine Nature of the Only Begotten is, by mixture, capable of suffering; therefore this present holy, great, and ecumenical synod, desiring to exclude every device against the Truth, and teaching that which is unchanged from the beginning, has at the very outset

decreed that the faith of the Three Hundred and Eighteen Fathers shall be preserved inviolate. And on account of them that contend against the HolyGhost, it confirms the doctrine afterwards delivered concerning the substance of theSpirit by the One Hundred and Fifty holy Fathers who assembled in the imperial City; which doctrine they declared unto all men, not as though they were introducing anything that had been lacking in their predecessors, but in order to explain through written documents their faith concerning the Holy Ghost against those who were seeking to destroy his sovereignty. And, From this passage can easily be understoodthe very obscure passage in the letter of the Council to Leo, where it says that the definition was delivered by St. Euphemia as her own confession of faith. Vide note of the Ballerini on this epistle of Anatolius.

Hefele. (Hist. of the Councils. Vol. III., p. 348.)

The present Greek text has e0k du/o fu/sewn while the old Latin translation has, in duabus naturis. After what had been repeatedly said in this session on the difference between ”in two natures” and ”of two natures,” and in opposition to the latter formula, there can be no doubt whatever that the old Latin translator had the more accurate text before him, and that it was originally e0n du/o fu/sesin. This, however, is not mere supposition, but is expressly testified by antiquity: (1) by the famous Abbot Euthymius of Palestine, a contemporary of the Council of Chalcedon, of whose disciples several were present as bishops at our Council (cf. Baron. ad. ann. 451, n. 152 sq.). We still have a judgment of his which he gave respecting the decree of Chalcedon concerning the faith, and in which he repeats the leading doctrine in the words of the Synod itself. At our passage he remarks: e0n du/o fu/sesi gnwri/zesqai o9mologei= to\n e\#naXristo\n k.t.l. The fragment of his writings on the subject is found in the Vita S. Euthymii Abbatis, written by his pupil Cyril in the Analecta Groeca of the monks of St. Maur, t. i., p. 57, printed in Mansi, t. vii., p. 774 sq. (2) The second ancient witness is Severus, from a.d. 513 Monophysite patriarch of Antioch, who represents it as a great reproach and an unpardonable offence in the fathers of Chalcedon that they had declared: e0n du/o fu/sesin a0diaire/toij gnwri/zesqai to\nXristo\n (see the Sententioe Severi in Mansi, t. vii., p. 839).

(3) Somewhat more than a hundred years after the Council of Chalcedon, Evagrius copied its decree concerning the faith in extenso into his Church History (Lib. ii., 4), and, in fact, with the words: e0n du/o fu/sesin a0sugxu/twj k.t.l. (ed. Mog., p. 294). (4) In the conference on religion held between the Severians and the orthodox at Constantinople, a.d. 553, the former reproached the Synod of Chalcedon with having put in duabus naturis, instead of ex duabus naturis, as Cyril and the old fathers had taught (Mansi, t. viii., p. 892; Hardouin, t. ii., p. 1162). (5) Leontius of Byzantium maintains quite on account of those who have taken in hand to corrupt the mystery of the dispensation [i.e. the Incarnation] and who shamelessly pretend that he who was born of the holy Virgin Mary was a mere man, it receives the synodical letters of the Blessed Cyril, Pastor of the Church of Alexandria, addressed to Nestorius and the Easterns, judging them suitable, for the refutation of the frenzied folly of Nestorius, and for the instruction of those who long with holy ardour for a knowledge of

the saving symbol. And, for the confirmation of the orthodox doctrines, it has rightly added to these the letter of the President of the great and old Rome, the most blessed and holy Archbishop Leo,which was addressed to Archbishop Flavian of blessed memory, for the removal of the false doctrines of Eutyches, judging them to be agreeable to the confession of the great Peter, and as it were a common pillar against misbelievers.

For it opposes those who would rend the mystery of the dispensation into a Duad of Sons; it repels from the sacred assembly those who dare to say that the Godhead of the Only Begotten is capable of suffering; it resists those who imagine a mixture or confusion of the two natures of Christ; it drives away those who fancy his form of a servant is of an heavenly or some substance other than that which was taken of us, and it anathematizes those who foolishly talk of two natures of our Lord before the union, conceiving that after the union there was only one.

Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as oneand the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, distinctly, in the year 610, in his work De Sectis, that the Synod taught e\#na Xristo\n e\n du/o fu/tesin a0sugxu/twj k.t.l.

It is clear that if any doubt had then existed as to the correct reading, Leontius could not have opposed the Monophysites with such certainty. The passage adduced by him is Actio iv., c. 7., in Galland. Bibliotheca PP., t. xii., p. 633. Gieseler (Kirchengesch. i., S. 465), and after him Hahn (Biblioth. der Symbole, S. 118, note 6), cites incorrectly the fourth instead of the fifth Actio. Perhaps neither of them had consulted the passage itself. (6) No less weight is to be attached to the fact that all the Latin translations, that of Rusticus and those before him, have in duabus naturis; and (7) that the Lateran Synod, a.d. 649, had the same reading in their Acts (Hardouin, t. iii., p. 835). (8) Pope Agatho, also, in his letter to the Emperor Constans II., which was read in the sixth Ecumenical Synod, adduced the creed of Chalcedon with the words in duabus naturis (in the Acts of the sixth Ecumenical Council, Actio iv.; in Mansi, t. xi., p. 256; Hardouin, t. iii., p. 1091). In consequence of this, most scholars of recent times, e.g., Tillemont, Walch (Bibloth. symbol veter., p. 106), Hahn (1. c.), Gieseler (1. c.), Neander (Abthl ii., 2 of Bd. iv., S. 988), have declared e0n du/o fu/sesin to be the original and correct reading. Neander adds: "The whole process of the transactions of the Council shows this (that e0n du/o is the correct reading).

Evidently the earlier creed, which was more favourable to the Egyptian doctrine, contained the e0k du/o fu/sewn and the favour shown to the other party came out chiefly in the change

of the e0k into e0n. The expression e0k du/o fu/sewn besides, does not fit the place, the verb gnwrizo/menon points rather to the original e0n. The e0n du/o fu/sesin or e0k du/o fu/sewn was the turning-point of the whole controversy between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism. Cf., on the other side, Baur, Trinitatslehre, Bd. i., S. 820, and Dorner (Lehre v. der Person Christi, Thl. ii., S. 129), where it is maintained that e0k is the correct and original reading, but that it was from the beginning purposely altered by the Westerns into in; moreover, that e0k fits better than e0n with gnwrizo/menon, and therefore that it had been allowed as a concession to the Monophysites. The meaning, moreover, they say, of e0k and e0n is essentially the same, and the one and the other alike excluded Monophysitism. inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.

These things, therefore, having been expressed by us with the greatest accuracy and attention, the holy Ecumenical Synod defines that no one shall be suffered to bring forward a different faith (e9te/ran pi/stin), nor to write, nor to put together, nor to excogitate, nor to teach it to others. But suchas dare either to put together another faith, or to bring forward or to teach or to deliver a different Creed (e\#teron su/mbolon) to as wish to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, from the Gentiles, or Jews or any heresy whatever, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, and the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laics: let them be anathematized. After the reading of the definition, all the most religious Bishops cried out: This is the faith of the fathers: let the metropolitans forthwith subscribe it: let them forthwith, in the presence of the judges, subscribe it: let that which has been well defined have no delay: this is the faith of the Apostles: by this we all stand: thus we all believe.

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.