Shorter writings

Council of Nicaea (AD 787) (AD 787)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Extracts from the Acts. Session 1

(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VII., col. 53.) [Certain bishops who had been led astray by the Iconoclasts came, asking to be received back. The first of these was Basil of Ancyra.] The bishop Basil of Ancyra read as follows from a book; Inasmuch as ecclesiastical legislation has canonically been handed down from past time, even from the beginning from the holy Apostles, and from their successors, who were our holy fathersand teachers, and also from the six holy and ecumenical synods, and from the local synods which were gathered in the interests of orthodoxy, that those returning from any heresy whatever to the orthodox faith and to the tradition of the Catholic Church, might deny their own heresy, and confess the orthodox faith, Wherefore I, Basil, bishop of the city of Ancyra, proposing to be united to the Catholic Church, and to Hadrian the most holy Pope of Old Rome, and to Tarasius the most blessed Patriarch, and to the most holy apostolic sees, to wit, Alexandria, Antioch, and the Holy City, as well as to all orthodox high-priests and priests, make this written confession of my faith, and I offer it to you as to those who have received power by apostolic authority. And in this also I beg pardon from your divinely gathered holiness for my tardiness in this matter. For it was not right that I should have fallen behind in the confession of orthodoxy, but it arose from my entire lack of knowledge, and slothful and negligent mind in the matter. Wherefore the rather Iask your blessedness to grant me indulgence in God's sight.

I believe, therefore, and make my confession in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, and in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life. The Trinity, one in essence and one in majesty, must be worshipped and glorified in one godhead, power, and authority. I confess all things pertaining to the incarnation of one of the Holy Trinity, our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, as the Saints and the six Ecumenical Synods have handed down. And I reject and anathematize every heretical babbling, as they also have rejected them. I ask for the intercessions (presbeiaj) of our spotless Lady the Holy Mother of God, and those of the holy and heavenly powers, and those of all the Saints.

And receiving their holy and honourable reliques with all honour (timhj), I salute and venerate these with honour (timhtikwj proskunew), hoping to have a share in their heliness. Likewise also the venerable images (eikonaj) of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the humanity he assumed for our salvation; and of our spotless Lady, the holy Mother of God;

and of the angels like unto God; and of the holy Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, and of all the Saints-the sacred images of all these, I salute and venerate -rejecting and anathematizing with my whole soul and mind the synod which was gathered together out of stubbornness and madness, and which styled itself the Seventh Synod, but which by those who think accurately was called lawfully and canonically a pseudo-synod, as being contrary to all truth and piety, arm audaciously and temerariously against the divinely handed down ecclesiastical legislation, yea, even impiously baring yelped at and scoffed at the holy and venerable images, and having ordered these to be taken away out of the holy churches of God; over which assembly presided Theodosius with time pseudonym of Ephesius, Sisinnius of Perga, with the surname Pastillas, Basilius of Pisidia, falsely called "tricaccabus;" with whom the wretched Constantine, the then Patriarch, was led (emataiwqh) astray.

These things thus I confess and to these I assent, and therefore in simplicity of heart and in uprightness of mind, in the presence of God, I have made the subjoined anathematisms. Anathema to the calumniators of the Christians, that is to the image breakers. Anathema to those who apply the words of Holy Scripture which were spoken against idols, to the venerable images. Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images. Anathema to those who say that Christians have recourse to the images as to gods. Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols. Anathema to those who knowingly communicate with those who revile and dishonour the venerable images. Anathema to those who say that another than Christ our Lord hath delivered us from idols. Anathema to those who spurn the teachings of the holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church, taking as a pretext and making their own the arguments of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Dioscorus, that unless we were evidently taught by the Old and New Testaments, we should not follow the teachings of the holy Fathers and of the holy Ecumenical Synods, and the tradition of the Catholic Church.

Anathema to those who dare to say that the Catholic Church hath at any time sanctioned idols. Anathema to those who say that the making of images is a diabolical invention and not a tradition of our holy Fathers. This is my confession [of faith] and to these propositions I give my assent. And I pronounce this with my whole heart, and soul, and mind. And if at any time by the fraud of the devil (which may God forbid!) I voluntarily or involuntarily shall be opposed to what I have now professed, may I be anathema from the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and from the Catholic Church and every hierarchical order a stranger. I will keep myself from every acceptance of a bribe and from filthy lucre in accordance with the divine canons of the holy Apostles and of the approved Fathers. Tarasius, the most holy Patriarch, said: This whole sacred gathering yields glory and thanks to God for this confession of yours, which you have made to the Catholic Church.

The Holy Synod said: Glory to God which maketh one that which was severed. [Theodore, bishop of Myra, then read the same confession, and was received. The next bishop who asked to be received read as follows: (col. 60)] Theodosius, the humble Christian, to the holy and Ecumenical Synod: I confess and I agree to (suntiqemai) and I receive and I salute

and I venerate in the first place the spotless image of our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, and the holy image of her who bore him without seed, the holy Mother of God, and her help and protection and intercessions each day and night as a sinner to my aid I call for, since she has confidence with Christ our God, as he was born of her. Likewise also I receive and venerate the images of the holy and most laudable Apostles, prophets, and martyrs and the fathers and cultivators of the desert. Not indeed as gods (God forbid!) do I ask all these with my whole heart to pray for me to God, that he may grant me through their intercessions to find mercy at his hands at the day of judgment, for in this I am but showing forth more clearly the affection and love of my soul which I have borne them from the first. Likewise also I venerate and honour and salute the reliques of the Saints as of those who fought for Christ and who have received grace from him for the healing of diseases and the curing of sicknesses and the casting out of devils, as the Christian Church has received from the holy Apostles and Fathers even down to us to-day.

Moreover, I am well pleased that there should be images in the churches of the faithful, especially the image of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the holy Mother of God, of every kind of material, both gold and silver and of every colour, so that his incarnation may be set forth to all men. Likewise there may be painted the lives of the Saints and Prophets and Martyrs, so that their struggles and agonies may be set forth in brief, for the stirring up and teaching of the people, especially of the unlearned.

For if the people go forth with lights and incense to meet the ”laurata” and images of the Emperors when they are sent to cities or rural districts, they honour surely not the tablet covered over with wax, but the Emperor himself. How much more is it necessary that in the churches of Christ our God, the image of God our Saviour and of his spotless Mother and of all the holy and blessed fathers and ascetics should be painted? Even as also St. Basil says: ”Writers and painters set forth the great deeds of war; the one by word, the other by their pencils; and each stirs many to, courage. And again the same author ”How much pains have you ever takenthat you might find one of the Saints whowas willing to be your importunate intercessor to the Lord? And Chrysostomsays, ”The charity of the Saints is not diminished by their death, nor does it come toan end with their exit from life, but after their death they are still more powerful than when they were alive,” and many otherthings without measure. Therefore I askyou, O ye Saints! I call out to you. I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.Receive me as God received the luxurious man, and the harlot, and the thief. Seek me out, as Christ sought out the sheep that was lost, which he carried on his shoulders; so that there may be joy in the presence of God and of his angels over my salvation and repentance, through your intervention, O all-holy lords!

Let them who do not venerate the holy and venerable images be anathema! Anathema to those who blaspheme against the honourable and venerable images! To those who dare to attack and blaspheme the venerable images and call them idols, anathema! To the calumniators of Christianity, that is to say the Iconoclasts, anathema! To those who do not diligently teach all the Christ-loving people to venerate and salute the venerable and sa-

cred and honourable images of all the Saints who pleased God in their several generations, anathema! To those who have a doubtful mind and do not confess with their whole hearts that they venerate the sacred images, anathema!

Sabbas, the most reverend hegumenus of the monastery of the Studium, said: According to the Apostolic precepts and the Ecumenical Synods he is worthy to be received back. Tarasius, the most holy Patriarch, said: Those who formerly were the calumniators of orthodoxy, now are become the advocates of the truth.[Near the end of this session, (col. 77)] John, the most reverend bishop and legate of the Eastern high priests said: This heresy is the worst of all heresies. Woe to the iconoclasts! It is the worst of heresies, as it subverts the incarnation (oikonomian) of our Saviour.

Extracts from the Acts. Session 2

[The Papal Letters were presented by the Legates. First was read that to Constantine and Irene, but not in its entirety, if we may trust Anastasius the Librarian, who gives what he says is the original latin text. Here follows a translation of this and of the Greek, also a translation of the Latin passage altogether omitted, (as we are told) with the consent of the Roman Legates.]

Extracts from the Acts. Session 3

(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VII., col. 188.) Constantine, the most holy bishop of Constantia in Cyprus, said: Since I, unworthy that I am, find that the letter which has just been read, which was sent from the East to Tarasius the most holy archbishop and ecumenical patriarch, is in no sense changed from that confession of faith which he himself had before made, to these I consent and become of one mind, receiving and saluting with honour the holy and venerable images. But the worship of adoration I reserve alone to the supersubstantial and life-giving Trinity. And those who are not so minded, and do not so teach I cast out of the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and T smite them with anathema, and I deliver them over to the lot of those who deny the incarnation and the bodily economy of Christ our true God.

Notes.

Hefele. (Hist. Councils, Vol. V., p. 366.) By false translation and misunderstanding the Frankish bishops subsequently at the Synod of Frankfort, a.d. 794, and also in the Carolingian books (iii. 17), understood this to mean that a demand had been made at Nicaea that the same devotion should be offered to the images as to the Most Holy Trinity. Under these circumstances it is clear that the Franks could do nothing but reject the decrees. I have treated of this whole matter elsewhere.

Extracts from the Acts. Session 4

[Among numerous passages of the Fathers one was read from a sermon by St. Gregory Nyssen in which he describes a painting representing the sacrifice of Isaac and tells how he could not pass it "without tears."] The most glorious princes said: See how our father grieved at the depicted history, even so that he wept. Basil, the most holy bishop of Ancyra, said: Many times the father had read the story, but perchance he had not wept; but when once he saw it painted, he wept. John the most reverend monk and presbyter and representative of the Eastern high priests, said: If to such a doctor the picture was helpful and drew forth tears, how much more in the case of the ignorant and simple will it bring compunction and benefit. The holy Synod said: We have seen in several places the history of Abraham painted as the father says.

Theodore the most holy bishop of Catanea, said: If the holy Gregory, vigilant in divine cogitation, was moved to tears at the sight of the story of Abraham, how much more shall a painting of the incarnation of our Lord Christ, who for us was made man, move the beholders to their profit and to tears? Tarasius the most holy Patriarch said: Shall we not weep when we see an image of our crucified Lord? The holy Synod said: We shall indeed-for in that shall be found perfectly the, profundity of the abasement of the incarnateGod for our sakes. [Post nonnulla a passage is read from St. Athanasius in which he describes the miracles worked at Berytus, after which there is found the following (col. 224),] Tarasius, the most holy Patriarch, said: But perhaps someone will say, Why do not the images which we have work miracles? To which we answer, that as the Apostle has said, signs are for those who do not believe, not for believers. For they who approached that image were unbelievers. Therefore God gave them a sign through the image, to draw them to our Christian faith. But "an evil and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign and no sign shall be given it."

[After a number of other quotations, was read the Canon of the Council in Trullo as a canon of the Sixth Synod (col. 233).] Tarasius, the most holy Patriarch said: There are certain affected with the sickness of ignorance who are scandalized by these canons [viz. of the Trullan Synod] and say, And do you really think they were adopted at the Sixth Synod? Now let all such know that the holy great Sixth Synod was assembled at Constantinople concerning those who said that there was but one energy and will in Christ. These anath-

ematized the heretics, and having expounded the orthodox faith, they went to their homes in the fourteenth year of Constantine. But after four or five years the same fathers came together under Justinian, the son of Constantine, and set forth the before-mentioned canons. And let no one doubt concerning them. For they who subscribed under Constantine were the same as they who under Justinian signed the present chart, as can manifestly be established from the unchangeable similarity of their own handwriting. For it was right that they who had appeared at an ecumenical synod should also set forth ecclesiastical canons. They said that we should be led as (by the hand) by the venerable images to the recollection of the incarnation of Christ and of his saving death, and if by them we are led to the realization of the incarnation of Christ our God, what sort of an opinion shall we have of them who break down the venerable images?

At the close of the Session, after a number of anathematisms had been pronounced, the following was read, to which all the bishops subscribed (col. 317).]

Fulfilling the divine precept of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, our holy Fathers did not hide the light of the divine knowledge given by him to them under a bushel, but they set it upon the candlestick of most useful teaching, so that it might give light to all in the house-that is to say, to those who are born in the Catholic Church; lest perchance anyone of those who piously confess the Lord might strike his foot against the stone of heretical evil doctrine. For they expelled every error of heretics and they cut off the rotten member if it was incurably sick. And with a fan they purged the floor. And the good wheat, that is to say tire word which nourisheth and which maketh strong the heart of man, they laid up in the granary of the Catholic Church; but throwing outside the chaff of heretical evil opinion they burned it with unquenchable fire. Therefore also this holy and ecumenical Synod, met together for the second time in this illustrious metropolis of Nice, by the will of God and at the bidding of our pious and most faithful Emperors, Irene a new Helena, and a new Constantine, her God-protected offspring, having considered by their perusal the teachings of our approved and blessed Fathers, hath glorified God himself, from whom there was given to them wisdom for our instruction, and for the perfecting of the Catholic and Apostolic Church:

and against those who do not believe as they did, but have attempted to overshadow the truth through their novelty, they have chanted the words of the psalm: ”Oh how much evil have thine enemies done in thy sanctuary; and have glorified themselves, saying, There is not a teacher any more, and they shall not know that we treated with guile the word of truth. But we, in all things holding the doctrines and precepts of the same our God-bearing Fathers, make proclamation with one mouth and one heart, neither adding anything, nor taking anything away from those things which have been delivered to us by them. But in these things we are strengthened, in these things we are confirmed. Thus we confess, thus we teach, just as the holy and ecumenical six Synods have decreed and ratified. We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son and Word, through whom all things were made, and in the

Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, consubstantial and coeternal with the same Father and with his Son who hath had no beginning. The unbuilt-up, indivisible, incomprehensible, and non-circumscribed Trinity; he, wholly and alone, is to be worshipped and revered with adoration; one Godhead, one Lordship, one dominion, one realm and dynasty, which without division is apportioned to the Persons, and is fitted to the essence severally.

For we confess that one of the same holy and consubstantial Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ the true God, in these last days was incarnate and made man for our salvation, and having saved our race through his saving incarnation, and passion, and resurrection, and ascension into heaven; and having delivered us from the error of idols; as also the prophet says, Not an ambassador, not an angel, but the Lord himself hath saved us. Him we also follow, and adopt his voice, and cry aloud; No Synod, no power of kings, no God-hated agreement hath delivered the Church from the error of the idols, as the Jewdaizing conciliabulum hath madly dreamed, which raved against the venerable images; but the Lord of glory himself, the incarnate God, hath saved us and hath snatched us from idolatrous deceit. To him therefore be glory, to him be thanks, to him be eucharists, to him be praise, to him be magnificence. For his redemption and his salvation alone can perfectly save, and not that of other men who come of the earth. For he himself hath fulfilled for us, upon whom the ends of the earth are come through the economy of his incarnation, the words spoken beforehand by his prophets, for he dwelt among us, and went in and out among us, and cast out the namesof idols from the earth, as it was written.

But wesalute the voices of the Lord and of hisApostles through which we have been taught to honour in the first place her who is properly and truly the Mother of God and exalted above all the heavenly powers; also the holy and angelic powers; and the blessed and altogether landed Apostles, and the glorious Prophets and the triumphant Martyrs which fought for Christ, and the holy and God-bearing Doctors, and all holy men; and to seek for their intercessions, as able to render us at home with the all-royal God of all, so long as we keep his commandments, and strive to live virtuously. Moreover we salute the image of the honourable and life-giving Cross, and the holy reliques of the Saints; and we receive the holy and venerable images: and we salute them, and we embrace them, according to the ancient traditions of the holy Catholic Church of God, that is to say of our holy Fathers, who also received these things and established them in all the most holy Churches of God, and in every place of his dominion. These honourable and venerable images, as has been said, we honour and salute and reverently venerate: to wit, the image of the incarnation of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that of our spotless Lady the all-holy Mother of God, from whom he pleased to take flesh, and to save and deliver us from all impious idolatry; also the images of the holy and incorporeal Angels, who as men appeared to the just.

Likewise also the figures and effigies of the divine and all-landed Apostles, also of the God-speaking Prophets, and of the struggling Martyrs and of holy men. So that through their

representations we may be able to be led back in memory and recollection to the prototype, and have a share in the holiness of some one of them.

Thus we have learned to think of these things, and we have been strengthened by our holy Fathers, and we have been strengthened by their divinely handed down teaching. And thanks be to God for his ineffable gift, that he hath not deserted us at the end nor hath the rod of the ungodly come into the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put their hands, that is to say their actual deeds, unto wickedness. But he doeth well unto those who are good and true of heart, as the psalmist David melodiously has sung; with whom also we stag the rest of the psalm: As for such as turn back unto their own wickedness, the Lord shah lead them forth with the evil doers; and peace shall be upon the lsrael of God. [The subscriptions follow immediately and close the acts of this session (col. 321-346).]

Extracts from the Acts. Session 6

(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VII., col. 389.) Leo the most renowned secretary said: The holy and blessed Synod know how at the last session we examined divers sayings of the God-forsaken heretics, who had brought charges against the holy and spotless Church of the Christians for the setting up of the holy images. But to-day we have in our hands the written blasphemy of those calumniators of the Christians, that is to say, the absurd, and easily answered, and self-convicting definition (oron) of the pseudosyllogus, in all respects agreeing with the impious opinion of the God-hated heretics. But not only have we this, but also the artful and most drastic refutation thereof, which the Holy Spirit had supervised. For it was right that this definition should be made a triumph by wise contradictions, and should be torn to pieces with strong refutations. This also we submit so as to know your pleasure with regard to it.

The holy Synod said: Let it be read. John, the deacon and chancellor [of the most holy great Church of Constantinople, in Lat. only] read. [John, the deacon, then read the orthodox refutation, and Gregory, the bishop of Neocoesarea, the Definition of the Mock Council,the one reading the heretical statement and the other the orthodox answer.]

The Decree of the Holy, Great, Ecumenical Synod, the Second of Nice

(Found in Labbe and Cossart, Concilia. Tom. VII., col. 552.) The holy, great, and Ecumenical Synod which by the grace of God and the will of the pious and Christ-loving Emperors, Constantine and Irene, his mother, was gathered together for the second time at Nice, the illustrious metropolis of Bithynia, in the holy church of God which is named Sophia, having followed the tradition of the Catholic Church, hath defined as follows: Christ our Lord, who hath bestowed upon us the light of the knowledge of himself, and hath redeemed us from the darkness of idolatrous madness, having espoused to himself the Holy Catholic Church without spot or defect, promised that he would so preserve her: and gave his word to this effect to his holy disciples when he said: "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," which promise he made, not only to them, but to us also who should believe in his name through their word. But some, not considering of this gift, and having become fickle through the temptation of the wily enemy, have fallen from the right faith; for, withdrawing from the traditions of the Catholic Church, they have erred from the truth and as the proverb saith: "The husbandmen have gone astray in their own husbandry and have gathered in their hands nothingness," because certain priests, priests in name only, not in fact, had dared to speak against the God-approved ornament of the sacred monuments, of whom God cries aloud through the prophet, "Many pastors have corrupted my vineyard, they have polluted my portion."

And, forsooth, following profane men, led astray by their carnal sense, they have calumniated the Church of Christ our God, which he hath espoused to himself, and have failed to distinguish between holy andprofane, styling the images of our Lord andof his Saints by the same name as the statues of diabolical idols. Seeing whichthings, our Lord God (not willing to behold his people corrupted by such manner of plague) hath of his good pleasure called us together, the chief of his priests, from every quarter, moved with a divine zeal andbrought hither by the will of our princes, Constantine and Irene, to the end that the traditions of the Catholic Church may receive stability by our common decree. Therefore,

with all diligence, making a thorough examination and analysis, and following the trend of the truth, we diminish nought, we add nought, but we preserve unchanged all things which pertain to the Catholic Church, and following the Six Ecumenical Synods, especially that which met in this illustrious metropolis of Nice, as also that which was afterwards gathered together in the God-protected Royal City.

We believe ...life of the world to come. Amen. We detest and anathematize Arius and all the sharers of his absurd opinion; also Macedonius and those who following him are well styled "Foes of the Spirit" (Pneumatomachi). We confess that our Lady, St. Mary, is properly and truly the Mother of God, because she was the Mother after the flesh of One Person of the Holy Trinity, to wit, Christ our God, as the Council of Ephesus has already defined when it cast out of the Church the impious Nestorius with his colleagues, because he taught that there were two Persons [in Christ]. With the Fathers of this synod we confess that he who was incarnate of the immaculate Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary has two natures, recognizing him as perfect God and perfect man, as also the Council of Chalcedon hath promulgated, expelling from the divine Atrium [aulhj] as blasphemers, Eutyches and Dioscorus; and placing in the same category Severus, Peter and a number of others, blaspheming in divers fashions. Moreover, with these we anathematize the fables of Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus, in accordance with the decision of the Fifth Council held at Constantinople. We affirm that in Christ there be two wills and two operations according to the reality of each nature, as also the Sixth Synod, held at Constantinople, taught, casting out Sergius, Honorius, Cyrus, Pyrrhus, Macarius, and those who agree with them, and all those who are unwilling to be reverent.

To make our confession short, we keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, agreeable to the history of the preaching of the Gospel, a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that so the incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely phantastic, for these have mutual indications and without doubt have also mutual significations.

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honourable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honourable reverence (aspasmon kai timhtikhn proskunh-sin), not indeed that true worship of faith (latreian) which pertains alone to the

divine nature; but to these, as to the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross and to the Book of the Gospels and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom.

For the honour which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented. For thus the teaching of our holy Fathers, that is the tradition of the Catholic Church, which from one end of the earth to the other hath received the Gospel, is strengthened. Thus we follow Paul, who spake in Christ, and the whole divine Apostolic company and the holy Fathers, holding fast the traditions which we have received. So we sing prophetically the triumphal hymns of the Church, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Rejoice and be glad with all thy heart. The Lord hath taken away from thee the oppression of thy adversaries; thou art redeemed from the hand of thine enemies. The Lord is a King in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more, and peace be unto thee forever."

Those, therefore who dare to think or teach otherwise, or as wicked heretics to spurn the traditions of the Church and to invent some novelty, or else to reject some of those things which the Church hath received (e.g., the Book of the Gospels, or the image of the cross, or the pictorial icons, or the holy reliques of a martyr), or evilly and sharply to devise anything subversive of the lawful traditions of the Catholic Church or to turn to common uses the sacred vessels or the venerable monasteries, if they be Bishops or Clerics, we command that they be deposed; if religious or laics, that they be cut off from communion. [After all had signed, the acclamations began (col. 576).]

The holy Synod cried out: So we all believe, we all are so minded, we all give our consent and have signed. This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the orthodox, this is the faith which hath made firm the whole world. Believing in one God, to be celebrated in Trinity, we salute the honourable images! Those who do not so hold, let them be anathema. Those who do not thus think, let them be driven far away from the Church. For we follow the most ancient legislation of the Catholic Church. We keep the laws of the Fathers. We anathematize those who add anything to or take anything away from the Catholic Church. We anathematize the introduced novelty of the revilers of Christians. We salute the venerable images. We place under anathema those who do not do this. Anathema to them who presume to apply to the venerable images the things said in Holy Scripture about. idols. Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images. Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols. Anathema to those who say that Christians resort to the sacred images as to gods. Anathema to those who say that any other delivered us from idols except Christ our God. Anathema to those who dare to say that at any time the Catholic Church received idols.

Many years to the Emperors, etc., etc.

The Divine Sacra Sent by the Emperors Constantine and Irene

(Found in Zabbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VII., col. 32.) They who receive the dignity of the empire, or the honour of the principal priesthood from our Lord Jesus Christ, ought to provide and to care for those things which please him, and rule and govern the people committed to their care according to his will and good pleasure. Therefore, O most holy Head (Caput), it is incumbent upon us and you, that irrepre-hensibly we know the things which be his, and that in these we exercise ourselves, since from him we have received the im-peratorial dignity, and you the dignity of the chief priesthood.

But now to speak more to the point. Your paternal blessedness knows what hath been done in times past in this our royal city against the venerable images, how those who reigned immediately before us destroyed them and subjected them to disgrace and injury: (O may it not be imputed to them, for it had been better for them had they not laid their hands upon the 'l Church!)- and how they seduced andbrought over to their own opinion all the people who live in these parts-yea, even the whole of the East, in like manner, up to the time in which God hath exalted us to this kingdom, who seek his glory in truth, and hold that which has been handed down by his Apostles together with all other teachers. Whence now with pure heart and unfeigned religion we have, together with all our subjects and our most learned divines, had constant conferences respecting the things which relate to God, and by their advice have determined to summon a General Council. And we entreat your paternal blessedness, or rather the Lord God entreats, "who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," that you will give yourself to us and make no delay, but come up hither to aid us in the confirmation and establishment of the ancient tradition of yen-erable images.

It is, indeed, incumbent on your holiness to do this, since you know how it is written- "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, ye priests, saith the Lord," and "the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and the law shall go forth out of his mouth, for he is the angel of the Lord of Hosts. And again, the divine Apostle, the preacher of the truth, who, "from Jerusalem and round about unto Il-lyricum, preached the Gospel," hath thus commanded- "Feed with discipline the flock of Christ which he purchased with his own blood. As then you are the

veritable chief priest (primus sacerdos) who presides in the place and in the see of the holy and superlaudable Apostle Peter, let your paternal blessedness come to us, as we have said before, and add your presence to all those other priests who shall be assembled together here, that thus the will of the Lord may be accomplished. For as we are taught in the Gospels our Lord saith- "When two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" -let your paternal and sacred blessedness be certified and confirmed by the great God and King of all, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by us his servants, that if you come up hither you shall be received with all honour and glory, and that everything necessary for you shall be granted.

And again, when the definition (capitulum) shall be completed, which by the good pleasure of Christ our God we hope shall be done, we take upon us to provide for you every facility of returning with honour and distinction. If, however, your blessedness cannot attend upon us (which we can scarcely imagine, knowing what is your zeal about divine things), at least, pray select for us men of understanding, having with them letters from your holiness, that they may be present here in the person of your sacred and paternal blessedness. So, when they meet with the other priests who are here, the ancient tradition of our holy fathers may be synodically confirmed, and every evil plant of tares may be rooted out, and the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be fulfilled, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. And after this, may there be no further schism and separation in the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which Christ our true God is the Head.

We have had Constantine, beloved in Christ, most holy Bishop of Leontina in our beloved Sicily, with whom your paternal blessedness is well acquainted, into our presence; and, having spoken with him face to face, have sent him with this our present venerable jussio to you. Whom, after that he hath seen you, forthwith dismiss, that he may come back to us, and write us by him concerning your coming-what time we may expect will be spent in your journeying thence and coming to us. Moreover, he can retain with him the most holy Bishop of Naples, and come up hither together with him. And, as your journey will be by way of Naples and Sicily we have given orders to the Governor of Sicily about this, that he take due care to have every needful preparation made for your honour and rest, which is necessary in order that your paternal blessedness may come to us. Given on the with before the calends of September, the seventh indic-tion, from the Royal City.

The Imperial Sacra. Read at the First Session

(Found in Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VII, col. 49.) Constantine and Irene-Sovereigns of the Romans in the Faith, to the most holy Bishops, who, by the grace of God and by the command of our pious Sovereignty, have met together in the Council of Nice. The Wisdom which is truly according to the nature of God and the Father-our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God-who, by his most divine and wonderful dispensation in the flesh, hath delivered us from all idolatrous error: and, by taking on him our nature, hath renewed the same by the co-operation of the Spirit, which is of the same nature with himself; and having himself become the first High Priest, hathcounted you holy men, worthy of the same dignity.

He is that good Shepherd who, bearing on his own shoulders that wandering sheep -fallen man, hath brought him back to his own peculiar folds-that is, theparty of angelic and ministering powers (Eph. if. 14, 15), and hath reconciled us in himself and having taken away the wall of partition, hath broken down the enmity through his flesh, and hath bestowed upon us a rule of conduct tending to peace; wherefore, preaching to all, he saith in the Gospel, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (Matt. v. 9). Of which blessedness, confirming as it does the exaltation of the adoption of sons, our pious Sovereignty desiring above all things to be made partakers, hath ever applied the utmost diligence to direct all our Roman Commonwealth into the ways of unity and concord; and more especially have we been solicitous concerning the right regulation of the Church of God, and most anxious in every way to promote the unity of the priesthood. For which cause the Chiefs of the Sacerdotal Order of the East and of the North, of the West and of the South, are present in the person of their Representative Bishops, who have with them respectively the replies written in answers to the Synodical Epistle sent from the most holy Patriarch; for such was from the beginning the synodical regulation of the Church Catholic, which, from the one end of the earth to the other, hath received the Gospel.

On this account we have, by the good will and permission of God, caused you, his most holy Priests, to meet together -you who are accustomed to dispense his Testimony in the unbloody sacrifice-that your decision may be in accordance with the definitions of former

councils who decreed rightly, and that the splendour of the Spirit may illumine you in all things, for, as our Lord teaches, No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel, but on acandlestick, that it may give light to allthat are in tim house; even so, should ye make such use of the various regulations which have been piously handed down to us of old by our Fathers, that all the Holy Churches of God may remain in peaceful order.

As for us, such was our zeal for the truth-such our earnest desire for the interests of religion, our care for ecclesiastical order, our anxiety that the ancient rules and orders should maintain their ground-that though fully engaged in military councils-though all our attention was occupied in political cares-yet, treating all these affairs as but of minor importance, we would allow nothing whatever to interfere with the convocation of your most holy council. To every one is given the utmost freedom of expressing his sentiments without the least hesitation, that thus the subject under enquiry may be most fully discussed and truth may be the more boldly spoken, that so all dissensions may be banished from the Church and we all may be united in the bonds of peace.

For, when the most holy Patriarch Paul, by the divine will, was about to be liberated from the bands of mortality and to exchange his earthly pilgrimage for a heavenly home with his Master Christ, he abdicated the Patriarchate and took upon him the monastic life, and when we asked him, Why hast thou done this? he answered, Because I fear that, if death should surprise me still in the episcopate of this royal and heaven-defended city, I should have to carry with me the anathema of the whole Catholic Church, which consigns me to that outer darkness which is prepared for the devil and his angels; for they say that a certain synod hath been held here in order to the subversion of pictures and images which the Catholic Church holds, embraces, and receives, in memory of the persons whom they represent. This is that which distracts my soul-this is that which makes me anxiously to enquire how I may escape the judgment of God-since among such men I have been brought up and with such am I numbered. No sooner had he thus spoken in the presence of some of our most illustrious nobles than he expired.When our Pious Sovereignty reflected on this awful declaration (and truly, even before this event, we had heard of similarquestionings from many around), we took counsel with ourselves as to what ought to be done; and we determined, after mature deliberation, that when a new Patriarch had been elected, we should endeavour to bring this subject to some decisiveconclusion.

Wherefore, having summoned those whom we knew to be most experienced in ecclesiastical matters, and having called upon Christ our God, we consulted with them who was worthy to be exalted to the chair of the Priesthood of this Royal and God-preserved city; and they all with one heart and soul gave their vote in favour of Tarasius-he who now occupies the Pontifical Presidency. Having, therefore, sent for him, we laid before him our deliberations and our vote; but he would by no means consent, nor at all yield to that which had been determined. And when we enquired, Wherefore he thus refused his consent?-at first he answered evasively, That theyoke of the Chief Priesthood was too much for him. But we, knowing this to be a mere pretext coveting his unwillingness to obey us, would not desist

from our importunity, but persisted in pressing the acceptance of the dignity of the Chief Priesthood upon him. When he found how urgent we were with him, he told us the cause of his refusal. It is (said he) because I perceive that the Church which has been founded on the rock, Christ our God, is rent and torn asunder by schisms, and that we are unstable in our confession, and that Christians in the East, of the same faith with ourselves, decline communion with us, and unite them with those of the West; and so we are estranged from all, and each day are anathematized by all:

and, moreover, I should demand that an Ecumenical Council should be held, at which should be found Legates from the Pope of Rome and from the Chief Priests of the East. We, therefore, fully understanding these things, introduced him to the assembled company of the Priests -of our most illustrious Princes-and of all our Christian people; and then, in their presence, he repeated to them all that he had before said to us; which, when they heard, they received him joyfully, and earnestly entreated our peace-making and pious Sovereignty that an Ecumenical Council might be assembled. To this their request, we gave our hearty consent; for, to speak the truth, it is by the good will and under the direction of our God that we have assembled you together. Wherefore as God, willing to establish his own counsel, hath for this purpose brought you together from all parts of the world, behold the Gospels now lying before you, and plainly crying aloud, "Judge justly; stand firm as champions of religion, and be ready with unsparing hand to cut away all innovations and new fangled inventions.

And, as Peter the Chief of the Apostolic College, struck the mad slave and cut off his Jewish ear with the sword, so inlike manner do ye wield the axe of the Spirit, and every tree which bears the fruit of contention, of strife, or newly-imported innovation, either renew by transplanting through the words of sound doctrine, or lay it low with canonical censure, and send it to file fires of the future Gehenna, so that thepeace of the Spirit may evermore protect the whole body of the Church, compacted and united in one, and confirmed by the traditions of the Fathers; and so may all our Roman State enjoy peace as well as the Church.

We have received letters from Hadrian, most Holy Pope of old Rome, by his Legates-namely, Peter, the God-beloved Archpresbyter, and Peter, the God-beloved Presbyter and Abbot-who will be present in council with you; and we command that, according to synodical custom, these be read in the hearing of you all; and that, having heard these with becoming silence, and moreover the Epistles contained in two octavos sent by the Chief Priest and other Priests of the Eastern dioceses by John, most pious Monk and Chancellor of the Patriarchal throne of Antioch, and Thomas, Priest and Abbot, who also are present together with you, ye may by these understand what are the sentiments of the Church Catholic on this point.

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.