The Captions of the Arabic Canons Attributed to the Council of Nice

Council of Nicaea (AD 325) (AD 325)

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Canon I.

Insane persons and energumens should not be ordained.

Canon II.

Bond servants are not to be ordained.

Canon III.

Neophytes in the faith are not to be ordained to Holy Orders before they have a knowledge of Holy Scripture. And such, if convicted after their ordination of grave sin, are to be deposed with those who ordained them.

Canon IV.

The cohabitation of women with bishops, presbyters, and deacons prohibited on account of their celibacy. We decree that bishops shall not live with women; nor shall a presbyter who is a widower; neither shall they escort them; nor be familiar with them, nor gaze upon them persistently. And the same decree is made with regard to every celibate priest, and the sameconcerning such deacons as have no wives.And this is to be the case whether the womanbe beautiful or ugly, whether a young girl or beyond the age of puberty, whether great inbirth, or an orphan taken out of charity under pretext of bringing her up. For the devil with such arms slays religious, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and incites them to the fires of desire. But if she be an old woman, and of advanced age, or a sister, or mother, or aunt, or grandmother, it is permitted to live with these because such persons are free from all suspicion of scandal.

Canon V.

Of the election of a bishop and of the confirmation of the election.

Canon VI.

That those excommunicated by one bishop are not to be received by another; and that those whose excommunication has been shown to have been unjust should be absolved by the archbishop or patriarch.

Canon VII.

That provincial Councils should be held twice a year, for the consideration of all things affecting the churches of the bishops of the province.

Canon VIII.

Of the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, and of their jurisdiction.

Canon IX.

Of one who solicits the episcopate when the people do not wish him; or if they do desire him, but without the consent of the archbishop.

Canon X.

How the bishop of Jerusalem is to be honoured, the honour, however, of the metropolitan church of Caesarea being preserved intact, to which he is subject.

Canon XI.

Of those who force themselves into the order of presbyters without election or examination.

Canon XII.

Of the bishop who ordains one whom he understands has denied the faith; also of one ordained who after that he had denied it, crept into orders.

Canon XIII.

Of one who of his own will goes to another church, having been chosen by it, and does not wish afterwards to stay there. Of taking pains that he be transferred from his own church to another.

Canon XIV.

No one shall become a monk without the bishop's license, and why a license is required.

Canon XV.

That clerics or religious who lend on usury should be cast from their grade.

Canon XVI.

Of the honour to be paid to the bishop and to a presbyter by the deacons.

Canon XVII.

Of the system and of the manner of receiving those who are converted from the heresy of Paul of Samosata.

Canon XVIII.

Of the system and manner of receiving those who are converted from the heresy the Novatians.

Canon XIX.

Of the system and manner of receiving those who return after a lapse from the faith, and of receiving the relapsed, and of those brought into peril of death by sickness before their penance is finished, and concerning such as are convalescent.

Canon XX.

Of avoiding the conversation of evil workers and wizards, also of the penance of them that have not avoided such.

Canon XXI.

Of incestuous marriages contrary to the law of Spiritual relationship, and of the penance of such as are in such marriages. [The time of penance fixed is twenty years, only godfather and godmother are mentioned, and nothing is said of separation.]

Canon XXII.

Of sponsors in baptism. Men shall not hold females at the font, neither women males; but women females, and men males.

Canon XXIII.

Of the prohibited marriages of spiritual brothers and sisters from receiving them in baptism.

Canon XXIV.

Of him who has married two wives at the same time, or who through lust has added another woman to his wife; and of his punishment. Part of the canon. If he be a priest he is forbidden to sacrifice and is cut off from the communion of the faithful until he turn out of the house the second woman, and he ought to retain the first.

Canon XXV.

That no one should be forbidden Holy Communion unless such as are doing penance.

Canon XXVI.

Clerics are forbidden from suretyship or witness-giving in criminal causes.

Canon XXVII.

Of avoiding the excommunicate, and of not receiving the oblation from them; and of theexcommunication of him who does not avoid the excommunicated.

Canon XXVIII.

How anger, indignation, and hatred should be avoided by the priest, especially because he has the power of excommunicating others.

Canon XXIX.

Of not kneeling in prayer.

Canon XXX.

Of giving [only] names of Christians in baptism, and of heretics who retain the faith in the Trinity and the perfect form of baptism; and of others not retaining it, worthy of a worse name, and of how such are to be received when they come to the faith.

Canon XXXI.

Of the system and manner of receiving converts to the Orthodox faith from the heresy of Arius and of other like.

Canon XXXII.

Of the system of receiving those who have kept the dogmas of the faith and the Church's laws, and yet have separated from us and afterwards come back.

Canon XXXIII.

Of the place of residence of the Patriarch, and of the honour which should be given tothe bishop of Jerusalem and to the bishop of Seleucia.

Canon XXXIV.

Of the honour to be given to the Archbishop of Seleucia in the Synod of Greece.

Canon XXXV.

Of not holding a provincial synod in the province of Persia without the authority of the patriarch of Antioch, and how the bishops of Persia are subject to the metropolitans of Antioch.

Canon XXXVI.

Of the creation of a patriarch for Ethiopia, and of his power, and of the honour to be paid him in the Synod of Greece.

Canon XXXVII.

Of the election of the Archbishop of Cyprus, who is subject to the patriarch of Antioch.

Canon XXXVIII.

That the ordination of ministers of the Church by bishops in the dioceses of strangers is forbidden.

Canon XXXIX.

Of the care and power which a Patriarch has over the bishops and archbishops of his patriarchate; and of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome over all. Let the patriarch consider what things are done by the archbishops and bishops in their provinces; and if he shall find anything done by them otherwise than it should be, let him change it, and order it, as seemeth him fit: for he is the father of all, and they are his sons. And although the archbishop be among the bishops as an elder brother, who hath the care of his brethren, and to whom they owe obedience because he is over them; yet the patriarch is to all those who are under his power, just as he who holds the seat of Rome, is the head and prince of all patriarchs; in-asmuch as he is first, as was Peter, to whompower is given over all Christian princes, andover all their peoples, as he who is the Vicarof Christ our Lord over all peoples and over the whole Christian Church, and whoever shall contradict this, is excommunicated by the Synod.

[I add Canon XXXVII. of Echellensis's Nova Versio LXXXIV. Arabic. Canonum Conc. Nicoeni, that the reader may compare it with the foregoing.] Let there be only four patriarchs in the whole world as there are four writers of the Gospel, and four rivers, etc. And let there be a prince and chief over them, the lord of the see of the Divine Peter at Rome, according as the Apostles commanded. And after him the lord of the great Alexandria, which is the see of Mark. And the third is the lord of Ephesus, which is the see of John the Divine who speaks divine things. And the fourth and last is my lord of Antioch, which is another see of Peter. And let all the bishops be divided under the hands of these four patriarchs; and the bishops of the little townswhich are under the dominion of the greatcities let them be under the authority of these metropolitans. But let every metropolitan of these great cities appointthe bishops of his province, but let none of the bishops appoint him, for he is greater than they. Therefore let every man know his own rank, and let him not usurp the rank of another. And whosoever shall contradict this law which wehave established the Fathers of the Synodsubject him to anathema.

Canon XL.

Of the provincial synod which should be held twice every year, and of its utility; together with the excommunication of such as oppose the decree.

Canon XLI.

Of the synod of Archbishops, which meets once a year with the Patriarch, and of its utility; also of the collection to be made for the support of the patriarch throughout the provinces and places subject to the patriarch.

Canon XLII.

Of a cleric or monk who when fallen into sin, and summoned once, twice, and thrice, does not present himself for trial.

Canon XLIII.

What the patriarch should do in the case of a defendant set at liberty unpunished by the decision of the bishop, presbyter, or even of a deacon, as the case may be.

Canon XLIV.

How an archbishop ought to give trial to one of his suffragan bishops.

Canon XLV.

Of the receiving of complaints and condemnation of an archbishop against his patriarch.

Canon XLVI.

How a patriarch should admit a complaint; or judgment of an Archbishop against an Archbishop.

Canon XLVII.

Of those excommunicated by a certain one, when they can be and when they cannot be absolved by another.

Canon XLVIII.

No bishop shall choose his own successor.

Canon XLIX.

No simoniacal ordinations shall be made.

Canon L.

There shall be but one bishop of one city, and one parochus of one town; also the incumbent, whether bishop or parish priest, shall not be removed in favour of a successor desired by some of the people unless he has been convicted of manifest crime.

Canon LI.

Bishops shall not allow the separation of a wife from her husband on account of discord-[in American, ”incompatibility of temper”].

Canon LII.

Usury and the base seeking of worldly gain is forbidden to the clergy, also conversation and fellowship with Jews.

Canon LIII.

Marriages with infidels to be avoided.

Canon LIV.

Of the election of a chorepiscopus, and of his duties in towns, and villages, and monasteries.

Canon LV.

How a chorepiscopus should visit the churches and monasteries which are under his jurisdiction.

Canon LVI.

Of how the presbyters of the towns and villages should go twice a year with their chorepiscopus to salute the bishop, and how religious should do so once a year from theirmonasteries, and how the new abbot of a monastery should go thrice.

Canon LVII.

Of the rank in sitting during the celebration of service in church by the bishop, the archdeacon and the chorepiscopus; and of the office of archdeacon, and of the honour due the archpresbyter.

Canon LVIII.

Of the honour flue the archdeacon and the chorepiscopus when they sit in church during the absence of the bishop, and when they go about with the bishop.

Canon LIX.

How all the grades of the clergy and their duties should be publicly described and set forth.

Canon LX.

Of how men are to be chosen from the diocese for holy orders, and of how they should be examined.

Canon LXI.

Of the honour due to the deacons, and how the clerics must not put themselves in their way.

Canon LXII.

The number of presbyters and deacons isto be adapted to the work of the church and to its means.

Canon LXIII.

Of the Ecclesiastical Economist and of the others who with him care for the church's possessions.

Canon LXIV.

Of the offices said in the church, the night and day offices, and of the collect for all those who rule that church.

Canon LXV.

Of the order to be observed at the funeral of a bishop, of a chorepiscopus and of an archdeacon, and of the office of exequies.

Canon LXVI.

Of taking a second wife, after the former one has been disowned for any cause, or even not put away, and of him who falsely accuseshis wife of adultery. If any priest or deacon shall put away his wife on account of her fornication, or for othercause, as aforesaid, or cast her out of doors for external good, or that he may change her for another more beautiful, or better, or richer, or does so out of his lust which is displeasing to God; and after she has been put away for any of these causes he shall contract matrimony with another, or without having put her away shall take another, whether free or bond; and shall have both equally, they living separately and he sleeping every night with one or other of them, or else keeping both in the same house and bed, let him be deposed. If he were a layman let him be deprived of communion. But if anyone falsely defames his wife charging her with adultery, so that he turns her out of doors, the matter must be diligently examined; and if the accusation was false, he shall be deposed if a cleric, but if a layman shall be prohibited from entering the church and from the communion of the faithful; and shall be compelled to live with her whom he has defamed, even though she be deformed, and poor, and insane; andwhoever shall not obey is excommunicated by the Synod.

[Note.-The reader will notice that by this canon a husband is deposed or excommunicated, as the case may be, if he marry another woman, after putting away his wife on account of her adultery. It is curious that in the parallel canon in the collection of Echellensis, which is numbered LXXI., the reading is quite different, although it is very awkward and inconsequent as given. Moreover, it should be remembered that in some codices and editions this canon is lacking altogether, one on the right of the Pope to receive appeals taking its place. As this canon is of considerable length, I only quote the interesting parts.]

Whatever presbyter or deacon shall put away his wife without the offence of fornica- tion, or for any other cause of which we have spoken above, and shall east her out of doors . . . such a person shall be east out of the clergy, if he were a clergyman; if a layman he shall be forbidden the communion of the faithful.. . . But if that woman [untruly charged by her husband with adultery], that is to say his wife, spurns his society on account of the injury he has done her and the charge he has brought against her, of which she is innocent, let her freely be put awayand let a bill of repudiation be written for her, noting the false accusation which had been brought against her. And then if she should wish to

marry some other faithful man, it is right for he; to do so, nor does the Church forbid it; and the same permission extends as well to men as to women, since there is equal reason for it for each. But if he shall return to better fruit which is of thesame kind, and shall conciliate to himself the love and benevolence of his consort, and shall be willing to return to his pristine friendship, his fault shall be condoned to him after he has done suitable and sufficient penance.And whoever shall speak against this decree the fathers of the synod excommunicate him.

Canon LXVII.

Of having two wives at the same time, and of a woman who is one of the faithful marrying an infidel; and of the form of receiving her to penance.[Her reception back is conditioned upon her leaving the infidel man.]

Canon LXVIII.

Of giving in marriage to an infidel a daughter or sister without her knowledge and contrary to her wish.

Canon LXIX.

Of one of the faithful who departs from the faith through lust and love of an infidel; and of the form of receiving him back, or admitting him to penance.

Canon LXX.

Of the hospital to be established in every city, and of the choice of a superintendent and concerning his duties. [It is interesting to note that one of theduties of the superintendent is- ”That if thegoods of the hospital are not sufficient for its expenses, he ought to collect all the time and from all Christians provision according to the ability of each.”]

Canon LXXI.

Of the placing a bishop or archbishop in hischair after ordination, which is enthronization.

Canon LXXII.

No one is allowed to transfer himself to another church [i.e., diocese] than that in which he was ordained; and what is to be done in the case of one cast out forcibly without any blame attaching to him.

Canon LXXIII.

The laity shall not choose for themselves priests in the towns and villages without the authority of the chorepiscopus; nor an abbot for a monastery; and that no one should give commands as to who should be elected hissuccessor after his death, and when this is lawful for a superior.

Canon LXXIV.

How sisters, widows, and deaconesses should be made to keep their residence in their monasteries; and of the system of instructing them; and of the election of deaconesses, and of their duties and utility.

Canon LXXV.

How one seeking election should not be chosen, even if of conspicuous virtue; and how the election of a layman to the aforesaid grades is not prohibited, and that those chosen should not afterward be deprived before their deaths, except on account of crime.

Canon LXXVI.

Of the distinctive garb and distinctive names and conversation of monks and nuns.

Canon LXXVII.

That a bishop convicted of adultery or of other similar crime should be deposed without hope of restoration to the same grade; but shall not be excommunicated.

Canon LXXVIII.

Of presbyters and deacons who have fallen only once into adultery, if they have never been married; and of the same when fallen as widowers, and those who have fallen, all the while having their own wives. Also of those who return to the same sin as well widowers as those having living wives; and which of these ought not to be received to penance, and which once only, and which twice.

Canon LXXIX.

Each one of the faithful while his sin is yet not public should be mended by private exhortation and admonition; if he will not profit by this, he must be excommunicated.

Canon LXXX.

Of the election of a procurator of the poor, and of his duties.

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.